

**Constitution
for
SOUTH CENTRAL REGION
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

**Version 7 as amended at
Spring Conference 25th February 2012**

ARTICLE 1: NATURE AND OBJECTS

1.1. The name of the Regional Party shall be "The South Central Liberal Democrats".

1.2. The area of the Region shall be the geographic counties of Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

1.3. The Regional Party is the successor to the Regional Parties of the Liberal Democrats and their predecessor organisations in the area of the Region.

1.4. The objects of the Regional Party shall be:

(a) to seek to achieve the objects set forth in the Preamble to the Party Constitution;

(b) for that purpose, to secure the election of Members of Parliament and the European Parliament from constituencies in the Region and of members of regional, local and other elected public authorities in the Region;

(c) to participate in the formulation of party policy and to play a full part in the democratic processes of the Party;

(d) to play a full part in the campaigning activity of the Party at all levels;

(e) to assist Local Parties and recognised Council groups within the Region; and

(f) to promote diversity of cultures within the Party and to represent the interests of under-represented groups in the Region.

1.5. In furtherance of its objects the Regional Party shall exercise the powers and fulfil the duties conferred upon Regional Parties by the Party Constitution in the manner specified in this constitution, and shall also undertake such other functions as the Local Parties in the Region may vest in the Regional Party.

1.6. In this constitution:

"The Regional Party" means the body governed by this constitution;

"The Region" means the area of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Oxfordshire.

"The Party" means the Liberal Democrats;

"The Party in England" means the Liberal Democrats in England;

"The Party Constitution" means the Federal Constitution of the Party and the Articles of the Party in England;

"The Regional Assembly" means the South East of England Councils.

"recognised Council Group" means a Council Group on a Local Authority which has been recognised in accordance with the procedures set out in Article 8 of the Articles of the Party in England

"The European Constituency" means the area defined for the purposes of European Elections of which the Region forms part.

All terms defined in the Party Constitution shall have the same meaning in this Constitution.

ARTICLE 2: THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

2.1. A Regional Conference shall be held not less than once in each year. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution and of the Party Constitution, the Regional Conference shall be the sovereign representative body of the Regional Party. One meeting of the Regional Conference shall be held in October or November each year and shall also be the Annual General Meeting of the Regional Party.

2.2. The business of the Regional Conference shall be:

- (a) to receive a report from the Chair on the activities of the Regional Party and the Regional Executive and representatives elected by Conference to other bodies since the previous Conference;
- (b) to receive reports from the Parliamentary Parties in the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the European Parliament (the House of Commons and European Parliamentary reports to be given by members representing Westminster and European Constituencies within the Region) and from representatives of the Party serving on the Regional Assembly;
- (c) to make policy on issues which relate exclusively to the Region;
- (d) to discuss and express its views upon other policy issues on a consultative basis; and
- (e) to submit motions and amendments including proposals to amend the Party Constitution to the Federal Conference and to the English Council.

2.3. Other Business which may be conducted at Conferences

2.3.1 In addition to any ordinary business of a Regional Conference, a General Meeting shall:

- (a) consider and, if thought fit, approve the accounts of the Regional Party for the previous financial year together with the auditors' report or an independent report on those accounts;
- (b) receive a report from the Treasurer on the financial affairs of the Regional Party for the year to date together with an outline budget for the following year;

2.3.2 In addition to any ordinary business of the Regional Conference, the Annual General Meeting shall:

- (a) 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 the next Annual General Meeting;
- (b) determine for the following year the division of subscription income remitted by the Party in England (as determined under Article 6 of the Articles of the Party in England) between Local Parties and the Regional Party;
- (c) elect the Officers of the Regional Party, the Ordinary Members of the Regional Executive and Members of the Regional Conference Committee, Regional Candidates Committee and Regional Policy Committee for the following calendar year;
- (d) elect representatives to the English Council and such other bodies as the Regional Conference may specify.

