



**CONSTITUTION OF  
HOUNSLOW BOROUGH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

**as passed at the AGM on 19th November 2001**

# CONSTITUTION OF THE HOUNSLOW BOROUGH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

## 1. Name and Area

- 1.1 The name of the body governed by this Constitution shall be "The Hounslow Borough Liberal Democrats".
- 1.2 The area of the Local Party shall be the Brentford & Isleworth and Feltham & Heston Parliamentary Constituencies.

## 2. Definitions

- 2.1 In this Constitution:

"the Local Party" means the Hounslow Borough Liberal Democrats;

"the Party Constitution" means the Constitutions of the Federal Party and of the Liberal Democrats in England;

"the Party" means the Liberal Democrats;

"the Regional Party" means the London Region Liberal Democrats;

"the Constituencies" means the Parliamentary Constituencies of Brentford & Isleworth and Feltham & Heston;

"Conference Representatives" means members of the Local Party elected to be its representatives at Federal and/or Regional Conferences;

"Party's Youth and Student Organisation" means the Specified Associated Organisation representing youth and students;

"Majority" at any meeting means majority of those present and voting; and

"Executive Committee" means the executive committee of the Local Party.

## 3. Objects

- 3.1 The objects of the Local Party shall be:

- (a) be the successor within its area to the Brentford & Isleworth Liberal Association, the Feltham & Heston Liberal Association and the Hounslow SDP Area Party; and
- (b) to promote and support the values and objects of the Party in the Constituency and in particular through its members:
  - (i) to secure the election of Liberal Democrats as Members of Parliament, UK Members of the European Parliament, members of regional, local and other elected public authorities and other public office;
  - (ii) to admit and actively recruit new members to the Party, and encourage existing members to renew their membership;
  - (iii) to participate in the formulation of the policy of the Party;
  - (iv) to be recognised as a Local Party; to play a full role in the democratic processes of the Party; and to send representatives, in accordance with the constitutions of the bodies concerned, to Party bodies;
  - (v) to play a full part in the campaigning activities of the Party at all levels;
  - (vi) to campaign and work with local people to achieve the objectives set out in the Preamble to the Party Constitution;
  - (vii) to help all local people, without regard to party or any other factor, to secure their rights and to protect them against oppression; and
  - (viii) to promote diversity of cultures within the Party and to represent the interests of under-represented groups in the locality.

## 4. Membership

- 4.1 The Local Party shall administer membership in accordance with the Membership Rules of the Liberal Democrats in England.
- 4.2 All persons shall be eligible to join the Local Party if they agree with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party; and

- (a) they live, work or study within the area of the Local Party, or
- (b) if not eligible under Section 4.2 (a) they acquire membership with the consent of the Local Party Executive Committee, or
- (c) they are an MP, MEP, prospective Westminster or European parliamentary candidate or member of a local authority for a seat wholly or partly within the area of the Local Party.

4.3 Eligible persons shall become members of the Local Party:

- (a) on enrolment through the Local Party; or
- (b) on enrolment through the Party's Youth and Student Organisation giving an address within the Constituency; or
- (c) if already members of the Party, on re-registration as a member of the Local Party.

Members of the Local Party who are also members of the Party's Youth and Student Organisation may be restrained under the Party Constitution from exercising certain rights as members of the Local Party if they exercise equivalent rights as members of the Youth and Student Organisation.

- 4.4
- (a) An applicant shall become a member on acceptance by the enrolling body, payment of the requisite subscription and registration on the register kept by the Party in England.
  - (b) An application shall be deemed accepted if not rejected in accordance with the Membership Rules.
  - (c) Initial membership shall run for one year from the quarter day (last day of March, June, September or December) following commencement.
  - (d) Members whose subscriptions are due shall receive notices of meetings and elections for a further 3 months.
  - (e) Members who do not renew their subscriptions before the end of the 3 months period must reapply for membership.

4.5 The Executive Committee may refuse membership to, or revoke the membership of, any person, on the grounds provided by the Party Constitution, using the procedure defined in the Membership Rules of the Liberal Democrats in England. Any person whose membership is revoked shall have the right to appeal to a General Meeting of the Local Party under Section 7.5, and shall be informed of this and any further rights of appeal. Such a meeting shall not proceed if not quorate.

4.6 A member of the Local Party who ceases to be eligible under Section 4.2 (a) may retain membership of the Local Party with the consent of the Executive Committee.

