

Harlow Liberal Democrats

CONSTITUTION

Adopted at the Special General Meeting on the 25th July 1988

Amended at the Annual General Meeting of the 11th February 1994

Amended at the Annual General Meeting of the 22nd October 1997¹

Amended at the Annual General Meeting of the 24th October 2000²

Amended at the Annual General Meeting of the 16 October 2001³

Amended at the Annual General Meeting of the 23 October 2004⁴

Amended at the Annual General Meeting of the 10 October 2009⁵

¹ Amended Article 14.3

² Amended Articles 10.2, 12, 13 and 14 and added Standing Order Article 5.15

³ Amended Articles 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19

⁴ Amended Articles 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, old 9 removed, 9, 10, 13

⁵ Amended Articles 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, old 10 replaced, 13

PREAMBLE

The Aims and Objects of the Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. We champion the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals, we acknowledge and respect their right to freedom of conscience and their rights to develop their talents to the full. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. We believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives.

We look forward to a world in which all people share the same basic rights, in which they live together in peace and in which their different cultures will be able to develop freely. We believe that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet and, by safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long term continuity of life in all its forms.

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Upholding these values of individual and social justice, we reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, colour, religion, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality. Recognising that the quest for freedom and justice can never end, we promote human rights and open government, a sustainable economy which serves genuine need, public services of the highest quality, international action based on a recognition of the interdependence of all the world's peoples and responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources.

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We believe that people should be involved in running their communities. We are determined to strengthen the democratic process and ensure that there is a just and representative system of government with effective Parliamentary institutions, freedom of information, decisions taken at the lowest practicable level and a fair voting system for all elections. We will at all times defend the right to speak, write, worship, associate and vote freely, and we will protect the right of citizens to enjoy privacy in their own lives and homes. We believe that sovereignty rests with the people and that authority in a democracy derives from the people. We therefore acknowledge their right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs and commit ourselves to the promotion of a democratic federal framework within which as much power as feasible is exercised by the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. We similarly commit ourselves to the promotion of a flourishing system of democratic local government in which decisions are taken and services delivered at the most local level which is viable.

We will foster a strong and sustainable economy which encourages the necessary wealth-creating processes, develops and uses the skills of the people and works to the benefit of all, with a just distribution of the rewards of success. We want to see democracy, participation and the co-operative principle in industry and commerce within a competitive environment in which the state allows the market to operate freely where possible but intervenes where necessary. We will promote scientific research and innovation and will harness technological change to human advantage.

We will work for a sense of partnership and community in all areas of life. We recognise that the independence of individuals is safeguarded by their personal ownership of property, but that the market alone does not distribute wealth or income fairly. We support the widest possible distribution of wealth and promote the rights of all citizens to social provisions and cultural activity. We seek to make public services responsible to the people they serve, to encourage variety and innovation within them and to make them available on equal terms to all.

Our responsibility for justice and liberty cannot be confined by national boundaries; we are committed to fight poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur and to promote the free movement of ideas, people, goods and services. Setting aside national sovereignty where necessary, we will work with other countries towards an equitable and peaceful international order and a durable system of common security. Within the European Community we affirm the values of federalism and integration and work for unity based on these principles. We will contribute to the process of peace and disarmament, the elimination of world poverty and the collective safeguarding of democracy by playing a full and constructive role in international organisations which share similar aims and objectives.

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These are the conditions of liberty and social justice which it is the responsibility of each citizen and the duty of the state to protect and enlarge. The Liberal Democrats consist of women and men working together for the achievement of these aims.

Harlow Liberal Democrats

Constitution

1 Name

The name of the body governed by this Constitution shall be the

“Harlow Liberal Democrats”.

The area covered by Harlow Liberal Democrats shall be the Harlow Parliamentary Constituency.

2 Definitions

In this Constitution:

- a) “the Party” means the Liberal Democrats;
- b) “the Local Party” means Harlow Liberal Democrats;
- c) “the Party Constitution” means the Constitutions of the Federal Party and of the Liberal Democrats in England;
- d) “the English Party” means The Liberal Democrats in England;
- e) “the Regional Party” means the East of England Liberal Democrats;
- f) “The Constituency” means the Harlow Parliamentary Constituency;
- g) “Conference Representatives” means members of the Local Party elected to be its representatives at Federal and/or Regional Conferences;
- h) “Majority” at any meeting means majority of those present and voting;
- i) “Executive Committee” means the Executive Committee of the Local Party.
- j) “Sub-Committees” means the Local Party Committee, Campaigns Committee, Candidates’ Committee and Strategy Committee collectively.

3 Objects

The objects of the Local Party shall be:

- 3.1 To promote and support Liberal Democrat principles, values and objects locally and in particular, through its members:
 - a) to secure the election of members of the Party to public office;
 - b) to recruit new members to the Party, and encourage existing members to renew their membership;
 - c) to raise funds for the expenses of fighting elections and other activities of the Local Party;
 - d) to participate in the formulation of Party policy and play a full role in the democratic processes of the Party; and to send representatives to Party bodies;
 - e) to play a full part in the campaigning activities of the Party at all levels;
 - f) to campaign and work with local people to achieve the objectives set out in the Preamble to the Party Constitution;
 - g) to seek to help all people, without regard to party or any other factor, to secure their rights and to protect them against oppression;
 - h) to promote diversity of cultures within the Party and to represent the interests of under-represented groups in the locality;

- i) to maintain a constant scrutiny upon the legislative and administrative activities of national and local government and other decision making bodies, especially as they affect the needs and interests of the constituency, and to direct the attention of the authorities, the public and the media to these subjects, and to the methods by which the Party believes they should be handled.

