

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION OF LIBERAL DEMOCRAT WOMEN

PREAMBLE

Liberal Democrat Women, holding firmly to the philosophy and objectives of the Liberal Democrats and to the vision of a fair, free and open society, oppose all entrenched forms of privilege and reject all prejudice and discrimination wherever it is found. In particular we are pledged to eliminate all inequality based upon gender.

In every aspect of life in which women are under-valued, under-represented or exploited we are dedicated to achieving equality. We endorse the feminist principles of encouraging, supporting, preparing and promoting women to realise their full potential in shaping society. We seek changes in society such that the contribution of women is fully recognised and valued equally with that of men.

We shall work to widen the opportunities open to women in professional and public life. At the same time we seek recognition of the special contribution made by women in the roles of mother, carer and homemaker. We support the right of women, as of every individual, to self-fulfilment in whichever role they choose; we defend their freedom and opportunity to make that choice.

We recognise that gender inequality is harmful to all genders, and endorse and encourage all women, men and those of non-binary gender to identify and act as they wish – without being constrained by gender stereotypes or social norms.

In furtherance of these aims we shall co-operate with women's and gender equality organisations elsewhere in Europe and throughout the world to support and foster the aspirations of women worldwide.

Above all, we are committed to a society in which all members, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, are free and unrestricted; where all are welcome and encouraged to participate alongside each other; and where economic, political, social and community life is enriched and enhanced in equal measure by the contributions made by women, men and all those of non-binary gender.

ARTICLES

1. NAME AND SUCCESSION

- 1.1 The Federal Name shall be Liberal Democrat Women, hereinafter referred to as “LDW” (formerly Women Liberal Democrats, who were formally The Social and Liberal Democrats Women’s Organisation).
- 1.2 LDW shall be the successor to the Women Liberal Democrats, Women’s Liberal Federation and Women for Social Democracy.
- 1.3 LDW is an Affiliated Organisation of the Federal Party of the Liberal Democrats (hereinafter called “the Party” which expression shall where the context requires also include the State Parties, Regional Parties, and Local Parties thereof).

2. AIMS AND OBJECTS

- 2.1 LDW shall be an independent body sharing the same aims and objects as the Party. LDW shall campaign for full participation of women at all levels and in all activities of the Party.
- 2.2 LDW shall seek to achieve the objects set forth in the Preamble to this Constitution. In order to achieve such objects LDW shall:
 - Campaign, publish and in every way publicise its objectives and activities; Formulate, advocate and advise on matters of policy;
 - Actively participate in education, organisation and promotion of its members and of women in general;
 - Seek to secure the election of **Liberal Democrat** Members of Parliament, UK members of the European Parliament, MSPs and AMs, members of local government and other elected public authorities; nominate candidates to appointed bodies; and especially seek the election and appointment of women;
 - Undertake all such activities and do all such things as the

Executive deems necessary in pursuit of these Aims and Objects.

3. MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 Membership of LDW is open to all men, women and those of non-binary gender who are members of the Party and subscribe to the Preamble hereto.
- 3.2 Members may vote and speak at any conference or general meeting provided that their membership is fully paid-up prior to the start of such conference or meeting. Members may vote in postal ballots subject to being paid up members 21 days prior to the sending of ballot papers to members.
- 3.3 A central register of members of LDW shall be kept.
- 3.4 The rates and method of collection of subscriptions shall be as recommended by the Executive and approved by the Annual General Meeting.
- 3.5 Those who are not members of the Party or of an associated party, are not members of any other political party in Great Britain, and who are in agreement with the Preamble set out above may be Supporters of Liberal Democrat Women, may attend events and receive LDW publications as Supporters without governance rights on receipt of a subscription. Supporters are not eligible to stand for election to the Executive Committee, nor do they have any voting rights

4. OFFICERS

- 4.1 The Officers of LDW shall be:

The Chair, whose role shall be executive

The Treasurer

The Secretary

Vice-Chairs (2), either of whom shall take responsibility for ensuring meetings are chaired in the absence of the chair

- 4.2 The Officers, who shall have been paid up members of LDW for one year, shall be elected for two years. Subject to Article 6.6 all Officers shall hold office for two full calendar years.
- 4.3 No Officer may hold the same office for more than four years.
- 4.4 No Officer may hold more than one office within LDW nor have another capacity on the Executive simultaneously, nor be a paid employee of LDW.