## 5. Officers and Executive Committee

5.1 The Officers of the Local Party shall be the Chair, up to two Vice-Chairs, Secretary, Membership Secretary and Treasurer. Their duties shall include:

- (a) The Chair - to chair all General and Executive Committee Meetings [;in the event of a tied vote the Chair shall have an additional casting vote]; to be jointly responsible with the Treasurer for the Local Party's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000;
- (b) up to two Vice-Chairs - to chair General and Executive Committee Meetings if the Chair is unable to do so;
- (c) The Secretary - to handle the Local Party's correspondence; to maintain minutes of meetings;
- (d) The Treasurer - to handle the Local Party's financial business and present financial reports to General Meetings; to be jointly responsible with the Chair for the Local Party's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000;
- (e) The Membership Secretary - to:
  - (i) receive all notices of application for membership and refer them to the Executive Committee for acceptance;
  - (ii) maintain a membership register and provide Branch and Local Party Officers with lists of members as necessary under this Constitution; and
  - (iii) ensure compliance with data protection legislation.

The Secretary shall not later than 2<sup>nd</sup> 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

5.2 There may be an Honorary President to be elected by the Annual General Meeting.

- 5.3 The general and financial business of the Local Party shall be controlled and carried on by the Executive Committee, subject to the decisions of General Meetings and in compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The Executive Committee shall consist of:
- (a) The Officers;
  - (b) Six Ordinary Members to be elected annually in the same manner as the Officers;
  - (c) Representatives from each Branch within the Constituency, on a scale of one per Ward contained within the Branch, and one representative of members in parts of the Constituency without Branches;
  - (d) The Party's Member of Parliament for the Constituency, and the prospective Parliamentary Candidate;
  - (e) representatives of the Party's members from the Borough Council representing wards within the Constituencies, elected by and from such members on the basis of one for every three members, rounded down, with a minimum of one;
  - (f) one representative elected by and from each local Branch of the Party's Youth and Student Organisation;
  - (g) The Local Party's Agents or Organisers for the Constituencies.
- 5.4 The Executive Committee may co-opt up to six additional members, for a term expiring not later than the next following AGM. The power of co-option shall be used, inter alia, to ensure if possible that no more than two-thirds of the Executive Committee (other than under Sections 5.3 (d) - (h)), are of the same sex, and that there is fair representation of under represented communities in the locality, taking into account race, religion, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation and that this would create a composition of the Executive that reflects the community the local Party serves.
- 5.5 The Honorary President is entitled to attend all meetings of the Executive Committee. Conference Representatives who are not members of the Executive Committee shall be entitled to attend any meeting of the Committee at which business relating to the Conferences is discussed. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be open to members of the Local Party as space permits.
- 5.6 The Executive Committee may fill any vacancy occurring among the Officers or the Ordinary Members. Any vacancy in the Chair shall be filled from amongst the existing Executive Committee members. The Secretary shall within seven days notify any change of Officers to the Regional Party and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- 5.7 The Executive Committee may assign special responsibilities to any of its members, including duties which would otherwise pertain to one of the Officers.
- 5.8 The Officers shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee within one month after taking office. The Executive Committee shall meet at least quarterly and not less than four times in a year. The Secretary shall give at least 7 days notice of meetings to all members of the Executive Committee. One-third of its members shall form a quorum. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects.
- 5.9 The Executive Committee may appoint sub-committees for any specified purpose. No sub-committee or Executive Committee member may take action on behalf of the Executive Committee beyond their terms of appointment. All sub-committees shall report on their activities to the Executive Committee and may include persons who are not members of the Executive Committee and may delegate authority to take actions on their behalf. The Executive Committee may also delegate authority to committees jointly constituted with other local parties for particular purposes.
- 5.10 In urgent circumstances the Officers may act on behalf of the Executive Committee. They shall report on such actions to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

## **6. Election of Officers, Executive Committee and Conference Representatives**

- 6.1 The Officers, Ordinary Members and Conference Representatives shall be elected by and from members of the Local Party at the time of the Annual General Meeting. If an election is contested there shall be a ballot.
- 6.2 The term of office of Officers, Ordinary Members and Conference Representatives shall be from the 1<sup>st</sup> January following their election until the following 31<sup>st</sup> December. They shall be eligible for re-election, save that the Chair shall not serve for more than three consecutive terms, and shall not be eligible for re-election as Chair for two terms after leaving Office.