3.2 to be the successor within the Constituency to the Harlow Constituency Liberal Association and the Central Essex SDP Area Party.

4 Constitution

The Local Party shall be constituted as follows:

- a) The members as provided by Article 5;
- b) The General Meetings as provided by Article 7;
- c) The Officers as provided by Article 8;
- d) The Executive Committee as provided by Article 9;
- e) The Strategy Committee as provided by Article 10.3;
- f) The Local Party Committee as provided by Article 10.4;
- g) The Campaigns Committee as provided by Article 10.5;
- h) The Candidates' Committee as provided by Article 10.6;
- i) The Branches as provided by Article 11;
- j) Other affiliated organisations within the constituency as provided by Article 12.

5 Membership

5.1 Membership of the Local Party shall be open to all persons living, working or studying in or connected with the constituency who agree with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party.

5.2 Membership of the Local Party by a person qualified under the above Article 5.1 shall commence upon:

- a) Payment of the requisite subscription and registration on the register kept by the Party in England, or
- b) Becoming a member of the Party's Youth and Student Organisations and giving an address within the Constituency, or
- c) If already a member of the Party, moving to an address within the Constituency and not remaining a member of their former Local Party, or
- d) On request to join the Local Party by a currently paid up member of the Party.

An application shall be deemed accepted if not rejected by the Executive Committee within three months.

5.3 Initial membership of the Party shall run for one year from the quarter day (last day of March, June, September or December) following commencement.

5.4 Members whose subscriptions are due shall receive notices of meetings and elections for a further 3 months, and may attend but not vote at such meetings. Members who do not renew their subscriptions before the end of the 3 months period must re-apply for membership.

5.5 The Membership Secretary shall:

- a) receive the names of all new members and refer them to the Executive Committee for acceptance;
- b) maintain a membership register and provide Branch and Local Party Officers with lists of members;
- c) ensure compliance with data protection legislation.

5.6 The Executive Committee may refuse membership to, or revoke the membership of, any person on one or more of the following grounds:

- a) material disagreement, evidenced by conduct, with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party;

- b) whose membership or conduct has or is likely to bring the Party into disrepute;
- c) standing against the candidate of the Party in any election to public office;
- d) membership of or support for another political party in Great Britain.

Membership shall not be revoked unless the member has been notified of the grounds on which revocation is to be considered and has been given a reasonable opportunity to reply.

- 5.7** Any person whose membership is refused or revoked shall have the right to appeal to a General Meeting of the Local Party, and shall be informed of this and any further rights of appeal. Such a meeting shall not proceed if not quorate.

Refusal or revocation of membership shall follow the procedures defined in the membership rules of the Liberal Democrats in England.

- 5.8** If a member stands at any public election as candidate or agent in opposition to a properly nominated Party candidate, their membership shall automatically and immediately be suspended and, subject to any appeal, shall be revoked.

- 5.9** A member of the Local Party who ceases to be eligible under Article 5.1 may retain membership of the Local Party with the consent of the Executive Committee.

6 Rights of Members

Every member of the Local Party as defined in Article 5 shall have the right:

- a) To submit their name to the appropriate body for consideration as a Party candidate for election to public office;
- b) To stand for election, provided they have been duly proposed and seconded, as an Officer of the Local Party, a member of the Strategy Committee or of any appropriate Branch, and as a Conference Representative;
- c) To attend and to speak and to vote at any General Meeting of the Local Party;
- d) To be a member of the Local Party and Campaigns Committees.

- e) To attend and to speak and to vote at any meeting of a Branch or Committee of which they are a member;
- f) To submit motions and matters for discussion to the Executive Committee, either through a Branch or directly;
- g) To speak at any meeting of the Executive Committee on any matter that they have previously submitted for consideration by that meeting;
- h) To attend any meeting of the Executive Committee as an observer as specified in Article 9.7;
- i) To communicate with the Press and other media in the name of the Party or its bodies **only** with the prior approval of the Press Officer.

No member shall have more than one vote at any meeting or election, even if present in more than one capacity.

7 General Meetings

- 7.1** An ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING shall be held during October or November of each year, on a date specified by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may postpone the AGM if it would conflict with a Parliamentary Election in the Constituency, or for other urgent reason.

Notices of Motions must be in writing and received by the Secretary at least seven days before the meeting.

- 7.2** The Annual General Meeting shall elect the Officers, the members of the Strategy Committee, and Representatives for the Federal and Regional Conferences for the following calendar year, and shall appoint a person(s) who is not an Officer of the Local Party to produce an independent report on the accounts.