5. THE EXECUTIVE

- 5.1 The Executive shall consist of:
- The Officers
 - Eight elected members
 - Up to three co-opted members
 - One member elected by each State Organisation
 - One member elected by the Young Liberals, from the Young Liberals
- 5.2 Subject to Articles 9.2 and 6.6 elected members shall be elected serve for two years.
- 5.3 The Executive shall elect a party member to serve as President for two years The Executive shall also appoint a Vice- President, both of whose roles shall be honorary and non-voting.
- 5.4 The Executive may co-opt up to three co-opted members, whose role shall be advisory and non-voting.
- 5.5 Subject to Article 5.6, the Vice-President and co-opted members shall serve until the end of the calendar year.
- 5.6 The Executive may remove any Officer or member itself for failure to attend three successive meetings without reasonable excuse or for any other good cause. Before exercising this power the Executive shall give the Officer or member concerned an opportunity to be heard.

- 5.7 Meetings of the Executive shall be chaired by the Chair of LDW or in their absence, by the Vice-Chair. 50% of those entitled to vote shall constitute a quorum.
- 5.8 Within the limits of the Constitution and in furtherance of the Aims and Objects the Executive shall direct the work of LDW and the Officers shall be responsible for its co-ordination, between meetings. In particular, the work of the Executive shall include:
- Conducting the business of LDW subject to the approval of the AGM;
 - Governing the organisation and finances of and fundraising for LDW;
 - Determining LDW's priorities and approving its expenditure;
- 5.9 The Executive may elect or appoint sub committees and shall determine the remit of each such committee. These committees shall actively seek the participation of the wider membership's expertise from time to time.
- 5.10 Establishing ad hoc working groups for specific purposes.
- 5.11 Appointing any paid staff: LDW shall be an equal opportunities employer. The line management of staff shall be by the Chair or as agreed by the Executive.
- 5.12 Formulating, advocating and advising on matters of policy and contributing to the policymaking process of the Party.
- 5.13 Organising and promoting campaigns within and outside the party;
- 5.14 Organising and promoting such meetings, conferences and activities, including fundraising. These events also include participation in conferences of the Party as the Executive shall think fit.
- 5.15 The Executive shall meet at least four times a year.
- 5.16 The Executive shall be responsible to the Annual General Meeting.

6. ORGANISATION

- 6.1 LDW shall operate at a Federal level.

- 6.2 It shall incorporate and encourage such state, regional and local levels of organisation as shall be or have been established and have been recognised by the Executive.
- 6.3 The Constitutions for these local organisations shall be drawn up by the organisations themselves in consultation with, and with the approval of, the Executive. They shall in all cases subscribe fully to the Preamble and Aims and Objects of this Constitution.

7. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

- 7.1 The election year shall be the calendar year.
- 7.2 Any paid-up member shall be eligible to be nominated by any other member and shall signify consent to nomination. All positions on the Executive shall be open to a job-share by members of LDW who shall be treated as one candidate.
- 7.3 Officers shall be elected for two-year terms of office as provided above and as in 5.2. In the absence of any nomination for an Officer, the new Executive shall, at its first meeting, have the power to appoint a member to carry out the functions of that position without any further call for nominations; the person should preferably be an elected ordinary member of the executive and have been a member of LDW for a minimum of one year.
- 7.4 Elected members shall be elected for two-year terms as provided above. At the start of the calendar year, one-half of the elected members shall retire by rotation (being those who have been longest in office since their last election).
- 7.5 Casual vacancies shall be filled from runners-up in the order in which they came in the elections. In the absence of sufficient nominations to fill all executive vacancies, the current officers and executive shall, at their first meeting following the results of the election, draw up a list of members, in consultation with the new officers, to be invited to serve as co-opted members of the Executive. These co-opted members will have voting rights, and will serve for one year.