- 6.3 Nominations for election shall be invited in the notice summoning the AGM, and shall close at the AGM, but not before the reception of the Chair's, Treasurer's and Conference Representatives' reports. They must be proposed and seconded, and except in the case of nominations made at the AGM shall be in writing signed by the proposer, seconder and candidate.
- 6.4 Where elections are contested, ballot papers shall be distributed and must be returned to the Returning Officer at the AGM.
- 6.5 No person may be elected to hold more than one Office, or may be elected to be both an Officer and an Ordinary Member. Elections for Officers shall be counted in the order listed in Section 5.1 and for Ordinary Members after Officers. Any votes cast for candidates already elected to Office shall be transferred according to the voters' subsequent preferences.
- 6.6 The Local Party's Federal and Regional Conference Representatives shall be elected as provided by the Party's Constitution. A representative shall cease to hold office upon ceasing to be a member of the Local Party or on failing to attend any meeting of the Conference without giving notice (so far as practicable) of inability to attend or without reasonable cause, unless the Executive Committee determines otherwise.
- 6.7 All contested elections under this constitution shall be by secret ballot by the Single Transferable Vote method in accordance with election rules made under the Party Constitution.
- 6.8 The Executive Committee shall appoint some disinterested person to act as Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall be responsible for the receipt of nominations and for the preparation and distribution of ballot papers, their receipt and counting on return, and the declaration of the results.
- 6.9 Accidental failure to despatch notice of the AGM or a ballot paper in due time or at all to a person entitled to vote shall not invalidate an election or be treated as an irregularity, unless a substantial number of persons entitled to vote have not received notices or ballot papers at all or have received them too late to make it practicable to attend the meeting or return the ballot paper in due time by first-class post.
- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 The Returning Officer may extend the time for distribution and return of ballot papers where there are special circumstances making it necessary to do so.

## **7. General Meetings**

- 7.1 The Annual General Meeting shall be on a day appointed by the Executive Committee, between 1<sup>st</sup> October and 30<sup>th</sup> November. The Executive Committee may postpone the AGM if it would conflict with a Parliamentary Election in the Constituency, or for other urgent reason.
- 7.2 The business of the AGM shall include:
  - (a) to receive a report from the Chair on the activities of the Local Party and the Executive Committee since the previous AGM;
  - (b) 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;
  - (c) to appoint for the current Financial Year (i) Auditors if required by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or (ii) a person(s) to produce an independent report on the accounts for a General Meeting;
  - (d) to receive reports from the Conference Representatives on the proceedings of the Federal and Regional Conferences since the previous AGM;
  - (e) to receive reports from each Liberal Democrat Council group on which Local Party members serve;
  - (f) to transact any other business specified by the Constitution, or directed by the Executive Committee;
  - (g) to consider any motion which has been submitted by any member of the Local Party to the Secretary in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM;
  - (h) to elect Officers, Ordinary Members of the Executive Committee and Conference Representatives.

- 7.3 The Secretary shall give all members at least 21 days written notice of the time and place of the AGM. Such notice shall specify all business to be conducted at the meeting.
- 7.4 The AGM may by a two-thirds majority agree to consider urgent or important business which has arisen since notice of the AGM was given.
- 7.5 A special General Meeting may be convened by the Officers, or by the Executive Committee; and shall, on receipt of a requisition signed by at least twenty members of the Local Party (or one-fifth of the membership if less), be convened by the Secretary so as to be held within 28 days from the receipt of such requisition. At least 14 days written notice shall be given to all members. The meeting shall only consider business stated in the notice convening it. Failure to convene a validly requisitioned meeting within 14 days shall permit the meeting to be convened on behalf of (and at the expense of) the Local Party by any of the original requisitioners. In an emergency, the Officers may convene a meeting giving such notice as they consider sufficient in the circumstances.
- 7.6 20 members (or one-fifth of the membership if less), shall form a quorum at any General Meeting. A quorum is not required to receive reports and accounts. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects (except (a) to make a decision to reject the shortlist and restart the shortlisting process or restart the entire process for the selection of a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate or (b) as provided for in Sections 4.5 and 11.1).
- 7.7 Notice and minutes of all Annual and Special General Meetings shall be sent to the secretary of the Regional Party.
- 7.8 Minutes shall be maintained of all proceedings of all General Meetings. Minutes shall also be kept of any meetings of the Executive Committee. In the absence of an Executive Committee member charged with the duty, the Meeting shall appoint a member to take minutes.