All contested elections shall be by secret ballot by Single Transferable Vote; uncontested candidates shall be confirmed in their posts by a show of hands.

The outgoing Chair shall preside over all elections save those for which that person is a candidate, for which the meeting shall appoint a person to preside temporarily. The election process shall conform to the gender rules laid down in the Federal Constitution.

Members unable to attend the meeting may vote in contested elections by post; they shall apply for postal ballots to the Secretary at least seven days before the meeting, and must return their ballot papers so as to reach the Secretary prior to the election.

All nominations must be in writing and received by the Secretary at least seven days before the meeting; email shall be acceptable. All persons nominated must be paid-up members of the Local Party, must be proposed and seconded by paid-up members of the Local Party and must signify their willingness to stand for election on the notice of nomination. Nominations for a given position may be accepted from the floor of the meeting if no valid nominations have been received for that position.

If the election of Conference Representatives is contested, candidates shall be invited to speak and answer questions at the meeting.

An unsuccessful candidate who alleges that there has been or may have been an irregularity in the election may within one calendar month after the declaration of the result ask for an investigation by the Regional Party in accordance with the Party Constitution. Subject to any order made after such an investigation, no irregularity shall invalidate an election.

7.3 The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be:

- a) to approve, amending if necessary, the minutes of previous General Meetings not already approved;
- b) to receive a report from the Chair on the activities of the Local Party and the Executive Committee since the previous AGM;
- c) to receive a report from the Vice Chairs on the activities of their respective sub-committees since the previous AGM.

- d) to consider and, if thought fit, approve the accounts of the Local Party for the previous financial year together with an independent report on those accounts, and to receive a report from the Treasurer including an outline budget for the following year;
- e) to receive reports from the Conference Representatives on the proceedings of the Federal and Regional Conferences since the previous AGM;
- f) to receive reports from the Branches of the Local Party, and from each Council Group on which Local Party members serve;
- g) to receive a report from the the Party Member of Parliament or Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the constituency;
- h) to hold elections as specified in Article 7.2, after the reports have been given;
- i) to consider any motion which has been duly submitted by any member of the Local Party to the Secretary;
- j) to transact any other business specified by the Constitution, or as directed by the Executive Committee;
- k) If agreed by a two-thirds majority, to consider urgent or important business which has arisen since notice of the AGM was given.

7.4 A SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING shall be convened by the Secretary on the instructions of the Executive Committee, or within twenty-eight days of receipt of a requisition stating the business to be transacted and signed by not less than twenty paid-up members of the Local Party (or one fifth of the membership if less) of at least three months' standing. The meeting shall consider only the business stated in the convening notice.

The Secretary shall give all members notice of the date, time and place of all General Meetings, and of the business to be transacted. The notice period shall be at least 21 days for the Annual General Meeting. It shall be at least 14 days for other General Meetings, except where the Executive Committee consider that such notice is precluded by exceptional circumstances (in which case the maximum possible notice shall be given).

One eighth of the membership, or 6 if the membership is less than 48, shall form a quorum. The meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects. Only paid-up members shall be entitled to speak and vote.

- 7.5** Minutes shall be maintained of all proceedings of all General Meetings. Minutes shall also be kept of all meetings of the Executive Committee.
- 7.6** Notice and minutes of all Annual and Special General Meetings shall be sent to the secretary of the Regional Party.

8 Officers

- 8.1** The Officers of the Local Party shall be the

Chair,
 Vice-Chair Local Party,
 Vice-Chair Campaigns,
 Secretary,
 Treasurer,
 Membership Secretary,
 Press Officer,

plus such other officers as may be determined from year to year by the Annual General Meeting.

The Chair shall not serve for more than three consecutive years, and shall thereafter be ineligible for a period of two years.

No person may serve in more than one office at the same time, save that if a post is unfilled, another officer may fill it as an acting post until a new officer can be found. In no case may one person serve as both Chair and Treasurer.

8.2 Duties of the Officers

- a) The Chair – to chair all General and Executive Committee meetings. The Chair shall only vote in the event of a tied vote, when the Chair shall have the casting vote;
- b) The Vice-Chair Local Party – to chair General and Executive Committee meetings if the Chair is unable to do so, and to be responsible for chairing the Local Party Committee and ensuring it meets its constitutional responsibilities;
- c) The Vice-Chair Campaigns – to chair General and Executive Committee meetings if the Chair is unable to do so, and to be responsible for chairing the Campaign Committee and ensuring it meets its constitutional responsibilities;
- d) The Secretary – to handle the Local Party's correspondence; to maintain minutes of meetings, (unless a Minutes Secretary is appointed);
- e) The Treasurer – to handle the Local Party's financial business and present financial reports to the AGM;

- f) The Membership Secretary – to organise recruitment of new members and ensure renewal of existing members, in conjunction with the Local Party Committee, and to manage the membership list as provided in Article 5.5;
- g) The Press Officer – to obtain the maximum possible beneficial exposure of the Party in the local press and other media, and to approve all correspondence and press releases issued by any member in the name of the Party;

The Chair and Treasurer shall be jointly responsible for the Local Party's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

The Secretary shall not later than 2nd January and within seven days after any subsequent change notify the names and addresses of all Officers to the Regional Party and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.