- 7.6 Co-opted members of the Executive and Vice-Presidents shall retire at the end of the calendar year.
- 7.7 All elections provided for in this Constitution shall be a **secret** ballot conducted by the single transferable vote and by postal ballot of all members of LDW. All candidates shall be informed of the time, date and place of the count for elections. Candidates shall be notified of the result within 10 days.
- 7.8 The rules of the election shall be agreed by the Executive. They will be circulated in advance of the election to the members along with the nomination forms, which shall include job descriptions of all vacancies.
- 7.9 The Executive shall appoint a Returning Officer, who must be a member of the Party who is not a candidate in the election. In the case of any disputed election the Returning Officer shall advise the candidates involved of the reasons and shall, if necessary, take advice from the Returning Officer for Federal Elections of the Liberal Democrat Party.

8 GENERAL MEETINGS

- 8.1 There shall be an Annual General Meeting in each calendar year that shall take place not later than fifteen months after the previous Annual General Meeting. Notice of AGM giving date, time, venue and seeking motions shall be sent to all paid-up members twenty one days in advance of the meeting date.
- 8.2 The Annual General Meeting shall be chaired by the President, or Vice President if the President is unable to attend.
- 8.3 The Annual General Meeting shall receive and consider reports as the Executive shall determine; shall consider the rates and method of collection of subscriptions pursuant to Article 4.4; shall appoint a duly qualified person to examine the accounts for the following year pursuant to Article 10; and shall consider such policy and business motions as have been duly notified and moved.
- 8.4 Extraordinary General Meetings may be called by the Executive or at the request of one tenth of LDW's total membership or of 50

members, whichever figure is the lesser. At such Extraordinary General Meetings no business shall be taken except that specified in the notice convening the meeting.

- 8.5 Ordinary general meetings may be called from time to time as the Executive may think fit.
- 8.6 Twenty-one days' written notice shall be given of motions to be considered at any general meeting. Amendments to motions may be submitted to the Secretary in writing not less than seven days' before the meeting.
- 8.7 Subject to Article 11, voting at general meetings shall be by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote.
- 8.8 Accidental omission to give due notice shall not invalidate the proceedings unless the error is substantial.

9 REFUSAL, SUSPENSION OR TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- 9.1 Members must treat others with respect and must not bully, harass or intimidate any other member, Party member, member of Party staff, member of Parliamentary staff, Party volunteer or member of the public. Such behaviour will be considered to be bringing the party into disrepute.
- 9.2 The Committee may, by a two-thirds majority vote, refuse, suspend or withdraw a person's Membership of the Group on the grounds that their activities or conduct, including conduct in breach of clause 9.1 above, are likely to bring the Group into disrepute or are not compatible with the Group's Aims or with the Party's fundamental values and objectives.
- 9.3 Before any meeting at which such a vote is to be taken, the Committee's Officers and Ordinary Members and the member concerned must be given reasonable notice (being not less than 3 days).
- 9.4 The member concerned must be given a reasonable opportunity to make a written statement in their defence to the Committee. Such written statement should be submitted by the member to the Chair

or, in her absence, the Vice-Chair in advance of the meeting and the Chair or Vice-Chair as the case may be should then circulate the statement to the Committee's Officers and Ordinary Members at or in advance of the meeting.

- 9.5 Any Party member who believes that their rights as a Party member have been infringed by such a decision may appeal against the decision to the Federal Appeals Panel of the Party. Such an appeal may only be made if they believe the process has not been correctly followed and not just because they do not agree with the outcome.
- 9.6 If the appeal is successful, the person's Membership shall be restored; Membership may also be restored by a simple majority vote of the Committee.

10 FINANCE

- 10.1 The finances of the Group shall be managed by the Treasurer subject to regular reports to, and guidance by, the Committee
- 10.2 It shall be the duty of the Treasurer and the Committee to ensure that the funds of the Group are used solely in accordance with the Group's stated aims and that the Group never has debts beyond its available resources.
- 10.3 It shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer and the Committee to ensure that the Group complies fully with any requirements that apply to the Group under the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or any successor Act.
- 10.4 Group funds may be used to reimburse reasonable out-of pocket expenses incurred by Officers and Ordinary Members in carrying out their duties for the Committee.
- 10.5 The Group's financial year shall be the calendar year.

11 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

No amendments shall be made to this Constitution except at a general meeting of the LDW, with at least twenty-one days' notice of the precise wording of the amendment(s) having been given to the membership, and except if passed by at least

two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote.