



Conference Directory

**SOUTH CENTRAL REGION LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
AUTUMN CONFERENCE**

**The Beaconsfield School
Wattleton Road, Beaconsfield
Buckinghamshire
HP9 1SJ**

Saturday 14 October 2017

Conference Venue and Directions

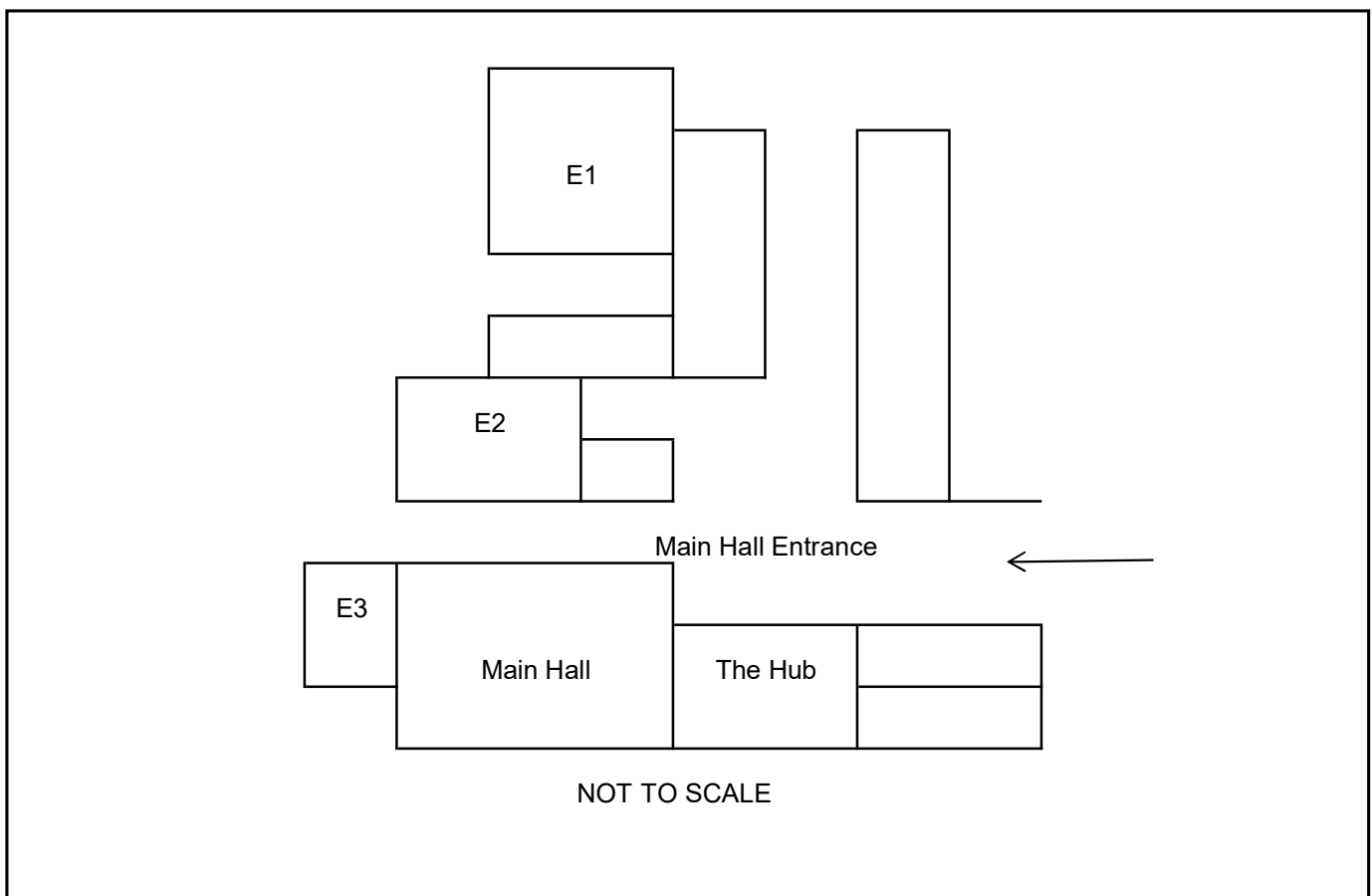
The Beaconsfield School, Wattleton Road, Beaconsfield HP9 1SJ

Travelling By Car

From Junction 2 of the M40, take the A355 towards Beaconsfield. At the first roundabout take the first exit onto the A40. Continue on the A40 to the roundabout just past the Royal Saracen's Head. Turn right onto Aylesbury End (B474). Wattleton Road is the second major turning on the left, after Old Town Close (to which your satnav may direct you). The Beaconsfield School is on the left, shortly after the junction. There is another school in Wattleton Road, confusingly called Beaconsfield High School, but that is further on, and on the right.

Coming By Public Transport

The Beaconsfield School is about a 15-minute walk from the Station. Come down Station Road towards the town centre. Wattleton Road is on the right, after Grove Road.