2.4. The Regional Conference shall (on the proposal of the Regional Conference Committee) adopt Standing Orders for the conduct of Conference. These Standing Orders shall provide for not less than 21 days written notice of the date, time and place of any Conference to be given to all voting members of the Regional Conference and to all Local Parties within the Region.

2.5. The following members of the Regional Party shall be voting members of Regional Conference:

- (a) the Officers of the Regional Party;
- (b) representatives elected by Local Parties;
- (c) representatives of the Specified Associated Organisation representing Youth and Students;
- (d) representatives of recognised Council Groups on principal local authorities within the Region;
- (e) members of the Liberal Democrat Group on the Regional Assembly;

- (f) Members of the Parliamentary Parties in the House of Commons and the European Parliament representing constituencies within the Region;
- (g) Members of the House of Lords who are members of the Regional Party;
- (h) Prospective Parliamentary and European Parliamentary candidates for constituencies and European constituencies within the Region from the date of their selection until the end of the calendar year in which they stood for election, unless a new prospective candidate is selected for the constituency; and
- (i) the members of the English Council elected by the Region.

Members entitled to attend in more than one capacity shall not be entitled to vote more than once.

2.6. The representatives of Local Parties shall be elected at the same time, in the same manner and for the same term as Federal Conference Representatives, but on the following scale:

Membership of Local Party	Number of Representatives
30 to 50	4
51 to 75	5
76 to 100	6
101 to 150	7
151 to 200	8
201 to 250	9
251 to 300	10
301 to 350	11
351 to 400	12
401 to 450	13
together with one further representative for every 100 members (or part thereof) in excess of 450.	

A Local Party comprising more than one Parliamentary constituency shall be entitled to the higher of (i) the number of representatives which each component constituency with 30 members or more would be entitled to if it formed a separate Local Party or (ii) the number of representatives which that Local Party would be entitled to send if it comprised a single constituency.

2.7. The provisions of the Party Constitution relating to cessation of office, election of additional representatives, and election of substitutes shall also apply to Regional Conference representatives.

2.8. The representatives of the Specified Associated Organisation for Youth and Students shall be elected by that organisation in accordance with its own procedures on the same scale as Local Parties with regard to its eligible membership within the Region. Eligibility to vote and to be counted as a member shall be on the same basis as for the election of Federal Conference Representatives.

2.9. The number of representatives to be elected by the recognised Council Group on each County Council in the Region shall be according to the following scale:

Number of Councillors	Number of Representatives
3 or Less	1
4 to 6	2
7 or more	3
and the Leader of the recognised Council Group.	

2.10. The number of representatives to be elected by the recognised Council Group on each District Council or Unitary Authority in the Region shall be according to the following scale:

Number of Councillors	Number of Representatives
3 or Less	1
4 to 6	2
7 or more	3
and the Leader of the recognised Council Group.	

2.11. Members of the Liberal Democrat Group on the Regional Assembly who are members of a Local Party in the Region shall be voting members of the Regional Conference.

2.12. The representatives elected by the recognised Council Groups on principal local authorities shall be elected by and from those Groups to serve for the calendar year. No person who is not a current member may participate in any such election of the Party.

2.13. Where the number of representatives to be elected by any body at the same time is three or more, not less than one-third or, if one-third is not a whole number, the whole number nearest to but not exceeding one-third ("the Specified Number") shall be men and women respectively, provided that there is at least twice the Specified Number of male and female candidates respectively validly nominated by the close of nominations.

2.14. All members of the Regional Party who are not voting members of Regional Conference shall be encouraged to attend the Regional Conference as observers, and shall be entitled to speak at the Regional Conference subject to such restrictions as may be appropriate.

2.15. Motions for the Regional Conference may be submitted by 2 voting members of Regional Conference, Local Parties, Specified Associated Organisations, Liberal Democrat Groups on principal local authorities or on the Regional Assembly or by the Regional Executive or the Regional Policy Committee.