- 8.3** The Officers shall conduct all necessary business in between meetings of the Executive Committee, in accordance with its instructions and policies.
- 8.4** In an emergency in which there is insufficient time to call a meeting of the Executive Committee, the Chair may take action normally reserved to the Executive Committee, provided that they have consulted with as many members of the Executive Committee as possible. The outcome shall be reported to the next meeting of the Executive Committee, which may ratify or (as far as is practical) reverse it.
- 8.5** The Annual General Meeting may elect an Honorary President and/or Honorary Vice Presidents. They shall not be officers.

9 Executive Committee

- 9.1** The general business of the Local Party shall be carried out by the Executive Committee, subject to the decisions of General Meetings. The Executive Committee shall consist of:
 - a) The Officers;
 - b) the Party Member of Parliament or Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the constituency, or both;
 - c) One representative of the Party's County Councillors representing any part of the constituency, elected by them;
 - d) One representative of the Party's District Councillors representing any part of the constituency, elected by them;
 - e) any paid official appointed by the Executive Committee;
 - f) one representative of each Local and Associate Branch, as defined in Articles 11 and 12, other than the Council Group;
 - g) one representative of Youth and Student members in the Local Party elected by them, or of any branch of the Liberal Democrat Youth and Students within the constituency.
 - h) The Chair of the Strategy Committee, if not already a member of the Executive Committee in some other capacity;
- 9.2** The Officers shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee within one month of taking office. Thereafter, the Executive Committee shall meet at least every 3 months.
- 9.3** The Secretary shall give at least seven days notice of meetings to all members of the Executive Committee. Six members shall form a quorum. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects.
- 9.4** A Special Meeting of the Executive Committee shall be convened upon a requisition signed by not less than six members of the Executive Committee, or upon request of the Chair, on receipt of which the Secretary shall immediately convene a meeting to be held within fourteen days.

9.5 Duties of the Executive Committee:

- a) To conduct the general business of the Local Party;
- b) To act on behalf of the Local Party;
- c) To approve the budget as drafted by the Strategy Committee, or to refer it back to the Strategy Committee for further consideration.
- d) To be responsible for managing the financial affairs of the Local Party.
- e) To delegate specific tasks within its responsibilities to such members or groups of members of the Local Party as may from time to time be necessary;
- f) To receive reports on any tasks delegated under the above Article 9.5 e), and to take such action on them as it deems necessary;
- g) To receive reports from the sub-committees which it shall either accept or refer back in whole or in part, and to refer specific items to the appropriate sub-committee for action or further consideration;
- h) To receive reports from the Branches;
- i) To appoint an Election Agent or Agents.
- j) To appoint a replacement Officer in the event of any elected post's becoming vacant;
- k) To appoint members to the Strategy Committee if it has less than five elected members.
- l) To appoint a substitute Conference Representative to attend a specific Conference which an elected Conference Representative is unable to attend.
- m) To appoint representatives to the Essex County Co-ordinating Committee (EC3).
- n) To appoint any paid Officials of the Local Party;
- o) To appoint Conference Representatives in the event that the Local Party becomes entitled to additional representatives, or if an existing Representative resigns, such Representatives to serve until the following AGM.
- p) To maintain a Development Plan, and monitor performance against it.
- q) To determine the number and boundaries of Branches;
- r) To consider motions put forward by the Officers or by any General Meeting, Branch or member of the Local Party;
- s) To bring to the attention of the appropriate authority any constituency matters that it considers to require attention.
- t) To seek to ensure that, so far as practicable, all seats within the Constituency on Principal Local Authorities are contested by members of the Party, unless the Executive Committee is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the Party in a particular case not to do so.
- u) To appoint the members of the Candidates' Committee as set out in Article 10.6;
- v) To submit motions and amendments to the Federal, State and Regional Party Conferences;
- w) To receive, on behalf of the Local Party, the resignation of a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate.

9.6 A Federal or Regional Conference representative who ceases to be a member of the Local Party or fails to attend a meeting of the Conference without notice or reasonable cause shall cease office unless the Executive Committee decides otherwise.

9.7 Every member of the Local Party shall have the right to attend meetings of the Executive Committee as an observer, without the right to speak or vote. Observers may speak by invitation of the Committee or of the Chair. An observer who has previously submitted a motion for consideration by the meeting shall have the right to speak on it.

10 Sub-Committees

10.1 The local party shall have the following sub-committees:

- Strategy Committee,
- Local Party Committee,
- Campaigns Committee and
- Candidates' Committee.

10.2 In an emergency in which there is insufficient time to call a meeting of a Sub Committee, the chair for that committee may take action normally reserved for that committee, provided that they have consulted with as many members of that Committee as possible. The outcome shall be reported to the next meeting of that Committee, which may ratify or (as far as is practical) reverse it.

10.3 Duties of the Strategy Committee:

- a) To prepare a budget for the local party for the consideration of the Executive Committee.
- b) To prepare a campaign plan for the local party.
- c) To organise an annual 'Away Day' to solicit the views of all party members on the above items.
- d) To meet at least twice a year.
- e) To report the details of its activities to the Executive Committee via the Chair of the Strategy Committee.