Layout of E Block

INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

Registration opens at 9.00 am in the Main Hall Entrance. Registration on the day will cost £25 or £10.00 for students / first time attendees /claimants.

CAR PARKING

There is plenty of parking available at the venue. Stewards will be there to help you. Please follow their instructions.

BADGES

Please collect your badge and any further papers from the Registration Desk on arrival even if you have pre-registered.

Nobody will be allowed into the Regional Conference without a badge.

STEWARDS

There are stewards to help you at Conference. They can be identified by their tabards and pink badges.

LUNCH

Lunch tickets will be available in the Main Hall Entrance at a cost of £5 per person. Lunch will be served in The Hub between 12.00 and 2.20.

REFRESHMENTS

Tea, coffee and snacks will be available throughout the day in The Hub.

SMOKING POLICY

There is a general policy of no smoking on all education premises across the county. The nearest place for smokers will be outside the main entrance to the school.

TRAINING

Training Sessions will be held in Rooms E1 and E2. For more information please see page 4.

FRINGE MEETINGS

There will be a Welcome Fringe for New Members in Room E1 at 12.45, hosted by Layla Moran MP.

PRESS

Vanessa McPake, the South Central Media Co-ordinator, will be liaising with the media. She may be contacted through the South Central stand in the Exhibition.

EXHIBITION

The following organisations have indicated that they will be exhibiting at the Conference:

- Catherine Bearder MEP
- EARS
- Guide Dogs for the Blind
- Lib Dem Image
- Liberal Youth
- South Central Region

You will find their stands in the Main Hall Entrance and The Hub.

WiFi

Wireless Internet will be available, with details on the day. However, there will be no access to social media as these are not allowed in Buckinghamshire's schools.

REGIONAL ELECTIONS

Completed nomination forms may be placed in the box on the Regional stand, or posted to:

The Returning Officer,
c/o Regional Office,
77 Oakwood Drive,
Bletchley,
Milton Keynes MK2 2JG

to arrive by noon on Friday 27 October.

The External Returning Officer is Antony Hook.

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

This Conference has been organised by the South Central Region Conference Committee.

Acting Chair: Penny Hopkins

Members: Coling Lawley

Beth Rowland

Mohsin Khan

Thanks are due to Beaconsfield Lib Dems, who have provided the refreshments and the volunteers to help make your day enjoyable.

CONFERENCE STANDING ORDERS

1. OBJECT

1.1 These Standing Orders govern the preparation and conduct of the agenda of the Conference of the South Central Region. Subject to any amendment they shall remain in force from meeting to meeting.

1.2 These Standing Orders endure until amended by a two-thirds majority of voting representatives voting at a meeting of the Conference, at which the amendment has been notified to the members at least one week in advance of the meeting.

2. REGIONAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

The arrangements for Regional Conference, and the composition and powers of the Regional Conference Committee, are set out in Article 2 of the South Central Constitution.

3. QUORUM

If there are fewer than 25 voting representatives present at any time, any one voting representative may demand, and procure, that discussion of a topic be deferred.

4. RULES OF DEBATE AND CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

4.1 The conference committee shall specify the deadlines for the receipt of motions and amendments. All dates specified shall be notified to conference representatives and those entitled to submit motions. The conference committee has discretion to accept motions or amendments after the announced deadline if in their opinion developments of importance have taken place after the closing date. The selection of motions and amendments for debate is at the discretion of the conference committee.

4.2 No motion or amendment shall be discussed unless it has been proposed and formally seconded.

4.3 Representatives shall direct their speeches to the question under discussion or to a point of order or to a personal explanation.

4.4 Subject to the right of amendment of the Conference Committee in the case of any specific item of business, the discussion of all motions shall normally comprise:

4.4.1 Speech of mover of main motion and any alternative under 4.5 below, five minutes at most.

4.4.2 Speeches of movers of any amendment: three minutes at most.

4.4.3 Speeches from the floor: three minutes at most.

4.4.3 Rights of reply as provided by S04.7: three minutes at most.

4.5 The Conference Committee may:

4.5.1 Recognise an amendment as an alternative option and allow its proposer the same time as the speech of the proposer of the motion.

4.5.2 Take two or more motions covering the same or associated subject matter to be debated simultaneously (along with any amendments to such motions); such debate shall conclude with a vote on each motion and amendment in turn, or between motions, or amendments or parts of motions or amendments, as appropriate.

4.6 Each motion will be moved and any amendment will then be moved, debated and voted upon in the order in which they affect the wording of the motion, except that the Session Chair may vary the order of debate to improve discussion where the nature or complexity of the motion make this desirable. Subject to S04.5 above, all amendments shall be decided before substantive debate on any motion.