## **8. Local Branches**

- 8.1 The Executive Committee may authorise the setting up of Branches covering defined areas of the Local Party, provided that no branch shall be formed with less than 10 members. The objects of a Branch shall be to further the objects of the Local Party in the area covered by the Branch. The Branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Local Party.
- 8.2 The members of the Branch shall be:
- (a) All members of the Local Party whose Registered Membership Address (as defined in the Membership Rules of the Liberal Democrats in England) is within the Branch area, unless they have opted to be a member of another Branch;
  - (b) Any councillor who represents a ward or division falling wholly or partially within the Branch area and who opts to be a member of the Branch;
  - (c) Other members of the Local Party who wish to be members, if the Branch's Committee and the Local Party Executive Committee agree.

No person who is not a member of the Local Party may be a member of the Branch. No person may be a member of more than one Branch.

- 8.3 A Branch shall not be entitled to require a subscription from its members, but the Executive Committee of the Local Party may agree to remit part of its subscription income to a Branch. A Branch shall not incur any debts for which the Local Party shall be responsible.
- 8.4 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 shall be in the form of the Model Constitution for Branches appended to this Constitution. A branch may adopt a constitution which is not wholly in the model form but 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.

- 8.5
  - (a) The Officers of the Branch shall include a Treasurer. 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 to be held not later than 30<sup>th</sup> November.
  - (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.
- 8.6 The Branch may appoint a substitute representative to the Executive Committee to fill a casual vacancy, or if a representative is unable to attend a particular meeting.
- 8.7 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.

If a Branch is dissolved or suspended, any member of the Branch may request the Regional Party to conduct an investigation. The Local Party shall not dissolve a Branch until the Branch has been given an opportunity to hold its own General Meeting.

- 8.8 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.

## **9. Candidates for and Elections to Public Office**

- 9.1 When it is necessary to select a Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, the procedure shall be as provided by the Party Constitution. The Executive Committee may appoint a sub-committee to carry out its duties under this procedure. The electoral college shall comprise members within the relevant constituency only.
- 9.2 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 the Executive Committee is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the Party in any case not to do so.
- 9.3 When it is necessary to select one or more local government candidates for an electoral area, the Branch or if there is no Branch, the Local Party shall hold a General Meeting at which all members who are resident in the electoral area may vote, and may select any member from a list of approved candidates maintained by the Executive Committee, or may select any other member conditionally upon subsequent

approval by the Executive Committee. The timetable and procedure for selection shall be agreed by the Branch Committee and the Executive Committee, or where there is no Branch by the Executive Committee.

- 9.4 In any electoral area, in which the eligible electorate for voting in the selection does not exceed 10, the electorate shall be expanded to constitute the members living in the electoral area plus the Branch Committee or, if there is no Branch, the Executive Committee.
- 9.5 In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a General Meeting the Branch Committee, or if there is no Branch the Executive Committee may select the candidate.
- 9.6 Where a Principal Local Authority covers more than one constituency the Executive Committees of the Local Parties concerned may agree to form appropriate joint arrangements to co-ordinate candidate approval and selection, campaigning and publicity and be responsible for the formulation of policy on that Authority.
- 9.7 In any parish or town council elections, the committee of the relevant Branch, or if there is no Branch the Executive Committee shall vary the provisions of Sections 9.2 to 9.5 above as appropriate.
- 9.8 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.
- 9.9 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.
- 9.10 The membership of any member of the Local Party who stands at any public election as candidate or agent in opposition to a properly nominated candidate of the Party shall automatically and immediately be suspended and, subject to any appeal, shall be revoked.
- 9.11 Any candidate for election to public office standing as a representative of the Party must be a current member of the Party.