The Strategy Committee will consist of five members elected at the AGM as set out in Article 7.2.

The Local Party Chair and the Party Member of Parliament or Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the constituency will have attendance and speaking rights at the Strategy Committee even if not elected to its membership.

The Strategy Committee shall elect its Chair from among its members.

Three members shall form a quorum. A meeting of the Strategy Committee may not make any decisions without a quorum present.

10.4 Duties of the Local Party Committee:

- a) To be responsible for fundraising in line with the local party budget set out by the Strategy Committee.
- b) To be responsible for fundraising in line with the local party budget.
- c) To be responsible for membership recruitment, retention and renewal for the local party, in conjunction with the Membership Secretary.

- d) To ensure that the Local Party has a wide a range of social and political activities to facilitate member retention.
- e) To be responsible for all internal communication within the local party.
- f) To meet at least once every 3 months.
- g) To report the details of its activities to the Executive Committee via the Vice Chair Local Party.

The Membership Secretary shall be an ex-officio member of the Local Party Committee.

Any member who wishes to contribute to the activities of the Local Party Committees will be a member of the Committee.

The Local Party Committee will be chaired by the Vice-Chair Local Party.

The Local Party Committee may delegate specific tasks within its responsibilities to one or more of its members;

Four members shall form a quorum. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects, however in this circumstance decisions may only be made with the consent of all members present and voting.

10.5 Duties of the Campaigns Committee:

- a) To be responsible for all campaigning, in line with the Campaign Plan set out by the Strategy Committee.
- b) To ensure the political education of the membership.
- c) To be responsible for all external communication from the local party.
- d) To maintain a Literature Plan.
- e) To ensure all candidates are informed of the activities of the campaigns committee.
- f) To meet at least once every 3 months.

- g) To report the details of its activities to the Executive Committee via the Vice Chair Campaigns

Any member who wishes to contribute to the activities of the Campaigns Committees will be a member of the Committee.

The Press Officer will be an ex-officio member of the Campaigns Committee.

The Campaigns Committee will be chaired by the Vice-Chair Campaigns.

The Campaigns Committee may delegate specific tasks within its responsibilities to one or more of its members;

Four members shall form a quorum. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects, however in this circumstance decisions may only be made with the consent of all members present and voting.

10.6 Duties of the Candidates' Committee:

- a) To identify and develop potential candidates for Local Government elections.
- b) To maintain the Approved List of candidates for Local Government as described in Article 13.3.
- c) To operate as the Selection Committee in shortlisting potential Parliamentary Candidates, in accordance with Article 13.1 and the rules set out by the English Party.
- d) To set up an Interview Panel of three or more of its members for each candidate interview. The Chair of the Interview Panel may not be a Councillor.
- e) To report its activities to the Executive Committee via the Chair of the Strategy Committee.

The Candidates' Committee shall have between 6 and 8 members, who shall be appointed to serve for the next calendar year by the Executive Committee. In its appointments, the Executive Committee must ensure that as far as possible the committee includes people who are and are not Councillors, who are and are not Officers, who represent the different geographical areas of the Constituency, and who are collectively representative of the Constituency in gender, age and ethnic origin.

Members who wish to be candidates at the next Local Government elections may not be members of the Candidates' Committee.

Councillors whose term of office expires at the next Local Government elections may not be members of the Candidates' Committee unless they have stated their intent to retire at the end of their current term, and nor may immediate members of their family, (parents, children and partners).

The Candidates' Committee shall elect its Chair from among its members.

Three members shall form a quorum. A meeting of the Candidates' Committee may not make any decisions without a quorum present.

11 Local Branches

11.1 Local Branches may be formed in any area within the Harlow constituency boundaries, and they shall be known as Local Branches of Harlow Liberal Democrats. The Executive Committee shall have power, in consultation with the Local Branches concerned, to vary or redefine the boundaries of the Local Branches as may prove necessary. Each Local Branch shall consist of all members of the Local Party, including members of other Party organisations as defined in Article 12.1, who reside or have votes in the Polling District or group of Polling Districts that lie within the boundaries of that Local Branch, save that a member may elect to be a member of a different Local Branch subject to the approval of the receiving Local Branch. No person may be a member of more than one Local Branch.

11.2 Each Branch shall be governed by a constitution which shall provide for:

- a) a Committee which shall include Officers and Ordinary Members, and may include ex-officio and co-opted members;
- b) rules for election of Officers, Ordinary Members of the Branch Committee and representatives to the Local Party Executive Committee;
- c) rules for the calling and conduct of an Annual General Meeting and other General Meetings of the members;
- d) the names and addresses of the Officers, Ordinary Members and representatives to be notified to, and minutes of General and Committee Meetings to be supplied to the Secretary of the Local Party.

The constitution may be in the form of the Model Constitution for Branches, or in some other form. If the branch adopts a constitution which is not wholly in the model form, any such constitution, or any changes to it, shall not take effect until the Executive Committee of the Local Party accepts its conformity with the Party Constitution and with this Constitution.

