

Constitution of The Liberal Party

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Preamble

1. The Liberal Party exists to build a Liberal Society in which every citizen shall possess liberty, property and security, and none shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. Its chief care is for the rights and opportunities of the individual and in all spheres it sets freedom first.
2. It believes that each generation is responsible for the fate of the Earth and the balance of nature. It works to ensure that people and institutions accept these responsibilities.
3. It looks to strengthen world governance and justice by developing and supporting the United Nations (which has a broader democratic system less subject to the restrictive influence of super states) with the aim of creating a fairer society by protecting democratic and liberal principles, safeguarding equality, rights and freedoms in which all peoples are able to enjoy continuous access to the Earth's environment and natural resources; in which the various cultures of humanity can develop freely without being warped by nationalist, racial or religious antagonism; and in which the free movement of ideas, of people and of goods is guaranteed to the benefit of all. To these ends it sees this country as committed to making a special effort together with richer nations towards assisting that part humanity whose essential freedoms are denied by poverty and hunger. It welcomes the establishment of links with other countries insofar as such groupings advance these Liberal aims.
4. At home its goal is a country in which the powers of the state will be used to establish social justice, to wage war against poverty, to spread wealth and power, to ensure that the country's resources are conserved for future generations whilst being wisely developed for the benefit of the whole community and to create the positive conditions which will make a full and free life possible for all regardless of colour, creed, race, sex or sexual orientation; a country in which, under the protection of law, all citizens shall have the right to think freely, to speak freely, to write freely and to vote freely; power through a just electoral system to shape the laws which they are called upon to obey; autonomous institutions ensuring genuine self-government; an effective voice in deciding the conditions in which they live and work; liberty to buy, sell and produce in circumstances which secure for the consumer real freedom of choice; guarantees against the abuse of monopoly, whether private or public; opportunity to work at a fair wage; decent homes in a varied and attractive environment; good education and facilities for the full cultivation of the human personality; an assurance that the community shall enjoy the benefits of publicly-created land values; and, as a safeguard of independence, the personal ownership of property by all citizens. These are the conditions of liberty, which it is the function of the State to protect and enlarge.
5. The Liberal Party consists of like-minded people working together for the achievement of these aims.

A. Name

The political party described in this Constitution is named The Liberal Party and first came together as a national organisation in 1877.

B. Liberal Beliefs and Aims

B1. Liberals believe in the equality of personal worth of every individual. We rejoice in the diversity of humanity and uphold the rights of minorities. We work for a society which will maximise the life chances of every individual and guarantee the liberty to live without restrictions, except for those which are required by the liberty of others.

B2. Liberals aim to spread wealth and power and to ensure that everyone has access to food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and the protection of the law.

B3. The economy of a truly Liberal society will be sustainable without depending on the use of non-renewable resources, will meet the needs of people both as workers and as consumers, and will work in harmony with nature.

B4. Liberals believe that a system of government is necessary; but for government to be acceptable there must be fair and effective representation and freedom of information. We believe that decisions are best taken at the most local practical level to allow the maximum public participation.

B5. Liberals have faith in free and rational debate as the means of reaching decisions. We resist prejudice in all its forms, oppose vested interests and believe that everyone should be equal before the law.

B6. Liberals aim to create an open and outward looking society which is honest and generous in its dealings with the rest of the world and always ready to promote the cause of liberty.

C. Liberal Party Objectives

C1. The Liberal Party seeks to advance its aims at every level of decision making. It works outside as well as inside existing political structures and encourages people and communities to take and use power.

C2. The Liberal Party strives to translate its beliefs and aims into policies and programmes which are kept under review to ensure that they meet changing circumstances. To this end it fosters debate and discussion, both inside and outside the Party.

C3. In order to put its policies into effect the Liberal Party seeks to identify suitable candidates from among its membership to stand for public office. It supports these candidates with briefings and training and by improving political campaigning methods.

C4. From time to time the Liberal Party campaigns on specific issues, and in doing so it may make common cause with other groups and organizations whose aims are compatible.

C5. The Liberal Party is an open and outward looking organization, always seeking new members and encouraging the growth of Local Associations.

D. Basis of Membership

D1. Membership of the Liberal Party is open to all who support its Beliefs, Aims and Objectives.

D2. Membership of the Liberal Party is by virtue of membership of an Affiliated Association or by payment of a subscription to the Liberal Party itself. Subscription rates shall be decided by the National Executive Committee, subject to approval by Assembly.