## **10. Finance**

- 10.1 The Local party's accounting period shall be annual, ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December each year.
- 10.2 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.
- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Local Party together with an independent report to a General Meeting which shall be held not later than 30<sup>th</sup> November in each year.
- 10.6 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.
- 10.7 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.
- 10.8 If the Local Party fails by 15<sup>th</sup> 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



## 11. Constitution and Interpretation

- 11.1 Amendments may only be made by a two-thirds majority at a quorate General Meeting. No amendment shall be made which conflicts with the Constitution of the Party or of the Regional Party. Any amendment to this Constitution shall be subject to approval by the Regional Party.
- 11.2 Details of any proposed amendment shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.
- 11.3 If the Model Constitution for Local Parties (England) is amended, any provision of this constitution shall be deemed to be correspondingly amended, unless the Local Party resolves in accordance with 11.1 above at a quorate General Meeting held within 6 months of receiving notice of the amendment not to accept it.
- 11.4 One copy of the Constitution shall be deposited with the Secretary of the Regional Party; and one shall be kept with the minute book of the Local Party. Any member shall be provided with a copy of the Constitution on request.
- 11.5 In the event of any question of interpretation arising, or any question on which this Constitution is silent, the Executive Committee shall have power to act according to its interpretation of the Constitution, or at its discretion, subject to Article 8 of the Constitution of the Liberal Democrats in England and Article 14 of the Constitution of the Federal Party.
- 11.6 No word or construction in this Constitution shall be taken to imply any discrimination whatsoever with regard to sex, race, colour, creed, age, disability, sexual orientation or any other ground other than political belief or practice.
- 11.7 In the event of the dissolution or suspension of the Local Party, the assets of the Local Party shall vest in the Regional Party on trust for the future reconstitution of the Local Party, unless explicitly provided otherwise by a General Meeting in the event of dissolution pursuant upon boundary changes and subject to the agreement of the Regional Party.

## Notes on this Model Constitution

This model constitution is recommended to Local Parties in England, to be adapted as necessary to suit local circumstances.

The symbol (...) indicates a suitable value to be fixed by the Local Party. Defaults are defined below.

Words and sections in square brackets [...] are optional and Local Parties may choose to include or omit them, subject to the requirements detailed below. By default they are all included (with the first alternatives in Sections 6.4, 7.2(h), 8.5, 8.5(e), 9.1, 9.3 and 9.5), except the words in square brackets in 10.5 are not included).

If amended, the document adopted should be forwarded to the Regional Party to confirm that it conforms with the Party Constitution. There are some sections, indicated below, where variation is likely to conflict with the Party Constitution.

### 1.2. Name and Definitions

The name should be taken from the constituency, and may optionally include the word "Constituency" or "Local".

A Local Party covering more than one constituency will wish to choose a suitable form for its name, to define the several constituencies. Changes throughout this constitution are necessary to reflect such a Local Party's multi-constituency structure.

Otherwise the definitions should not be changed.

### 3. Objects

Should not be subtracted from, but Local Parties might wish to add additional objects, for instance the provision of social facilities for members.

### 4. Membership

Should not generally be changed. The powers of the Executive Committee might be reduced or transferred to General Meetings.

### 5. Officers and Executive Committee

Every Local Party must have a Chair and a Treasurer, which is a legal requirement under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act. The same person cannot combine the offices of Chair and Treasurer. Each Local Party must also have a Membership Secretary, in order to operate the Party's membership system satisfactorily. This Model Constitution does not allow for the same person to be elected to more than one office, but small Local Parties (e.g. with less than 100 members) wishing to combine offices may with the agreement of their Region amend the Model. If a Local Party finds it impossible to elect five separate people to fill the offices, it may co-opt one of the officers to do a second job, except that the Chair and Treasurer must be separate people at all times

Local Parties might decide to:

- (a) elect extra officers, e.g. Social Secretary, Press Officer, Equal Opportunities Officer;
- (b) remove the casting vote of the Chair, or to give the Chair a casting vote only;
- (c) dispense with the Honorary Office of President.

Local Parties should fix the scale of Branch, direct, Councillor and Youth/Student representation on the Executive Committee on an equitable basis and to accord with local circumstances. Either the number of direct representatives (b), or representatives per Branch (c) must be sufficient to enable fair representation of opinions within the Local Party. A minimum of 6 is recommended in one class. Unless the Local Party has a small number of large wards/branches the larger number would be in class (b).

The default numbers in Section 5.3 are 10 in (b), 1 and 2 in (c), 1 each in (e) and (g) and 3 in (f). The relevant County and District/Borough/Unitary Council names should be inserted in (e) and (f). If the Local Party area covers more than one District/Borough, each Council group may be represented separately or

jointly, depending on local circumstances. Section 5.3 (e) may be dispensed with where there is no County Council.

The list of categories of Executive Committee members should not be subtracted from, but may be increased in special circumstances.