11.3 The finances of the Branch may be managed by and as part of the funds of the Local Party, or may be managed by the Branch.

If the Branch manages its own funds, the Officers of the Branch shall include a Treasurer, in which case:

- a) The Branch's accounting period shall be the same as that of the Local Party;
- b) The Branch Treasurer shall keep, maintain for six years, and pass to his or her successor accounting records which shall be available for inspection in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000;
- c) The Branch Treasurer shall ensure that no donation of over £200 is accepted except from a permissible donor and shall keep records and submit donations reports to the Treasurer of the Local Party;
- d) The Branch Treasurer shall annually produce accounts which shall be approved by the Branch Committee and shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Local Party by a date to be specified by the Treasurer of the Local Party;
- e) The Branch Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Branch together with an independent report to the Annual General Meeting of the Branch.
- f) The Branch shall maintain one or more bank or other appropriate accounts in the name of the Branch for which the mandate for withdrawal shall require the signature of at least two Officers who shall not come solely from members of any one family. The Branch may maintain further accounts for the deposit of money not required for the time being, requiring the same signatures.

11.4 The duties of each Local Branch shall be:

- a) To field and support suitable candidates in local elections;
- b) To carry out the objects of the Local Party within the area concerned, subject to the directions of the Executive Committee;
- c) To undertake any local work referred to it by the Executive Committee and to report thereon;

- d) To hold regular Branch meetings, open to all members of that Branch, not less than once in every three months, and to forward to the Executive Committee resolutions on local matters;
- e) To be constantly engaged upon recruiting new members to the Party, and to canvass with a view to obtaining a marked register;
- f) To arrange for local open meetings, the distribution of literature and the spreading of knowledge of Liberal Democratic principles and policy;
- g) To raise funds for the Local Party, to collect subscriptions as they fall due and to pay to the Local Party the quota of contributions agreed with the Treasurer of the Local Party;
- h) To supply the Membership Secretary of the Local Party with a list of members of the Branch and to keep this list up to date;
- i) To hold an Annual General Meeting that shall elect such Branch Officers and other members of its Committee as the meeting shall decide;
- j) To notify the names and addresses of Officers and other committee members to the Secretary of the Local Party following the AGM or when any change occurs, and the name, bank, branch, number and signatories of all bank or similar accounts held by them to the Treasurer of the Local Party;
- k) To make the accounts of the Branch available to the Local Party Treasurer;
- l) To send representatives to the Executive Committee according to the entitlement of the Branch;
- m) To report Branch activities to the Executive Committee.

11.5 The Secretary of the Local Party shall receive notices of all meetings of each Branch, and the Officers of the Local Party shall be entitled to attend all such meetings but shall not have the right to vote unless themselves members of that Branch or Branch Committee. The Executive Committee shall have power to summon a meeting of a Branch or Branch Committee if it deem such action necessary.

11.6 A Branch may dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting, or be dissolved or suspended by the Executive Committee on the grounds that:

- a) it is no longer functioning or able to hold such a meeting;
- b) there have been serious irregularities in the conduct of the affairs of the Branch;
- c) the affairs of the Branch have not been conducted in compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and with its Constitution, this Constitution and the Party Constitution ;
- d) the membership of the Branch has fallen below 10; or
- e) the affairs of the Branch are being conducted in a manner contrary to the interests of the Local Party as a whole.

The Local Party shall not dissolve a Branch until the Branch has been given an opportunity to hold its own General Meeting.

If a Branch is dissolved or suspended, any member of the Branch may request the Regional Party to conduct an investigation.

The funds of a Branch shall, upon dissolution, be applied in paying its debts, and any surplus shall be added to the funds of the Local Party.

12 Associate Branches

12.1 Associate Branches may be formed by members of the Local Party who are also members of organisations recognised by the Party, for example the Youth Organisation.

12.2 The Executive Committee may recognise other groups (such as the Printing Society and the Council Group) as Associate Branches.

12.3 An Associate Branch shall be governed by a Constitution which shall in as far as is applicable make the same provisions as in Article 11.2. Furthermore, if the Associate Branch manages any funds, the provisions of Article 11.3 shall apply.