D3. Liberals have the right to disagree with any aspect of Liberal Party policy. However, those who stand for public office have a special responsibility to think through their opposition and in their campaigning to make clear the difference between the Party's policy and their own view.

E. Rights of Members

All members of the Liberal Party have the following rights which are to be respected and upheld by other members, by Liberal Associations, by Regional Federations, and by all the bodies functioning under this Constitution:

- A. to be offered equal opportunities to participate in the activities of the Party, and not to be excluded by the deliberate withholding of information or by other unfair means;
- B. to attend and observe any Party meeting (subject to the payment of the registration fee in meetings where such a fee is payable) unless that meeting specifically resolves that it is a closed meeting and states the reason why its business is confidential;
- C. to have such details about themselves as may be held by the Party kept confidential and not disclosed to any other person without their permission;
- D. to be sent promptly any information about the Party and its activities which is available, subject to payment of the reasonable costs of providing that information, but excluding membership lists and any other information which the National Executive Committee declares to be confidential.

F. Refusal or Revocation of Membership and Disputes Among Members

F1. Membership of the Liberal Party may be refused or revoked by the enrolling body and/or The President on any of the following grounds and an appeal may be made to the National Executive committee:

- A. active support for a person standing against a Liberal Party candidate;
- B. membership of a rival political party;
- C. disagreement with Liberal Party policy expressed in a way and to an extent, or personal conduct, that seriously throws doubt on the person's support for the Beliefs, Aims and Objectives of the Liberal Party as set out in this Constitution;
- D. failure to comply with Government legislation relating to political parties and elections.
- E. brings the party into disrepute.

F2. Anyone whose membership is refused or revoked may appeal in writing to the NEC who shall take reasonable steps to ascertain the full facts of the case and whose decision shall be final. A person whose membership has been refused or revoked may not apply for membership again until one year has passed.

F3. In any dispute between members or groups of members efforts must first be made to resolve the matter at the most local practical level. If this has proved impossible the dispute may be referred to the President to arbitrate.

G. Liberal Associations

G1. Members of the Liberal Party are encouraged to join together to form Liberal Associations, which are formally constituted organisations affiliated to the Liberal Party.

G2. The Liberal Party has adopted a system of branch accounting to comply with the Election Commission and no longer operates any Accounting Units.

Branches must inform the Treasurer of the Liberal Party of their income, expenditure, and assets for the previous year by the 20th January of each year.

The Liberal Party has adopted a Financial Scheme as submitted to the Election Commission with the parties named Treasurer as the point of contact.

G3. Liberal Associations cover one or more Parliamentary constituencies. Liberal Associations based on areas other than Parliamentary constituencies may be formed with the agreement of the National Executive Committee.

G4. The minimum membership of an Affiliated Association is five.

G5. In an Affiliated Association members pay their subscription to the Association. The Association must pay an affiliation fee to the Liberal Party, which entitles the members of the Association to membership of the Liberal Party. The affiliation fee is decided by the NEC, subject to approval by the Assembly.

G6. Each Affiliated Association must have a constitution containing the following minimum requirements:

a) The objectives of the Affiliated Association shall include: -

- i. to affiliate to the Liberal Party;
- ii. to recruit new members to the Liberal Party;
- iii. to raise funds to support local and national activities;
- iv. to promote, and increase understanding of, the Beliefs and Aims of the Liberal Party;
- v. to select and support candidates in local elections;
- vi. to select and support a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for each constituency covered by the Association.

b) A copy of the Association's constitution must be sent to the President of the Liberal Party, who must be informed whenever the constitution is amended;

c) An Annual General Meeting must be held each year to which all the Association's members are invited. The AGM must elect at least three officers, including a Chair and a Treasurer;

d) A bank or building society account or manual accounts must be maintained and an annual financial statement presented to the AGM, and a copy of the annual financial statement sent to the Treasurer of the Liberal Party.

G7. The President of the Liberal Party is responsible for ensuring that each Affiliated Association's constitution complies with the Constitution of the Liberal Party.

G8. The NEC may refuse or revoke the status of any Affiliated Association which, in its opinion, does not support the Beliefs and Aims of the Liberal Party, or which has not abided by the terms of this Constitution. This decision must be taken by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at an NEC meeting. Before the decision comes into effect the NEC shall explain the grounds to the Association and give the Association two months in which to satisfy the NEC that the grounds no longer exist. The NEC's decision may be overturned by the President.

G9. The failure by any association or its officers at any time to provide information on time to the Party which is required to comply with Government legislation will result in that association's immediate disaffiliation.