If there are Ordinary Members the number of co-opted Members in 5.4 may not be more than the number of Ordinary Members. If there are no Ordinary Members then the Local Party must determine the maximum number of co-opted Members. The default number is ten.

The Executive Committee is required to meet at least quarterly. More frequent (e.g. monthly) meetings may be appropriate. If the Executive Committee only meets quarterly, it might be appropriate to provide for a "Finance and General Purposes Committee", by whatever name is preferred, with specific make-up and powers, to meet more often.

## 6. Elections

Most changes to the provisions for election and holding office would conflict with the Federal Constitution. Elections can be by postal ballot of all members or by the members present at the AGM. The same method of election should be used for Officers, Ordinary Members and Conference Representatives.

Local Parties should appoint a person who is a not candidate, a close relative of a candidate or the proposer or seconder of a candidate ("a disinterested person") as Returning Officer. Local Parties anticipating contested elections may wish to ask their Region to nominate a person from outside the Local Party to act as Returning Officer.

## 7. General Meetings

Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution. Provisions could be added, notice periods could be lengthened or a large Local Party might decide to raise the required quorum.

## 8. Local Branches

It is for the Local Party to decide whether it wishes to have any Branch structure. If it does not then the whole of Section 8 together with the references to Branches in Section 9 should be deleted.

If the Local Party wishes to have a Branch structure then the provisions in 8.1 to 8.8 set out the necessary constitutional provisions. A Model Constitution for Branches is appended and should be followed, but may be varied by Branches with the agreement of the Local Party Executive.

8.5 contains a number of options for the financial arrangements of Branches. Local Parties should decide which they want to adopt. A Local Party could provide for one version to apply to some branches and another version to others. Either the Local Party may provide for Branch funds to be held by the Local Party Treasurer (first option 8.5) or to be held separately (second option 8.5) in which case the Branch must have a Treasurer and produce accounts. Where the Local Party Treasurer holds Branch funds, they may be held as part of the funds of the Local Party (in which case the words in square brackets are retained). The Branch then has no financial autonomy. Alternatively, the Branch funds may be held by the Local Party Treasurer as a separate account (in which case the words in square brackets in the first version of 8.5 should be deleted). In default the first option applies with the words in square brackets retained.

## 9. Candidates and Elections

Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution. The Party Constitution and rules made by the Joint States Candidates Committee cover Parliamentary Candidate selection. Regional Parties will make rules for the selection of candidates for Regional Government. City/Borough/District Mayors are Local Government elections and Local Party Constitutions should make appropriate provision for the selection of Mayoral Candidates. 9.6 will apply where the Local Government area covers more than one Local Party.

The last sentence of 9.1 only applies to a Local Party covering more than one Constituency. Only one of the electoral college options, before or after the "/", should then be included.

A Local Party should determine which method to use for local election candidate selection - a General Meeting or a postal ballot and whether the selection is to be done by only the members in the relevant electoral area, by all members of the Branch or by all members of the Local Party. 9.3 and 9.4 should then

be adapted accordingly. It is automatically provided that the Local Party undertakes the selection where there is no branch. 9.4 provides a minimum number of members for selections by electoral areas. This provision is not needed when selection is by all members of the Local Party or all members of the Branch, when the relevant minimum numbers are specified in other provisions.

9.5 provides for the selection procedure when a selection has to be conducted at short notice, as is often the case for by-elections. The Local Party should decide whether emergency selections are to be by the Branch Committee (where there is one) or by the Local Party Executive.

Section 9.7 should only be deleted if Local Parties find them inappropriate in local circumstances.

## 10. Finance

Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution and with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

In 10.5 the Local Party may wish to provide for a Special General Meeting to be held reasonably soon after the financial year-end on 31st December to consider the annual accounts. In that event at the end of this paragraph a date should be inserted, for example 28<sup>th</sup> February or 31<sup>st</sup> March. The reference to the accounts being approved by the AGM in 7.2(b) should then be deleted, but not the references to a Treasurer's report and budget. Where Local Party accounts are required to be submitted to the Electoral Commission and published, where the Local Party's gross income or total expenditure is over £25,000, early approval of the Accounts by a Special General Meeting is recommended.

The officers whose signatures are required to draw money might be specified more precisely in 10.7, especially if extra officers have been created. No bank account should be operated on a single signature or by two members of the same family.