12.4 An Associate Branch may be dissolved by the procedures given in Article 11.6.

13 Candidates for and Elections to Public Office

- 13.1** The Executive Committee shall specify the procedure for selecting and for de-selecting a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, in accordance with the procedures provided in the Party Constitution.
- 13.2** The Executive Committee shall seek to ensure that, so far as practicable, all seats within the Constituency on Principal Local Authorities are contested by members of the Party, unless it is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the Party in a particular case not to do so.
- 13.3** The Candidates' Committee shall approve potential candidates for local government elections and shall maintain a list of those who have been approved. An applicant who is not approved may appeal to a meeting of the Executive Committee.
- 13.4** In order to select local government candidates for an electoral area, the Executive Committee shall draw up a shortlist, and shall hold a General Meeting and/or postal ballot in which all members of the Local Party may vote. The timetable and procedure for selection shall be drawn up by the Executive Committee. All members of the shortlist must be approved candidates, or must have been so approved by the time of the close of the vote. An approved candidate must be a member of the list maintained under Article 13.3, or in the case of Local Authorities covering more than one constituency, the list maintained under any joint arrangements set out in Article 13.7.
- 13.5** In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a General Meeting and/or postal ballot, the Executive Committee may select the candidate.
- 13.6** In an emergency, such as the resignation of a candidate shortly before nominations close, the Chair and the Candidate's Committee Chair may select the candidate after consulting with as many members of the Executive Committee as is practical.
- 13.7** Where a Principal Local Authority covers more than one constituency the Executive Committee may agree to form appropriate joint arrangements with the Executives of other Local Parties concerned to co-ordinate candidate approval and selection, campaigning and publicity and be responsible for the formulation of policy on that Authority.
- 13.8** A Delegated Nominating Officer will be appointed by the Party's Nominating Officer. The Delegated Nominating Officer shall act in accordance with the Rules made by the Party for Delegated Nominating Officers.
- 13.9** When a Parliamentary Election takes place, the activities of the Local Party shall be suspended except as necessary to comply with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and such power vested in an Agent to act on its behalf as necessary for the conduct of the Election.
- 13.10** No candidate may be selected for adoption who is not a current member of the Party, and who has not made a prior full declaration of financial and business interests.

14 Finance

- 14.1** The Local Party's accounting period shall be annual, running from the 1st January to the 31st December.
- 14.2** The Treasurer shall keep, maintain for six years, and pass to his or her successor accounting records which shall be available for inspection in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
- 14.3** The Treasurer shall ensure that no donation of over £200 is accepted except from a permissible donor and shall keep records and submit donations reports to the Executive Committee and to Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- 14.4** The Treasurer shall annually produce accounts which shall be approved by the Executive Committee and if required by the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act 2000 shall be audited and submitted to the Electoral Commission.

- 14.5** The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Local Party together with an independent report to a General Meeting.
- 14.6** A copy of the annual accounts shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Regional Party and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- 14.7** The Local Party shall maintain one or more bank or other appropriate accounts in the name of the Local Party for which the mandate for withdrawal shall require the signature of at least two Officers who shall not come solely from members of any one family. The Local Party may maintain further accounts for the deposit of money not required for the time being, requiring the same signatures.
- 14.8** If the Local Party fails by 15th January to notify the Chief Executive of the Federal Party of the appointment of a Chair and a Treasurer the Local Party shall automatically be suspended.

15 Notice of Meetings

Provided it can be shown that all reasonable efforts have been made to notify members of meetings as required in this constitution, the failure of any member to be notified shall not constitute grounds for challenging the validity of that meeting.

16 Standing Orders

The Local Party shall adopt Standing Orders to define procedure at meetings. When adopted, no amendment shall be made to the Standing Orders save by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at an Executive Committee or General Meeting of the Local Party.

17 Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to this Constitution may only be made by a two-thirds majority at a quorate Annual General Meeting of the Local Party, or at a Special General Meeting for which details of the amendments have been sent to all members with the notice of the meeting. Following any amendment, a copy of the amended Constitution shall be supplied to the Regional Party. No amendment shall be made which conflicts with the Party Constitution, and any amendment so declared by the Regional Party shall become null and void.

18 Dissolution

The Local Party may be dissolved upon a motion passed by a two-thirds majority at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose.

On dissolution or suspension, the general funds of the Local Party or any part thereof shall be distributed in accordance with such resolution. If no provision is made for the distribution of funds, they shall vest in the Regional Party on trust for the future reconstitution of the Local Party.

19 Interpretation of Constitution

In the event of there arising any question of interpretation of this Constitution, or any question on which these Articles are silent, the Executive Committee shall have the power to act according to their interpretation of the Articles or at their discretion, provided that no part of this constitution shall be construed in such a way as to conflict with the Party Constitution. In the event of any such question arising outside a meeting of the Executive Committee, the Chair shall rule and this ruling shall stand until the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Harlow Liberal Democrats

Standing Orders for the Conduct of Meetings

20 Order of Business

The order of business at any meeting shall be as follows, except where on the ground of urgency this order is varied by leave of the meeting:

- a) To choose a person to preside if the Chair and Vice-Chair be absent;
- b) To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of that body;
- c) To receive such communications as the Chair may desire to lay before the meeting (including apologies);
- d) To dispose of any business remaining from the previous meeting;
- e) To receive and consider reports from Officers;
- f) To receive and consider reports or minutes of committees or groups;
- g) To consider notices of motion and matters for discussion in the order in which they have been received;
- h) To conduct any other business for which the meeting may give leave;
- i) To fix a time and date for the next meeting of that body.

Unless a meeting decides otherwise, all meetings should end by 10.15pm.

21 Notices of Motion

Every notice of motion shall be delivered in writing to the Secretary and shall be signed by the member or members, or Branch Secretary, giving the notice.

22 Other Business

Business other than that stated on the notice convening a meeting shall be transacted only by leave of the meeting given by a simple majority of those present and voting.

23 Minutes

The Secretary shall present the minutes of the previous meeting of that body, but no motion or discussion shall be allowed on the minutes except in regard to their accuracy and any question of their accuracy shall be raised by motion. After the confirmation of the minutes they shall be signed by the Chair, and the members shall then be at liberty to ask any questions in regard to matters arising out of them. Such questions shall be allowed for purposes of information only, and no debate on the policy outlined in the minutes shall take place.

