

East of England Liberal Democrats Regional Conference

Saturday 31 October 2009, 10.00am to 4.00pm

Performing Arts Centre, Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon

Keynote speaker: Lynne Featherstone MP

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

DIARY

Monday 5 October, 10:00	Deadline for amendments to motions
Saturday 17 October	Mailing of final agenda to all registered representatives
Friday 23 October	Deadline for £20 standard rate bookings
Friday 30 October, 10:00	Deadline for submission of emergency motions
Friday 30 October	Deadline for £25 late rate bookings (registrations on the day will incur an additional £5 charge)

POLICY RESOLUTIONS

I. A LIBERAL VISION FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Submitted by: East of England Regional Policy Committee

1 Conference notes with regret that the East of England faces a set of political and
2 economic issues that are largely outwith its control. The global financial crisis coupled
3 with poor decisions by the Labour government mean that unemployment is rising,
4 people are struggling to pay their mortgages and businesses are failing. And the
5 expenses scandal has led to scepticism and alienation among many citizens who may
6 not bother voting at all in the 2010 elections or might consider voting for fringe or
7 extreme parties.

8 Conference recognises that there are no quick fixes to these problems but believes that
9 Liberal Democrats do have solutions that will help the East of England to weather the
10 crises and emerge strengthened politically, economically and environmentally.

11 Conference welcomes the policy paper "A Liberal Vision for the East of England", in
12 particular the proposals to:

- 13 1. review local government arrangements, with the possibility of increasing the
14 number unitary authorities;
- 15 2. create an Academy of Eastern Action;
- 16 3. promote green jobs and local apprenticeships designed to fit local people for the
17 jobs that are available;
- 18 4. free businesses from unnecessary red-tape and give them incentives to reduce
19 carbon emissions, including allowing staff to work from home where appropriate;

- 20 5. work to eliminate the practice of upwards only rent reviews, and ensure that
21 business evictions could only take place when there is evidence that the business
22 is unviable, not the rents too high for the economic cycle;
- 23 6. make waste disposal authorities responsible for ensuring a waste treatment
24 infrastructure that can maximise resource recovery from municipal, business and
25 (where appropriate) agricultural waste;
- 26 7. empower individuals and groups to take direct responsibility for their own local
27 environments, including managing open spaces and wildlife areas;
- 28 8. get people and freight off the roads and onto trains by focusing on rail expansion
29 rather than motorway widening, including upgrading rail links to Felixstowe and
30 support for the Lower Thames multi-modal crossing and enhancing east-west rail
31 links;
- 32 9. ensure that new housing will be accessible by sustainable methods of travel,
33 reducing the need for car ownership and supporting car-free developments;
- 34 10. use local development frameworks to ensure that major new housing
35 developments have access to a full range of local services, including shops,
36 schools, healthcare and leisure facilities;
- 37 11. ensure that young people have access to youth facilities at least within 3 miles of
38 their home, and give them a voice in decisions that affect them through
39 representation as co-optees on relevant committees and in the allocation of
40 budgets related to their service;
- 41 12. stop treating young people as a problem, for example by ending the use of
42 mosquito devices and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

2. CABINET SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Submitted by: Brentwood & Ongar Local Party

1 The East of England Liberal Democrats note that various authorities across the region
2 have introduced a cabinet system of local government following the Local Government
3 Act 2000. We believe that the cabinet system has failed to enhance the democratic
4 process, has left many residents and councillors feeling disenfranchised and powerless
5 to properly influence the decision making process and has put even more power into
6 the hands of small cliques of councillors, and should thus urgently be reformed.

7 Conference therefore calls on the Government to:

- 8 1. conduct an urgent review into all the issues surrounding the cabinet system of
9 local government as soon as possible
- 10 2. give local authorities that have introduced the cabinet system the freedom to revert
11 back to the Committee / Panel system if they so wish.
- 12 3. ensure that no local authority currently operating a Committee / Panel system
13 should be forced into adopting the cabinet system.

3. BRINGING BROADBAND TO RURAL AREAS

Submitted by: Braintree & Witham Local Party

1 Conference welcomes the “Carter Report”, “Digital Britain 2009”, and the
2 commitment to making 2Mb/s broadband available to all households.

3 Conference recognises the importance of broadband to those living in rural areas,
4 where services such as libraries, shops, social and cultural facilities, are not easy to
5 reach, particularly for children, students, the elderly, those without private transport
6 and those working from home. It recognises that school age children need broadband

7 for their homework (to do research and to run educational software, much of which
8 requires a fast connection).

9 Conference congratulates those district, unitary and county councils that have given
10 funding to parish councils, or community groups, to help them set up local wireless
11 networks which bring broadband to those not served by cable or telephone line
12 broadband.

13 Conference urges the Government and the East of England *Development Agency* to
14 give the highest priority to bringing broadband, at 2Mb/s or more, to areas where there
15 is no broadband at all, or where the “broadband” service is provided at less than
16 0.5Mb/s.

17 Conference draws the attention of the Government and the East of England
18 *Development Agency* to the effectiveness of community broadband in bringing
19 broadband to the most difficult to reach rural areas (“the last 1%”), and commends
20 them to offer local authorities a share of the Digital Britain Funding to use to support
21 new community networks and the extension of existing ones.

BUSINESS RESOLUTIONS

I. BUDGET

Conference approves the Regional budget.

(Please note that this is a holding motion. Details of the budget will be contained in the final agenda mailing. The deadline for amendments will be 5.00pm on Friday 30 October).

2. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Conference approves the amendments to the Constitution of the Liberal Democrats in the East of England.

(Please note that this is a holding motion. Details of the constitutional amendments will be contained in the final agenda mailing. The deadline for amendments will be 5.00pm on Friday 30 October).

In addition to this item the conference will receive reports from the regional chair, and the region’s MPs, Peers, MEP and East of England Regional Assembly group.

FRINGE AND TRAINING EVENTS

Full details of the Fringe and training events will be included in the final agenda. This will be despatched to all representatives who have registered by Friday 16 October.

CAMPAIGN 2010 PRESENTATION

The conference will include a presentation on planning for the General Election and the 2010 local election campaigns.

CAMPAIGN PLAN REVIEW

Local parties will be able to book a half-hour slot with an accredited party trainer to review their campaign plan for the period to the 2010 election(s). For further details and to book your slot please contact the East of England Administrator, 4 Pound Lane, Sutton, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB6 2PR, tel 07930 337596, admin@east.libdems.org.