4.7 No member shall speak more than once on any motion or amendment or in any simultaneous debate under S04.5 above except:

4.7.1 To exercise any right of reply given by these Standing Orders;

4.7.2 By way of explanation;

4.7.3 To move any procedural motion;

4.7.4 On different aspects of a Report which is discussed in parts;

4.8 The Session Chair may allow any person who is not a Representative to the Conference to speak in any debate.

4.9 Speakers will be selected by the Session Chair from those members who indicate their wish to speak. In choosing speakers, the Session Chair shall attempt to provide a balanced debate between different viewpoints within the conference. The Session Chair shall also have regard, in choosing speakers, to the number of times a particular person has already been called to speak during the meeting of Conference.

4.10 A motion or amendment once moved and seconded may only be withdrawn with the consent of Conference, which shall be signified by a show of voting cards without discussion.

5. PROCEDURAL POINTS

5.1 Subject to SO 8.4, a person may rise to a point of personal explanation, but a personal explanation shall be confined to some material part of a former speech by that person at the same meeting which may have been misunderstood. A person so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

5.2 The ruling of the Session Chair on a point of order or the admissibility of a personal explanation shall not be open to discussion and shall only be open to challenge on a two thirds majority of those present and voting.

5.3 When a motion is under debate only the following procedural motions shall be allowed:

5.3.1 That the Session Chair's ruling be set aside;

5.3.2 To adjourn the debate in motion;

5.3.3 That the question be not put;

5.3.4 That the question be now put;

5.3.5 That a separate vote be taken

5.3.6 That the motion be referred back to the mover.

Any such procedural motion, when moved and formally seconded, shall immediately become the motion under discussion unless deferred under S05.6. When any such procedural motion is moved and where the Session Chair has not deferred debate under SO 5.6, only a higher procedural motion on the list above may then be moved before such procedural motion is decided.

5.4 Procedural motions 5.3.2 to 5.3.4 may only be moved without comment by a voting representative at the end of another person's speech.

5.5 The mover of any procedural motion under SO 5.3.1, SO 5.3.5 or SO 5.3.6 may make a brief speech of up to two minutes; and the Session Chair in case SO 5.3.1 and the mover of the motion in case SO 5.3.5 or SO 5.3.6 shall have a brief right of reply of up to two minutes.

5.6 Motions SO 5.3.4 and SO 5.3.6 above shall not be accepted unless the Session Chair believes that there has been adequate discussion of the matter under consideration. If a motion in case SO 5.3.4 is carried the movers shall have a right of reply before their motion is voted on.

5.7 Procedural motions require a two-thirds majority of those voting to be passed, except for 5.3.5 for a separate vote and 5.3.6 to refer the motion back, which shall require a simple majority to pass.

5.8 No procedural motion shall be moved during a vote.

6. RIGHT OF REPLY

6.1 The proposer of a motion shall have a right of reply at the close of the debate upon such motion, immediately before it is put to the vote.

6.2 If any amendment is proposed, the proposer of the motion shall be entitled to reply at the end of the debate upon the amendment.

6.3 The mover of any amendment shall have the right of reply immediately before the proposer of the substantive motion.

6.4 The right of reply may be delegated by the proposer concerned.

6.5 A representative exercising a right to reply shall not introduce new matter to the debate.

7. ACCEPTANCE OF AMENDMENT

The proposer or seconder of a motion may, with the consent of Conference, signified without discussion, accept a drafting amendment to the motion which has been proposed and may also accept any duly tabled amendment.

8. VOTING

8.1 On being appointed each representative shall be issued with a voting card. Such voting cards shall not be transferable.

8.2 Names of substitutes for any representative shall be notified to the Regional Conference Committee. Following valid receipt of such notification, each substitute shall be issued with a voting card and become a representative for the meeting in question, replacing the representative so substituted.

8.3 All votes shall be taken by a show of voting cards. The voting shall be counted by tellers at the request of the Session Chair or 15 members upstanding.

8.4 No point of personal explanation may be raised during a vote. Points of order raised during a vote shall only be admissible if they relate to the conduct of the vote.

8.5 A separate vote may be taken on a part of a motion or amendment at the discretion of the chair. Requests for a separate vote may be submitted in advance or as a procedural motion.

8.6 The Session Chair's decision and announcement of the result shall be final.

9. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

9.1 A voting representative may during any plenary Conference move a motion for the suspension of Standing Orders. The mover of the motion shall submit the motion and a brief written statement of the purpose of the proposed suspension to the Chair, who shall read them to the meeting. The Chair may take the request immediately upon receipt or at the end of the speech currently being made.

9.2 No motion to suspend standing orders may suspend any requirement of the Constitution of the party, the rights for submission of motions and amendments or procedural motions for next business or suspension of standing orders.

9.3 The Chair shall then (if the motion is in order) ask the conference if it wishes to debate the request for suspension. If the conference decides by a majority of those voting to debate the request, the mover may speak and a representative of the conference committee may reply. The Chair shall have the discretion whether to allow other speakers on the motion.

9.4 A motion to suspend Standing Orders shall be carried only if supported by at least two thirds of the Conference representatives voting. If the motion is carried, all Standing Orders shall be deemed to be still in force, except only for the purpose set out in the motion.