## 11. Constitution and Interpretation

None of the points in this section should be omitted. Most changes would conflict with the Federal Constitution and rules made to ensure the Party's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act 2000.

## **Model Constitution for Branches**

### **Constitution of the "... Branch of the Hounslow Borough Liberal Democrats"**

#### **1. Name**

1.1 The name of the Branch shall be "... Branch Liberal Democrats."

#### **2. Objectives**

2.1 The objects of the Branch shall be to further the objects of the Hounslow Borough Liberal Democrats (the "Local Party") within the area covered by the Branch.

#### **3. Branch area**

3.1 The ... Branch area will be that part of the area of the Hounslow Borough Local Party in ... wards of the Borough.

#### **4. Members**

4.1 The members of the Branch shall be:

- (a) All members of the Local Party whose Registered Membership Address (as defined in the English Party Membership Rules) is within the Branch area, unless they have opted to be a member of another Branch;
- (b) Any councillor who represents a ward or division falling wholly or partially within the Branch area and who opts to be a member of the Branch;
- (c) Other members of the Local Party who wish to be members, if the Branch's Executive and the Local Party Executive Committee agree.

4.2 No person who is not a member of the Local Party may be a member of the Branch.

4.3 No person may be a member of more than one Branch.

4.4 The Branch may not levy a membership fee on its members.

#### **5. Officers and Executive**

5.1 The Officers of the Branch shall be Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Development Officer, who shall be elected annually.

5.2 The general and financial business of the Branch shall be conducted by a committee (the "Executive"), subject to the decisions of General Meetings. The Executive shall consist of:

- (a) The Officers;
- (b) Four Ordinary Members, elected annually;
- (c) One representative elected annually by and from the Branch's members on Hounslow Borough Council representing wards falling wholly or partially within the Branch area;
- (d) One representative elected annually by and from members of the Party's Youth and Student Organisation who are also members of the Branch.

5.3 The Executive may co-opt up to three additional members, for a term expiring not later than that of the next AGM.

5.4 The Executive may fill any vacancy occurring among the Officers or Ordinary Members. Any vacancy amongst the Officers shall, if possible, be filled from amongst the other members of the Executive.

5.5 In urgent circumstances, the Officers may act on behalf of the Executive. They shall report on all such actions to the next meeting of the Executive.

#### **6. Elections of Executive Members and others**

- 6.1 The Officers and Ordinary Members and any representatives to the Local Party's Executive Committee, as provided for in the Local Party's constitution, shall be elected by and from the members of the Branch at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the single transferable vote (STV) and secret ballot .
- 6.2 The term of office for Officers and Ordinary Members shall be from 1<sup>st</sup> January following their election until the following 31<sup>st</sup> December.
- 6.3 The Executive shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election of Officers and Ordinary Members before the issue of notice of the AGM under 7.3. The Returning Officer will make any supplementary rules as they feel fit and are consistent with the Federal and English Party constitutions, the English Party's membership rules and any rules made by the local party.
- 6.4 Representatives from the party's councillors and the Youth and Student organisation shall be elected according to rules set by the relevant Council Group and the Youth and Student organisation.
- 6.5 The names and addresses of all Executive members shall be kept by the Secretary and provided to the Secretary of the Local Party within 7 days of their election or of any change in any Officer.
- 6.6 The Executive may appoint substitute representatives to the Local Party's Executive Committee if there is a casual vacancy or an elected representative is not able to be present at a meeting.

## **7. General meetings**

- 7.1 The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be on a day and at a time and place decided by the Executive, not before 1<sup>st</sup> September and not later than 30<sup>th</sup> November. The Executive may postpone an AGM if it would conflict with any public election involving the Branch's area. The Local Party may require the AGM to be held before the AGM of the Local Party or before some other particular date.
- 7.2 The business of the AGM shall be:
  - (a) To receive reports from all the Officers on their activities in the last year;
  - (b) To receive reports from councillors representing wards or divisions falling wholly or partially within the Branch area (if such people exist);
  - (c) To consider, and if thought fit adopt, the accounts for the previous financial year together with an independent report on those accounts and the budget for the current financial year;
  - (d) To appoint a person to produce an independent report on the accounts for the current financial year;
  - (e) To consider any motion which has been submitted by any two members of the Branch to the Secretary in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM;
  - (f) Any other business specified by the constitution, or directed by the Executive.
- 7.3 The Secretary shall give all members at least 14 days written notice of the time and place of the AGM.
- 7.4 A Special General Meeting may be convened by the Officers, the Executive or on receipt of a requisition signed by at least one fifth of the Branch's membership. Such a meeting shall be convened within 28 days of being requested, and with members being given at least 14 days written notice of its time and place. It shall only conduct business stated in the notice calling it.
- 7.5 Five members shall form the quorum at any General Meeting.
- 7.6 Notice and minutes of all General Meetings and Executive Meetings shall be kept by the the Secretary and copies shall be sent to the Secretary of the Local Party.