24 Rules of Debate

- 24.1 No motion shall be discussed at a meeting until it has been moved and seconded, except that motions moved by the Chair shall require no seconder.
- 24.2 A member shall stand when speaking, and shall address the Chair. If two or more members rise, the Chair shall call on one to speak. When that member has finished the other member shall have the right to speak.
- 24.3 A member shall speak to the question under discussion, or to a motion as provided in Standing Order 24.13. No member shall speak for more than five minutes on any one matter save by leave of the meeting.
- 24.4 If an amendment be rejected, other amendments may be moved on the original motion. If an amendment be carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the motion upon which any further amendment may be moved.

- 24.5** No amendment shall be taken which, in the opinion of the Chair (supported by the meeting if challenged by a member), is trivial, illogical or is tantamount to a direct negative to the motion or to any amendment already passed.
- 24.6** Where notice has been given of more than one amendment, they shall be taken in the order in which they affect the wording of the motion and one amendment shall be disposed of before another is moved.
- 24.7** The mover of a motion may reply to each amendment, and to the discussion on a motion, before the votes are taken in each case. The mover may similarly speak in reply to any motion moved under Standing Order 24.8.
- 24.8** To close a discussion, a member may move that the question be now put.
- To close a discussion and prevent a decision upon a motion or amendment, a member may move that the next business be taken.
- To postpone discussion until the next meeting of that body, a member may move that the motion lie upon the table.
- Such procedural motions may be moved only at the end of a speech of any member and take precedence over all other business save a point of order.
- 24.9** Except when rising to a point of order or a point of information, as defined in Standing Orders 24.10 and 24.11 respectively, no member shall interrupt the speech of any other member.
- 24.10** Any breach of the Constitution or of Standing Orders may be raised by a member in rising to a point of order, which shall be taken forthwith. The Chair's ruling shall be final unless challenged, when the Chair shall put the ruling to the meeting forthwith.
- 24.11** Any member desiring to give or to receive further information on a matter under discussion may rise to a point of information. The Chair shall invite the member who is speaking at the time to take the point of information, and the speaker may do so or may decline.

- 24.12** A motion or amendment, when moved and seconded, may be withdrawn only by leave of the meeting.
- 24.13** When a motion is under debate, no motion other than the following may be moved:
- a) a motion mentioned in Standing Orders 24.8, 24.10, 24.11, and 25;
 - b) a motion that the subject of debate be referred back to a committee, group or other such body;
 - c) a motion that another member take the chair for the remainder of the business under discussion;
 - d) a motion to suspend Standing Orders as provided in Standing Order 31.
- 24.14** The Chair shall have the right to vote only in the event of there being an equality of votes on any motion. If the Chair chooses not to exercise this right, that motion is not carried.
- 24.15** No person at a meeting, whether or not acting in more than one capacity at that meeting, shall have the right to vote more than once in any vote.

25 Disorderly Conduct

If at a meeting any member present, in the opinion of the Chair notified to the meeting, misconducts by persistently disregarding the ruling of the Chair, or by behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively, or by wilfully obstructing the business of the meeting, it shall be competent for a member to move that the member named "be not further heard" or "do leave the meeting", and the motion if seconded shall be put and determined without discussion.

26 Suspension of Sitting

If after a motion under Standing Order 25 as been carried the misconduct or obstruction is continued, and in the opinion of the Chair renders the due and orderly dispatch of business impossible, the Chair may adjourn or suspend the meeting for whatever period the Chair considers expedient.

27 Right of Reply

A member exercising a right of reply as provided under Standing Order 24.7 shall be confined to answering previous speakers and shall not introduce new matter. The Chair's ruling as to this shall be final and not open to discussion. After every reply to which this Standing Order refers, a decision shall be taken without further discussion.

28 Alteration of Motion

A member may, with the consent of the meeting signified without discussion, alter a motion that he has proposed or of which notice has been given, if the alteration is one that could have been moved as an amendment thereto.

29 Voting and Elections

Votes shall be taken by a show of hands, except in the case of elections of Officers, Auditors, Conference Representatives and Prospective Candidates, which shall be carried out by a secret ballot using the Single Transferable Vote.

30 Discussion of Confidential Business

When business of a confidential nature is to be transacted, any observer or visitor without the right to vote may be asked to leave a meeting. The Chair's ruling shall be final unless challenged, when the ruling shall be put to the meeting forthwith.

31 Suspension of Standing Orders

Any or all of Standing Orders 20 to 28 inclusive, or any part thereof, may be suspended by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a meeting, for the duration of the meeting or for a shorter period. When such a motion has been carried, any suspended Standing Orders or any part thereof may be reinstated by the Chair on the grounds that the business cannot otherwise be effectively conducted, or by a motion that the Standing Orders be reinstated being carried by a simple majority of those present and voting. Any general motion to suspend Standing Orders shall automatically be deemed to exclude Standing Orders 29, 30 and 31, which may not be suspended.