G10. Liberal members may form informal groups to promote Liberalism in localities not covered by formal affiliated Liberal associations or to pursue a particular interest, or to develop policy. These groups have no formal status within the Liberal Party. Informal groups may subsequently apply for affiliated association status provided they satisfy the requirements under this section of the Constitution.

H. Regional and National Federations

H1. Any group of Associations and members may decide to form a Regional or National Federation although participation in such a Regional or National Federation is voluntary. The boundaries of Regional or National Federations are subject to the agreement of the National Executive Committee, but the NEC may not refuse to agree without good reason.

H2. The NEC may dissolve any Regional or National Federation which, in its opinion, is acting against the best interests of the Liberal Party or in a manner likely to bring the Liberal Party into disrepute. Any funds held by a Regional or National Federation on its dissolution shall be returned, as far as possible, to the Associations and members who contributed them.

I. The Assembly

I1. All members of the Liberal Party are entitled to attend the Assembly, subject to payment of a registration fee to cover administration and venue costs.

I2. There shall be at least one meeting of the Assembly in each calendar year. Special meetings may be summoned by the National Executive Committee. At a Special Assembly no business can be taken unless it has been specified in the calling notice for the meeting.

I3. Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of the Party. The functions of Assembly are:

- i. to consider policy motions;
- ii. to receive a report from the NEC on its work;
- iii. to receive audited accounts and a report from the Treasurer;
- iv. to decide on the membership subscriptions and affiliation fees proposed by the NEC.

I4. Motions to Assembly which involve expenditure by the Liberal Party must be framed as recommendations to the NEC.

I5. The NEC may convene other national meetings of members of the Liberal Party between Assemblies and shall have power to charge a registration fee for such meetings.

I6. Party policy shall consist only of resolutions passed at meetings of the Assembly. Such other election manifestos and policy statements as may be produced by the Party from time to time shall not contradict Party policy but may discuss, explain, promote or amplify it.

J. The National Executive Committee (NEC)

J1. The National Executive Committee (NEC) shall consist of 20 members serving 2 year terms each using the Single Transferable Vote. Any casual vacancy of the NEC may be filled by co-option for the remainder of the vacant term of office.

J2. In the event of the resignation of a registered party officer, Leader, Treasurer or Nominating Officer, the Liberal Party shall hold an emergency NEC meeting to appoint their successors within 14 days and

inform the Election Commission of the appointment.

Should the appointment of the registered Treasurer terminate for any reason, the position shall be assumed first by the Party Leader, then Nominating Officer and then other registered officer until a replacement has been appointed.

J3. The NEC shall elect a Chair and appoint a Nominating Officer and a Treasurer from their membership annually.

J4. The NEC may elect or appoint such committees as it decides are necessary and shall specify the extent to which its powers are delegated to each committee.

J5. The NEC directs the work of the Liberal Party and is responsible for implementing the Liberal Party's Objectives. In particular, the NEC shall:

- A. be responsible for the organisation and finances of the Party;
- B. determine Party priorities and approve the annual budget for Party income and expenditure;
- C. initiate and progress campaigns and political action;
- D. temporarily suspend scheduled leadership, presidential or NEC Chairman elections should it be deemed unsuitable for the scheduled time period as laid out in section L1.

- E. receive regular reports on the Party's finances from the Treasurer;
- F. develop and vote on the Party's policy;
- G. liaise with National and Regional Federations and Liberal Associations;
- H. decide membership subscriptions and affiliation fees.
- I. The NEC shall appoint a returning office for internal elections and review election regulation.

J6. The NEC is responsible for deciding Standing Orders for its meetings.

J7. A 2/3 majority petition of the NEC has the ability to remove any of The Leader, President or NEC Chairman and trigger a brand-new election for that position.

K. The President

K1. The President is the guardian of the Party's Constitution and arbitrates in disputes within the Party when called on to do so.

K2. The President shall be elected using the Instant Runoff Vote system by a ballot of the National Executive Committee. Their term limit will last for 4 years.

K3. The President is the administrative head of the party and leading constitutional authority who shall oversee the management and governance of the party while holding unilateral authority to launch investigations into any pressing party matter.

K4. This includes the authority for unilateral approval of any defections into the Party of already sitting officials.

K5. The President while in office must not be a member of the NEC, the elected Leadership or the NEC Chairman.

L. The Leader

L1. The Leader shall be elected using the Instant Runoff Vote system by postal ballot of the membership. Their term limit will last for 2 years however, the NEC can vote to extend the term should an election be deemed inappropriate for the next scheduled date.

L2. The Leader is the Party's candidate for Prime Minister.