## **8. Candidates for public office**

- 8.1 The Branch shall perform the tasks prescribed by the constitution of the Local Party in connection with the selection of local government candidates for any electoral area within its area, and in conjunction with the appropriate adjoining Branch(es) or the Local Party for any electoral areas lying only partially within the Branch's area.
- 8.2 The Executive shall seek to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all seats within its area on Principal Local Authorities are contested by members of the Party.

- 8.3 Where it is necessary to select one or more local government candidates, for either Principal Local Authorities or parish or town councils:
- (a) The Executive shall ensure that any candidate approval process specified by the Local Party is followed;
  - (b) The timetable for the selection shall be agreed by the Executive, in consultation with the Executive of the Local Party;
  - (c) The Branch shall hold a [General Meeting][postal ballot], in which all members who are resident in the electoral area concerned [or of the Branch] may vote. If the eligible electorate does not exceed 10, the electorate shall be expanded to include members of the Branch Executive;
  - (d) The election shall be held by Single Transferable Vote (STV) and secret ballot;
  - (e) The Executive shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer will make any supplementary rules as they feel fit and are consistent with the Local Party constitution, Federal and English Party constitutions, the English Party's Membership rules and any rules made by the Local Party.
  - (f) In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a [meeting]/[postal ballot] the Executive may select the candidate;
  - (g) Any candidate for election to public office standing as a representative of the Party must be a current member of the Party.
- 8.4 For the period of a local government election within its area, the Executive will resolve to suspend the activities of the Branch and to invest an Agent or Agents with the authority to act on its behalf in the conduct of the election campaign.
- 8.5 The suspension of the Local Party due to the holding of an election shall have the effect of also suspending the Branch's activities for the same period.
- 8.6 During the selection of [Mayor, Greater London Authority,] Parliamentary and European candidates, the Branch and its members shall comply with the relevant selection rules.

## **9. Finance**

- 9.1 The Branch's accounting period shall be the same as that of the Local Party.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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 Treasurer of the Local Party.
- 9.4 The 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.
- 9.5 The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Branch together with an independent report to the Annual General Meeting to be held not later than 30<sup>th</sup> November
- 9.6 The authorised signatories on any branch bank account shall be at least two in number, and shall not come solely from members of any one family.

## **10. Constitution and interpretation**

- 10.1 Amendments to this constitution may only be made by a two-third majority at a General Meeting. Details of any proposed change shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.
- 10.2 Any changes to this constitution shall only come into force after being approved by the Executive Committee of the Local Party. No amendment may be made or approved which would conflict with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or with the constitutions of the Local Party, English Party, Federal Party or English Party's Membership Rules.
- 10.3 A copy of this constitution shall be kept by the Secretary and sent to the Local Party Secretary.

- 10.4 In the event of any question on which this Constitution is silent, the Constitution of the Local Party shall be followed. In the event of any question of interpretation arising the Executive shall have the power to act according to its interpretation of the constitution, or, if it does not cover the issue, at its discretion, subject to the duty of the Local Party to ensure the Branch's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and with its Constitution, the Local Party Constitution and the English and Federal Party Constitutions and subject to Article 8 of the Constitution of the Liberal Democrats in England and Article 14 of the Constitution of the Federal Party.
- 10.5 The Branch may choose to dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting, or may be dissolved following the procedure laid out in the Local Party's constitution. The funds of the Branch shall, if dissolved, be applied first to paying its debts, with any surplus being added to the funds of the Local Party.
- 10.6 The Executive shall perform the same functions as that of a "Branch Committee" under the Local Party's constitution.
- 10.7 The Branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Local Party.

***(HOUNSLOW BOROUGH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS constitution  
– as passed at the AGM on 19th November 2001)***

***(PR HOBo CONstitution 19 11 '01)***