TRAINING

Morning Session 9.55-11.10
Room E1:
Delivering Your Targeting Strategy
Neil Fawcett

Afternoon Session 14.00-15.15
Room E1:
Targetting Groups of Voters
Neil Fawcett

Room E2:
Improving Your Media Coverage
Vanessa McPake and Ben Dowling

Room E2:
Growing Your Resources
Becky Carr

ASK AN EXPERT Q&A SESSIONS Room E2 12.45-13.45

Membership and Membership Services *Prue Bray*

PagePlus *Margaret McNeill*

PPERA and Accounts *Steve Sollitt*



SPEAKER'S CARD

Called
Not called
Withdrawn

Please complete all sections on this card

Item: Title Policy Business Debate Speaker
(Please circle whichever applies)

Your name M/F

Your Local Party

Any offices that you hold (Cllr, Group Leader, Chair, Secretary, PPC etc)

.....

.....

Is this the first time you have spoken at Regional Conference? Yes No

Do you want to speak:

For the motion as a whole?

For lines

Against the motion as a whole?

Against lines

Are you a voting representative? Yes No

Are you a wheelchair user?

Do you have any special needs to help you speak in this debate?

Win MONEY for your Local Party

Do you produce really good Focuses? They could win your Local Party **£50**

Bring a few recent Focus examples, with a note saying which ward,
which Local Party, and who did the artwork,
and put them in the box on the Regional stand by 3 pm.

Prizes will be awarded at 4.15.



First Prize £50

Second Prize £30

Third Prize £20



Please explain to the chair why you should be called, if you have any special knowledge of the subject, and a brief outline of what you will be saying/asking. The chair will need this to be able to balance the debate if too many cards are submitted.

CONFERENCE AGENDA - MAIN HALL

MORNING SESSION

9.55 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Jane Wallis

Beaconsfield Local Party

10.00 **One Member One Vote (OMOV)**

Gerald Vernon-Jackson

Regional Chair

10.05 to 11.10 *Session Chair: Richard Fagence*

Session Aide: Margaret McNeill

10.05 **Policy Motion 1**

LEASEHOLDERS' RIGHTS

Proposed by South Central Regional Policy Committee

Mover: Mohsin Khan Summation: tba

1 Conference notes that:

2 1. Leaseholders with local authority freeholders have fewer rights and mechanisms to avoid major
3 charges;

4 2. Leaseholders on council estates are already paying maintenance charges, and may then be
5 charged significant sums for major works anywhere in their block, including upgrade and
6 regeneration projects for entire estates;

7 3. Costs beyond £15,000-£25,000 have been charged to individual leaseholders by some councils;

8 4. Legislation intended to protect leasehold owners from these charges, such as cost capping or the
9 right to request alternative contractors, often does not apply to leaseholders of local authority-
10 owned freeholds.

11 Conference also notes that:

12 1. Leaseholders under a local authority freehold have no practical legal remedy for abuses in service
13 charge collection, since the council itself is charged with prosecuting private landlords for these
14 offences;

15 2. Caps limiting charges to £10,000 (£15,000 in London) over a 5-year period currently apply only
16 if repairs are partially funded by a central government grant;

17 3. Councils have an obligation to provide an estimate of individual service charges for five years in
18 advance only;

CONFERENCE AGENDA - MAIN HALL

MORNING SESSION (continued)

- 19 4. The ‘right to enfranchise’ legislation is difficult for council leaseholders to exercise in practice,
20 since at least two thirds of the flats in the building must be owned by private leasehold owners and
21 not let to council tenants;
- 22 5. That although there are non-legal remedies available to local authority leaseholders, these may be
23 difficult for many leaseholders to obtain.
- 24 Conference calls for:
- 25 1. The Government to set up a consultation on councils having sinking funds/contingency funds so
26 leaseholders are not required to pay sudden large costs for major works;
- 27 2. Local authorities to apply caps to the costs incurred by individual leaseholders, even where there
28 is no government funding;
- 29 3. The Government to review how to allow leaseholders to better hold local authority freeholders to
30 account for their legal obligations.

10.25 Policy Motion 2 MENTAL HEALTH

Proposed by South Central Regional Policy Committee

Mover: Henry Jones Summation: tba

- 1 Conference notes that:
- 2 A. In May 2017, the Prime Minister described the 1983 Mental Health Act as "outdated",
3 "discriminatory" and "unfit for purpose", and promised to repeal it and replace it with new
4 legislation. In June 2017, the Queen's Speech promised to "reform mental health legislation".
- 5 B. Current UK law treats physical and mental health differently. Physical health patients cannot be
6 forcibly treated unless they lack capacity (the ability to make their own decisions), and they can
7 make "advance decisions" about what will happen if they lose capacity, as defined in the Mental
8 Capacity Act 2005. However, mental health patients do not have these rights: under the 1983 Act,
9 they can be forcibly detained and treated even if they have capacity, and even if they've made an
10 advance decision to refuse treatment.
- 11 C. If a person has a "mental disorder" (which includes Asperger's syndrome and learning
12 disabilities), they can be forcibly detained and treated, but people without one can't be, even under
13 the exact same circumstances. In some cases, including cases in the South Central region, having a
14 childhood diagnosis of Asperger's has allowed people to be forcibly detained for months, while they
15 could not have been detained at all without this diagnosis.
- 16 D. Mind, a mental health charity, has argued that detaining people based on disability is
17 discriminatory, and in breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It
18 has called for replacing the "mental disorder" test with a "mental capacity" test, as defined in the
19 Mental Capacity Act 2005, so that mental health and physical health are treated equally, and people
20 with disabilities or "mental disorders" are not discriminated against.