L3. The Leader is the executive of policy and strategy in the party. The leader has the right to refer policy back to the NEC for policy review and development.

M. The National Executive Committee (NEC) Chairman

M1. The National Executive Committee (NEC) Chairman shall be elected by members of the NEC. Their term limit will last for 2 years.

M2. The NEC Chairman is the legitimiser of the business of the NEC. Their role is to construct meeting agendas and coordinate policy, acting as the mediator between the wishes of the NEC at large and the wishes of The Leader.

M3. Should an NEC vote be tied, the NEC Chairman may cast the deciding vote.

M4. Should The Leader become unable to fulfil their duties, the NEC shall select a temporary spokesperson until a new Leader can be elected.

M5. The NEC Chairman while in office must not be The President or The Leader. They may announce their candidacy for these positions and run-in multiple elections simultaneously, but they must not hold multiple offices simultaneously.

N. Dissolution of The Liberal Party

N1. The Liberal Party may only be dissolved if a proposal to that effect is passed by both: a three-quarters majority at a properly convened Special Assembly; and subsequently a four-fifths majority in a postal ballot of the membership, provided that at least half of the entire membership vote in favour of the dissolution.

N2. The postal ballot provided for in clause N1 must be completed within three months of the success of a dissolution motion at a Special Assembly.

N3. Any proposal to dissolve the Liberal Party must incorporate proposals for the disposal of the assets and records of the Party.

N4. Section N of the Constitution may only be amended by a three-quarters majority at an Assembly, followed by a four-fifths majority in a postal ballot of the membership, provided that at least half of the entire membership vote in favour of the amendment.

O. Candidates

O1. The National Executive Committee is responsible for the system of candidate approval for elections to the UK Parliament.

O2. In the case of local elections approval and selection of candidates is a matter for the Liberal Association concerned, subject only to the provisions of this Constitution.

O3. All Liberal Party candidates at any election must be paid up members of the Party.

O4. The NEC shall maintain a list of approved candidates for Parliamentary elections. The NEC shall also establish, and periodically review, the rules for approving Parliamentary candidates.

O5. All members of the Liberal Party may apply to become approved Parliamentary candidates subject the requirements of clause O3, but no member can become an approved candidate until they have been properly approved under the rules established by the NEC. No member may describe themselves as a Parliamentary candidate, or prospective candidate, unless they have been properly approved.

O6. The selection of a candidate for a particular UK Parliamentary seat is the responsibility of the Affiliated Association whose area covers the seat. They may only select from the list of candidates approved by the NEC. Where there is a contest for the selection all members of the Association shall be given the opportunity to vote. Where the Affiliated Association is deemed unfit to take on the responsibility of candidate selection the NEC shall be responsible for selecting the candidate.

O7. All Liberal Party candidates have the duty to promote the Beliefs and Aims of the Party, as set out in this constitution.

O8. Because of their public status, Liberal Party candidates in all elections have a special duty not to do or say anything that may bring the Party into disrepute, a duty which, if they be elected, continues throughout their time in office.

P. The Finances of The Liberal Party

P1. The finances of the Party are the responsibility of the National Executive Committee who, at their first meeting after the Party's Annual Assembly, will elect a Treasurer who must keep a proper set of books and who has overall responsibility for the drawing and paying of monies and for all monetary transactions.

P2. The Treasurer has a place as of right on any committee appointed to oversee the finances of the Party and has a right to address any meeting of that committee, or the NEC, on the financial implications of a proposal before the vote on that proposal is taken.

P3. At the end of each financial year, the Party's accounts are to be audited by a competent person appointed by the previous year's Annual Assembly and whose report is to be embodied in the annual accounts. The Annual Assembly may resolve to delegate the appointment to the National Executive Committee.

P4. The NEC must agree a budget for each financial year and observe the restraints imposed by the budget, taking any action that may be necessary to contain excess of expenditure or manage any shortfall in income.

P5. This constitution specifically prohibits the Party from borrowing money, secured or unsecured, by way of overdraft or loan.

Q. Amendments and Interpretation

Q1. This Constitution may only be amended by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at an Assembly. Constitutional Amendments may be proposed by the National Executive Committee, any Affiliated Association, or any three members and must be submitted in accordance with Assembly Standing Orders.

Q2. If there is any question of interpretation of this Constitution, or if a matter arises where the Constitution is silent, the President shall give a ruling which may be reversed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a meeting of the NEC.

R. Compliance with Current Election Regulations.

R1. The Liberal Party seeks to adhere to and fully comply with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) and any subsequent legislation or guidance.