CONFERENCE AGENDA - MAIN HALL

MORNING SESSION (continued)

21 Conference believes that:

22 i) Mental health patients should have the same rights as physical health patients.

23 ii) Everyone has the right to control their own life. A person should never be forced to receive
24 treatment, unless they do not have the capacity to make that decision.

25 iii) Detaining people on the basis of disability or "mental disorder", rather than capacity, is
26 discriminatory, contributes to stigma and discourages people from being open about their mental
27 health.

28 Conference calls on the Government to reform the Mental Health Act to ensure that:

29 1. The "mental disorder" test for involuntary detention and treatment is replaced with a "mental
30 capacity" test, so that a person cannot be involuntarily detained or treated unless they lack capacity,
31 as defined in the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

32 2. Advance decisions, as defined in the Mental Capacity Act 2005, can be applied to mental health
33 conditions, including an advance decision to refuse detention and/or treatment.

34 Conference reiterates its support for the Liberal Democrat policy of ensuring that mental health
35 services are fully funded, so that people can be given care without unnecessarily having to be
36 detained.

10.45 **Presentation**

Antony Hook

South East Brexit Spokesman

Brexit Update

PUT THE DATE IN YOUR DIARIES
South Central Liberal
Democrats Spring Conference
will be held on
Saturday 24 February 2018

Venue tba

Lots of information for your
Local Election Campaigns.
More details soon.

CONFERENCE AGENDA - MAIN HALL

MORNING SESSION (continued)

11.10 to 12.10 *Session Chair: Prue Bray*
Session Aide: Imogen Shepherd-Dubey

11.10 Business Session

South Central Region Chair's Report

To receive the report of the Regional Chair
Mover: Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Regional Chair

Business Resolution

Budget 2018 - 2021 and Accounts

Proposed by South Central Region Executive Committee
Mover: Steve Sollitt, Summation: Gerald Vernon-Jackson
Conference:

1. adopts the 2018 - 2021 Budget;
2. appoints the independent inspector for 2017 accounts;
3. approves the inspected accounts for 2016.

A copy of the budget can be found on page 12

Report Back on the Regional Development Plan approved at Spring Conference

A copy of the Report can be found on page 13

Report Back on Local Party Boundaries - Motion approved at Spring Conference

A copy of the Report can be found on page 13

12.10 to 12.40 *Session Chair: Cec Tallack*
Session Aide: James Read

12.10 Keynote Speech 1

Layla Moran MP

Shadow Education Secretary

12.35 Appeal

12.40 Lunch

Lunch will be served from 12-2.20 pm

CONFERENCE AGENDA - MAIN HALL

AFTERNOON SESSION

14.00 to 15.15 *Session Chair: Steve Lambert*
Session Aide: Ian Morton

14.00 Keynote Speech 2

Catherine Bearder MEP

14.30 Reports to Conference

Catherine Bearder MEP (European Parliament)

Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Councils)

(House of Commons)

(House of Lords)

Copies of reports submitted can be found on pages 14 to 17

15.05 English Party Review - the next steps and the timetable for change

Liz Leffman

Chair of English Party

15.15 to Close *Session Chair: Gerald Vernon-Jackson*
Session Aide: Faith Ponsonby

15.15 General Election Debrief:

What does the research evidence tell us?

Mark Pack and Julian Ingram

16.15 Presentations and Focus Competition

16.30 Closing Remarks (including raffle results)

16.40 Close of Conference

SOUTH CENTRAL LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BUDGET 2018-2021

	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>NOTE</u>
Income					
Membership rebate	27000	27500	28000	28000	1
Regional Conference	5500	5500	5750	5750	
Donations	2000	2000	2000	2000	2
Sundry	25	25	25	25	
Training	500	500	500	500	3
TOTAL	35025	35525	36275	36275	
Expenditure					
Salaries & fees	25000	25000	25000	25000	4
Campaign Support	2000	2000	2000	4000	
Candidates and Returning Officers	500	200	100	100	5
Training	500	500	500	500	3
Membership awards	250	250	250	250	
Communications	350	350	350	350	
Regional Conference include venue costs	3000	3000	3000	3000	
Federal Conference costs	1000	1000	1000	1000	
Room hire	100	100	100	100	
Travel	2000	2000	2000	2000	
TOTAL	34700	34400	34300	36300	
NET	325	1125	1975	-25	
BALANCE SHEET					
EXISTING RESERVES	1500	1825	2950	4925	
REVISED RESERVES	1825	2950	4925	4900	

NOTES

- 1 Increase in expected membership income in line with national change in membership levels and increase in membership fees
- 2 Expected fundraising for different sources
- 3 Training income and costs are expected to be equal
- 4 Costs for regional staff
- 5 Budget to cover Candidate and Returning Officer training

Steve Sollitt Treasurer
South Central Liberal Democrats 2017

South Central Region Development Plan - Report Back

At the last Regional Conference delegates supported a regional development plan which aimed to increase the amount of campaigning the Lib Dems do across all of the region, in every single Local Party. The Regional Exec was required to work up this plan and deploy resources to achieve it. There has been consultation with Local Parties over the development plan.

The aim was to make the Lib Dems run more effectively and efficiently in all areas, providing additional training and campaign support to all Local Parties. We will also look to work with each Local Party to help them draw up a development plan, work out what training and support they need and help this to happen.

We will also look to provide a additional service to Local Parties to have a list of experts who will facilitate policy discussions for Local Parties on policy issues members are interested in.

The region will continue to give support with PPERA returns, collecting Local Party officers' details and provide Returning Officers for PPC selections.

To make this happen we will be moving from one employee paid to work 30 hours a week to three new posts: one Admin Officer for 7 hours a week and two Development workers each being paid by the Region for 11.5 hours a week. One Development Officer will work in the north of the region and one in the south. Local Parties and Council groups can buy into the Development Officers to have dedicated time from them to support campaigning in their local areas. We are also looking to hire a self-funding fundraiser to help raise additional funds to expand the time the Development Officers can work to increase our campaigning capacity in the Region.

ALDC will provide professional line management support to the Development Officers.

Conference is asked to note this report

Local Party Boundaries - Report Back

At the Spring Regional Conference a motion was passed to move all Local Party boundaries to Local Authority boundaries. The reason for this is because the law means constituency boundaries have to be reviewed every 5 years. It therefore seems sensible to redo our boundaries once onto Local Authority boundaries, just once. We also said that if there is no agreement across a county then no one Local Party can hold a county up.

Over Party Conference in Bournemouth a series of meetings were held. The meeting invitations were sent to Local Party Chairs and Secretaries. This update is done by county.

The **Isle of Wight** is already a county, constituency and Local Party.

Hampshire. Only Romsey & Southampton North opposed moving to Local Authority boundaries. Recommendation: Move to LA boundaries. In Test Valley there is the option for strong Romsey and Andover branches.

Berkshire. West Berks, Wokingham, and Bracknell support moving to LA boundaries. Greater Reading were agnostic. Windsor & Maidenhead opposed. Recommendation: Move to LA boundaries including a stand-alone Slough Local Party. There is an option for strong branches in Windsor and Maidenhead.

Oxon and Bucks. Here there is the possibility of Local Authority reviews. These may come to nothing. Recommendation: Put off moving to LA boundaries for one year.

The Regional Executive will give approval to new boundaries for local parties in line with this report.

Reports to Conference

European Parliamentary Report

Since my last report, Article 50 has been triggered, signalling the start of the Brexit negotiations.

One of my main preoccupations is ensuring that our parliamentary team, our campaigns team and our Councillor teams are well briefed on Europe. With this in mind, I am organising a series of information days in Brussels. Before the local elections I welcomed over 30 Councillors from across the UK to Brussels and I am looking forward to welcoming a team of key Parliamentarians from the Lords and Commons for a programme of meetings with the Commission, the Parliament and the British embassy. These meetings will help our Parliamentarians as they approach the Repeal Bill.

Environment Committee

I have continued to focus on protecting wildlife and the natural environment with crime a high priority. Europol's security agenda did not have the resources to fight wildlife trafficking as it did for human or drug trafficking. I hosted a hearing in the European Parliament which invited EU governments to hear from anti-wildlife trafficking specialists and Europol officers about the growing challenges to protect wildlife. The EU Council have now agreed that wildlife trafficking will be a high priority for the next four years meaning Europol gets two extra environment crime officers to help national police forces crack down on wildlife trafficking. In addition, the main wildlife treaty CITES will receive extra funding to its secretariat allowing them to increase their operations.

The Chinese Ivory ban is a real game-changer. China is the biggest importer of ivory goods which is driving mass poaching of elephants and destabilisation in impoverished communities across Africa. I met with the Chinese Mission to the EU in Easter for a progress update. They have been rapidly closing down ivory processing factories across the nation and engaging the public with social media campaigns to turn consumers off buying ivory gifts. The EU also introduced a raw-ivory export ban in July. Member States are now expected to ban the export of all raw ivory. The Commission called for this ban as evidence showed that forged CITES ivory permits were allowing poached ivory to enter the legal raw ivory network. The scale of ivory poaching is threatening to take elephants to extinction within decades. EU countries must adhere to this ban – we must ensure pressure is kept up on the government to transpose this EU legislation into national - if we leave the EU.

More generally, ensuring all environmental legislation remains key to the Brexit debate – especially as the Repeal Bill goes through Parliament - will be an important plank of my work. The government has shown little will to protect environmental legislation and it is my concern that much of it will be seen as 'red tape' and be watered down without proper recourse to full parliamentary processes.

Cross-Party MEP Group

Since September 2016 I have coordinated a monthly cross-party pro-European MEP group to monitor Brexit. We meet to discuss the major topics on the Brexit agenda: citizens' rights, the Single Market, the Customs Union, the financial settlement, Northern Ireland, the environment and so on. We also meet the European Parliament's Brexit coordinator and leader of the ALDE group Guy Verhofstadt MEP. The European Parliament has a veto on the Brexit deal, so it is vitally important we stay in touch throughout the process and flag up concerns.

Citizens' Rights Task Force

I have been working with my liberal colleague Sophie in t' Veld to set up a Task Force to hear the views of EU citizens living in the UK and UK citizens living elsewhere in the EU. We have had thousands of responses to emails sent out from people who are understandably concerned about their pensions, healthcare, family separation and right to residency among many other things. There are huge concerns on both sides of the channel and we are continuing to gather evidence and work with key stake holders to apply pressure.

Euratom

Since the invocation of Article 50 I have become increasingly concerned about the UK's relationship with legal entities that don't form part of our membership of the EU. The Government's apparent distaste for the European Court of Justice means we will be withdrawn from vital bodies and instruments such as Europol, Eurojust and, of particular concern to many, Euratom – the European Atomic Energy Community. I have attended Culham, the research facility on nuclear fusion in my constituency, with Layla Moran MP to hear concerns from the industry. The priority now is to continue highlighting that our membership of Euratom is not dependent on our membership of the EU.

Quaestor

I was re-elected as one of five Quaestors of the European Parliament making me the only British MEP to sit on the Bureau of the Parliament, where I represent the interests of fellow MEPs. I continue with the same portfolio of overseeing artworks (many of them from Britain) and exhibitions, and I am member of the Bureau's ICT Working Group and the High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity for the parliament and its staff. I am also a board member of the Former Members Association and the Pension Fund.

Finally, I am still your Liberal Democrat MEP. If, or until, the UK leaves the EU, British MEPs will continue their work as full members of the European Parliament representing their constituents. I will continue to work on your behalf in the ALDE group to deliver liberal values and policies. I have a strong team around me who are eager to help so please don't hesitate to contact us if we can help with any issue. catherine@bearder.eu

Catherine Bearder MEP

Parliamentary Party Report (Commons)

Since last autumn the parliamentary party has seen big changes. We have new MPs, a new Leader and a new Chief Whip. Politics has been dominated by Brexit and the snap General Election and while neither were particularly welcome, we now have a larger and more diverse Commons parliamentary party.

Losing Sarah so soon after her by-election victory in December was a particularly difficult blow. In her short time in Parliament she made a real impact and showed tremendous skill and judgement.

I must pay tribute to Tim Farron. Leading the Party following the defeat we suffered in 2015 was never going to be easy for anyone but Tim brought much-needed energy to the role and his legacy is one of a party off life support and enjoying its largest ever membership – for which we will all be grateful. His hard work and bold judgement following the Brexit referendum result was not easy but it has undoubtedly reaped dividends and made us relevant in a way felt near impossible in the days following 2015's result. Tim's early focus on the refugee crisis made the Government take notice and has saved lives.

Congratulations go to our new Leader, Vince Cable. Having returned to Parliament with a huge majority, Vince will no doubt do an excellent job of leading the party in the Commons and across the country. His credentials and record speak for themselves and using the platform that 2017's results have delivered we can be sure he will use his significant political weight and intellect to help fight this Tory government and a disastrous Brexit.

You may have notice that Parliament kicked off with a 'dressed down' Queen's Speech this year. Quite undeliberately I'm sure, Her Majesty has quite fittingly reflected what a lukewarm start to this Parliament we have experienced.

As we've come to expect, the Conservatives are coming up with many ways to avoid meaningful votes in the Commons. The establishment of Select Committees and the like has also been painfully slow even by Parliament's standards. Playing for time is perhaps no surprise given that they have no majority in either the Commons or the Lords, a Leader without support, and a Labour Opposition with a false sense of confidence and their backs up.

As we know Brexit continues to dominate Whitehall's thinking. May's hubristic decision to go to the country has not only left her without the majority she had hoped for, but substantially less time from which to prepare for Brexit – and the real possibility of having to return to the polls in the near future. Her purchasing of ten DUP votes for £1b will only get her so far in this Parliament. They will be flaky, difficult and unreliable bedfellows giving our twelve votes a premium.

Predictably the Tories showed their true colours in the very first vote in Parliament where they voted against a much needed increase in public sector pay. At this first hurdle we have seen the fragility of their party and the power of May's backbenchers with the Government giving way to Stella Creasy's amendment to the Queen's Speech. We were very happy to support Stella's amendment which ensures that the NHS pay for women from Northern Ireland travelling to England, Scotland and Wales to have abortions. With it passing without a vote we learnt very early on in this Parliament both how fragile this Government is but also received a timely reminder of the mess the Labour party continues to be in with its brightest people restricted to the backbenches.

Cross-party cooperation is going to be a key feature in the new Parliament and we all look forward to working with colleagues across the House. If we are to prevent Theresa May from forcing through her own agenda and a damaging Brexit this work is essential. Politicians continue to have a low stock in public life and I hope that this Parliament can prove to the public that politicians are capable of delivering positive change.

As we learnt during the Queen's speech votes, the Labour party continues to support the Government's hard Brexit despite what their new supporters may believe. This is especially worrying given the Bill's proposals for Henry VIII powers and a total lack of respect for the devolution of powers to our national assemblies. Our hope remains that sensible Conservative and Labour MPs follow our lead and use this Parliament's arithmetic to not leave our fate in the hands of May, Fox, Boris and Davis.

Alistair Carmichael MP
Chief Whip, House of Commons

Parliamentary Party Report (Lords)

Leadership

Dick Newby was re-elected as leader of the group, following the start of the new Parliament in June. **Ben Stoneham** was re-elected as Chief Whip and **Kate Parminter** and **Navnit Dholakia** were re-elected as the Deputy Leaders. We have a strong team of party whips who support the leadership team – **Diana Maddock**, **Chris Humphreys**, **Mike Storey** and **Qurban Hussain**. We have welcomed back **Brian Paddick** and **Meral Hussein-Ece** as whips, and are delighted that **John Shipley** and **Barbara Janke** have also joined the team. **Alison Suttie** and **Cathy Bakewell** both stood down as party whips after the General Election, and we thank them both for all their service.

Legislation

We continued to provide the real scrutiny of the Government in the House of Lords. We have taken the lead in challenging the Conservative Government, resulting in the Liberal Democrats providing effective opposition to the Government's legislative programme.

- There were seven government defeats on the **Digital Economy Bill** when it was in the Lords, and the Government accepted the principle of many of those defeats in the few short days before the election. Earlier in the bill they had also accepted a Liberal Democrat amendment to increase the provision of children's programmes on Public Sector Broadcasters, and increase the amount of original British-made children's programmes.

- We were supportive of the provisions of the **Health Service (Medical Supply Costs) Bill** and supported a cross-party initiative to promote the life sciences sector of the economy.
- We had significant concerns about the **Higher Education and Research Bill**, particularly given the impact of Brexit on universities in the UK. Working effectively with other parties across the House we defeated the government seven times when the bill was in the Lords and helped to ensure some good concessions before the election.
- We fought hard against the Government's illiberal **Investigatory Powers Bill**, pushing on a number of issues including establishing an independent civil liberties board to ensure that civil liberties are always considered in the development and implementation of policy; and measures to protect people's privacy.
- We were critical of the Government's decisions to spend £1bn on the one project in the **National Citizenship Service Bill**, at a time when public services for young people are being severely reduced.
- Working with Labour on the **Neighbourhood Planning Bill**, we successfully made changes to the bill to protect pubs, scoring a significant victory for Greg Mulholland's long-running campaign.
- Following the collapse of the power-sharing Executive in **Northern Ireland** we supported a piece of fast-track legislation to extend deadlines for talks and to allow Westminster to set regional rates for domestic and non-domestic property for the 2017-18 rating year.
- In the **Technical and Further Education Bill** we won a Government concession to require Ofsted to consider the quality of careers provision when conducting standard inspections of further education colleges.

Europe and Brexit

- We fought hard in the **EU (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill** to try and ensure that there would be a referendum on any deal the Government negotiates with the other EU countries; to protect the rights of EU citizens living in the UK; and to maintain membership of the Single Market. Sadly, we could not sustain this once the Commons had sent the amendments back as we lacked support from Labour in the Lords.
- The group will continue to provide real scrutiny to the Government's Brexit plans and we expect the first Brexit-related legislation to arrive in the House of Lords towards the end of the year.

Private Members' Bills

17 Liberal Democrat Peers have tabled Private Members' Bills this session. Those towards the top of the ballot, and therefore likely to get time for debate in the next few months include **Navnit Dholakia's** bill to **increase the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12**, **Paul Tyler's** bill to **reform party funding**, and **Sally Hamwee's** bill to ensure that **refugees who have family members who are British citizens or settled person are given leave to enter or remain in the UK**.

Campaigns and Visits

The group continues to be very active around the country. Peers took part in have over 500 visits to local parties, AGMs, campaigning sessions and EU events in the 2015-1017 Parliament, and then played a huge part in the party's General Election campaign, both locally and nationally.

Peers

Jamie Mar and Kellie retired from the group in June. We thank him for all his work and dedication to the liberal cause in Britain during his 23 years in the House of Lords.

Ben Stoneham
Chief Whip, House of Lords