2.16. Special meetings of the Regional Conference may be summoned on the requisition of:

- (a) the Regional Executive;
- (b) 5 Local Parties within the Region; or
- (c) 25 voting members of Regional Conference.

The requisition must specify the business to be conducted, and no other business shall be taken at the meeting.

2.17. The Regional Executive may postpone any meeting of the Regional Conference if it conflicts with a General Election or for other urgent reason.

2.18. There shall be a Regional Conference Committee, which shall comprise the Chair of the Regional Conference Committee (who shall be a member of the Regional Executive) elected by and from voting members of Regional Conference, the Chair of the Regional Policy Committee elected by and from voting members of Regional Conference, 2 members elected by and from voting members of Regional Conference and 2 members elected by the Regional Executive. Subject to direction by the Regional Executive on matters of finance, the Regional Conference Committee shall be responsible to the Conference for:

- (a) the organisation of the meetings of the Regional Conference;
- (b) the preparation of Standing Orders for the Regional Conference, subject to the approval of the Conference;
- (c) determining in consultation with the Policy Committee, subject to the Standing Orders, the business to be transacted at each meeting of the Regional Conference, including the selection of motions and reports for debate;
- (d) maintaining a register of the voting members of Regional Conference; and
- (e) promoting the Regional Conference and encouraging attendance at Regional Conference by members of the Regional Party.
- (f) The maintenance of a record of the proceedings and decisions of Regional Conferences.

ARTICLE 3: THE OFFICERS

3.1. The Officers of the Regional Party shall be:

- (a) the Chair of the Regional Party;
- (b) the Vice-Chair of the Regional Party;
- (c) the Treasurer;
- (d) the Secretary;
- (e) the Chair of the Regional Candidates Committee;
- (f) the Recruitment Officer;
- (g) the European Officer;
- (h) the Diversity Officer; and
- (i) the President

3.2. The Chair of the Regional Party shall chair the Regional Conference (save insofar as provision is made in accordance with the Conference Standing Orders for some other person to chair all or part of the Conference), shall chair all meetings of the Regional Executive and shall have a casting vote at such meetings, shall be the Region's representative on the English Council Executive, shall be jointly responsible with the Treasurer for the Region's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and shall be the Region's principal executive officer.

3.3. The Vice-Chair of the Regional Party shall deputise for the Chair when required and when chairing the Regional Executive shall have a casting vote and shall exercise such other functions as may be prescribed by the Regional Executive.

3.4. The Chair of the Regional Candidates Committee shall, together with the Regional Candidates Committee, be responsible for the exercise under the Party Constitution of the Region's functions in connection with the approval and selection of Parliamentary and European Parliamentary Candidates and candidates for Regional Assembly elections and shall be the Region's member on the English Candidates Committee.

3.5. The Secretary shall be responsible for arranging the meetings of the Regional Executive and keeping minutes and for the Region's communications with Local Parties and other bodies within the Party.

3.6. The Treasurer shall handle the financial business of the Regional Party in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, and shall present the annual accounts and outline budget to the Annual General Meeting.

3.7. The Recruitment Officer shall co-ordinate and promote recruitment activities throughout the Region.

3.8. The European Officer shall be responsible for communications within the Region with Members of the European Parliament and ensuring the Region undertakes its responsibilities with respect to matters relating to the European Parliament and the Regional Assembly.

3.9. The Diversity Officer shall encourage, promote and support diversity and widening participation throughout the Region and shall work with Local Parties and the English Party and Federal Party to identify and support potential activists from under-represented groups and develop and promote best practice.

3.10. The President of the Regional Party shall be the ambassador of the Regional Party and may act as a conciliator in disputes where possible and appropriate.

ARTICLE 4: THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

4.1. The Regional Executive shall be responsible, subject to the authority of the Regional Conference and in compliance with the Party Constitution and with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, for directing, co-ordinating and implementing the work of the Regional Party. The Regional Executive shall develop, maintain and implement a strategic plan for the Region.

4.2. The members of the Regional Executive shall be:

- (a) the Officers of the Regional Party;
- (b) Ordinary Members elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the voting members of Regional Conference from the geographic county of Berkshire on the scale below;
- (c) Ordinary Members elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the voting members of Regional Conference from the geographic county of Buckinghamshire on the scale below;
- (d) Ordinary Members elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the voting members of Regional Conference from the geographic county of Hampshire on the scale below;
- (e) Ordinary Members elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the voting members of Regional Conference from the geographic county of Oxfordshire on the scale below;
- (f) Ordinary Members elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the voting members of Regional Conference from the geographic county of the Isle of Wight on the scale below;

Membership of each geographic County	Number of Ordinary Members
0 to 1000	1
1001 to 2000	2
2001 to 3000	3
Together with one further representative for every 2000 members (or part thereof) in excess of 3000	

- (g) 4 Ordinary Members elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the voting members of Regional Conference.
- (h) 1 member elected at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the elected representatives of the Specified Associated Organisation for Youth and Students;
- (i) 1 member elected at the at the time of the Annual General Meeting by and from members of the Parliamentary Parties representing constituencies in the Region;
- (j) up to 3 additional members to be co-opted by the Regional Executive. Co-opted members shall have the same rights, including voting rights, as elected members. The power of co-option shall be used, inter alia, to ensure that there is fair representation of under represented communities in the Region, 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 within the Region.
- (k) Chairs of other Committees of the Regional Party as specified in this constitution.

4.3. The Officers and the ordinary Members shall be elected annually by the voting members of the Regional Conference by postal ballot at the time of the Annual General Meeting

4.4. A Candidate for election as an Officer of the Regional Party or Ordinary Member of the Regional Executive must be a member of the Regional Party at the date when nominations close, but need not be an elected voting representative to the Regional Conference.

4.5. No person may hold more than one office, or be both an Officer and an Ordinary Member of the Regional Executive. Elections for Officers shall be counted in the order listed in Article 3.1 of this constitution, and for Ordinary Members in the order listed in Article 4.2 of this constitution. Any votes cast for candidates already elected to office shall be transferred to the voter's subsequent preferences.

4.6. The term of office of the Officers and all other members of the Regional Executive shall be from 1st January following their election until the following 31st December. They shall be eligible for re-election, save that the Chair of the Regional Party shall not serve more than three consecutive terms and shall then not be eligible for election as Chair or Vice Chair for a period of two years.

4.7. The Regional Executive shall fill any vacancy occurring among the Officers or Ordinary Members. A vacancy in the Chair of the Regional Party shall be filled from amongst the Regional Officers if any one of them is willing to accept the post, and if not from amongst the Ordinary Members of the Regional Executive. Any other vacancy may be filled from any member of the Regional Party.

4.8. Within seven days of the conclusion of the elections, the Returning Officer shall send a list of the names and addresses of all Officers to the Chair of the Party in England and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party. The Secretary shall send details of any later change of Officers to the Chair of the Party in England and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party within seven days of such changes occurring

4.9. The Regional Executive shall meet at least 4 times a year. The Secretary shall give at least 7 days notice of meetings to all members of the Regional Executive, specifying in the notice the business to be transacted at the meeting. The agenda for each ordinary meeting of the Regional Executive shall include reports from each Regional Officer and from each sub-committee of the Regional Executive and shall include a report from the Region's representatives on the English Council, English Council Executive and English Candidates Committee.

4.10. A special meeting of the Regional Executive shall be convened by the Secretary at the request of the Chair of the Regional Party or one-third of the members of the Regional Executive, to deal with the business specified in the notice of requisition.

4.11. One third of the voting members of the Regional Executive shall form a quorum. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects. Any member may within one week of despatch of the minutes of a meeting require the reference to the next meeting of any decision taken in the absence of a quorum.

4.12. The Regional Executive shall have power to make, and from time to time revise, Standing Orders for the conduct of its business. Such Standing Orders shall provide that:

(a) if any member of the Executive or of any Committee of the Executive has any pecuniary interest direct or indirect in any contract, proposed contract or other matter, that member shall declare that interest and shall withdraw from the meeting while the contract, proposed contract or other matter is under consideration, unless the Executive, after the member has declared his or her interest, invites him or her to remain; and

(b) if a dispute regarding any Local Party or any Council Group is the subject of debate at any meeting of the Executive or any Committee of the Executive, any member of that Local Party or Council Group (as the case may be) or anyone directly or indirectly involved in the dispute shall withdraw from the meeting while such a dispute is under debate, unless the Executive or the relevant committee invites him or her to remain.

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

4.14 The Regional Executive may appoint and dismiss employees of the Regional Party, who shall be appointed on terms not less favourable than those agreed by the Joint Employment Council. The Regional Party shall join the Joint Employment Council and shall agree that it shall constitute a negotiating forum between management and staff.

4.15 The Regional Executive shall appoint a member of the Regional Party who is eligible to be a member of the Federal Appeals Panel and is not and has not within the preceding year been a member of the Regional Executive or of the Regional Candidates Committee to be a member of the Appeals Panel for England. This appointment shall be subject to the ratification of the next Regional Conference.

ARTICLE 5: COMMITTEES OF THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

5.1. The Regional Executive shall establish such sub-committees or working groups as it shall consider appropriate from time to time to carry out the work of the Regional Party, and may assign special responsibilities to any of its members, including duties which would otherwise pertain to one of the Officers. The Regional Executive may also delegate authority to committees jointly constituted with other regions for particular purposes. No committee, sub-committee, working group or individual member shall take action on behalf of the Regional Executive beyond their terms of appointment. All committees of the Regional Executive, sub-committees and working groups shall report on their activities to the Regional Executive.

5.2. The Regional Executive shall appoint a chair (who shall be a member of the Regional Executive) and the members of all sub-committees of the Regional Executive.

5.3. All members of all committees, sub-committees and working groups and all the Region's representatives on committees jointly constituted with other regions shall, save as expressly provided to the contrary in this Constitution, be members of the Regional Party.

5.4. The Committees and sub-committees of the Regional Executive may include

- a) a Campaigns sub-committee, whose responsibilities may be undertaken at a sub regional level, and
- b) a Finance and Administration Committee.

5.5. The Campaigns sub-committee shall be responsible to the Regional Executive for:

- (a) the stimulation and co-ordination of campaigning and publicity activities within the Region;
- (b) the undertaking of regional campaigns and the monitoring of the joint arrangements made by the relevant Local Parties for campaigning in elections to principal local authorities covering more than one Local Party;
- (c) the management of Regional Election campaigns for the European Parliament and the Regional Assembly
- (d) the encouragement of Local Parties to co-ordinate campaigning for Parliamentary and local elections and between elections;
- (e) the promotion of the political image of the Party within the Region;
- (f) the appointment of a person to serve as Regional Media Co-Ordinator and the management of the work of the Regional Media Co-Ordinator;
- (g) providing and co-ordinating assistance to Local Parties for Parliamentary and local elections;
- (h) the appointment of a person to serve as Regional Training Co-Ordinator and the management of the work of the Regional Training Co-Ordinator;
- (i) training prospective candidates and other members in the Region, except training functions which fall within the terms of reference of the Candidates Committee; and
- (j) liaison in respect of these matters with appropriate Associated Organisations and Specified Associated Organisations.

When there is no Campaigns sub committee these functions shall be the responsibility of the Regional Executive.

5.6. The Finance and Administration Committee

shall comprise the Treasurer of the Regional Party [who shall chair it], all other elected officers, a staff representative plus 2 non-officer members of the Executive, who shall be elected by the Regional Executive to serve on the FAC.

shall be responsible to the Regional Executive for:

- (a) ensuring the compliance of the Regional Party with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000;
- (b) the planning and administration of the budget and finances of the Regional Party;

- (c) consideration of the accounts of the Regional Party, and the submission of regular financial reports to the Regional Executive;
- (d) the submission of estimates of income and expenditure for approval by the Regional Executive;
- (e) the raising of funds for the purposes of the Regional Party in accordance with the fundraising and data protection policies of the Party;
- (f) negotiations with the English Council Executive on the proportion of subscription income to be remitted to the Regional Party;
- (g) the preparation for approval by the Regional Executive of business motions for the Federal Conference;
- (h) the appointment, dismissal and terms and conditions of staff;
- (i) the general administration of the Regional Party including the activities of its staff; and
- (j) the provision and maintenance of office accommodation and equipment.

When there is no Finance and Administration Committee the functions in a-b, e-f, h-j shall be the responsibility of the Regional Executive, the functions b-c and g shall be the responsibility of the Treasurer and the functions in c shall be split between the Regional Executive and the Treasurer.

ARTICLE 6: LOCAL PARTIES AND MEMBERSHIP

6.1. The executive may convene as and when it deems necessary a Local Parties' Panel of the Regional Party which shall comprise the Chair or Vice Chair of the Regional Party and not more than 5 other members elected by the Regional Executive at least half of whom shall be members of the Regional Executive and at least one of whom shall be a member of the Regional Candidates Committee and at least one of whom shall be a person who is or has within the preceding four years been a councillor on a principal local authority. The Chair of the Local Party Panel shall be elected by and from the membership of the Local Party Panel.

6.2. The Local Parties' Panel of the Regional Party shall exercise the Region's powers and duties under the Party Constitution in relation to the adherence of Local Parties to the Party Constitution and to their own respective constitutions, and the compliance of such constitutions and any proposed amendments with the requirements of the Party Constitution **and in relation to any question concerning the recognition of Council Groups**. In particular, it shall be responsible for:

- (a) ensuring the adherence of Local Parties to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, the Party Constitution, and to their own respective constitutions;
- (b) reviewing any proposed new constitution for a Local Party or any proposed amendment to its existing constitution to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Party Constitution;
- (c) investigating the affairs of any Local Party upon the instructions of the Regional Executive if there is reason to believe that the Local Party is not adhering to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, the Party Constitution or its own constitution; or that events in connection with the affairs of the Local Party which are or may be seriously detrimental to the Party have taken place or are about to take place; or if requested by the Local Party itself to carry out such an investigation;
- (d) implementing any recommendations resulting from such an investigation;
- (e) monitoring the joint arrangements made by the relevant Local Parties for the approval and selection of candidates for local authority elections and imposing and/or appointing a Party member to administer the procedures for the approval and/or selection of candidates for local authority elections where the relevant Local Party or Local Parties have not adopted or having adopted have not followed a procedure for the approval and/or selection of candidates in accordance with the provisions of the Party Constitution;
- (f) the exercise of the powers of the Regional Party in constituencies where no Local Party is recognised or where the Local Party has been suspended;
- (g) determining disputes as to proposed combinations of constituencies to form a Local Party;
- (h) determining whether to exempt all or any parish or town councils in the Region from the requirements for the approval of candidates;
- (i) the exercise of the powers of the Region under Article 2 of the Articles of the Party in England (Membership).
- (j) the exercise of the powers of the Region under Article 8 of the Articles of the Party in England (Councillors and Recognised Council Groups) including [determining][recommending to the Regional Executive] whether the requirements for the recognition of Council groups shall apply to all or any parish or town councils in the Region

6.3. Where there appears to be any conflict affecting a Local Party or a Council Group, the Local Parties Panel may appoint a conciliator, who shall be impartial and neither a member of the relevant Local Party or authority (as the case may be) nor any Local Party within the area covered by the authority, to seek to mediate and resolve the conflict. Any person who has acted as such a conciliator shall not play any part in any later investigation or formal decision regarding the relevant dispute.

6.4. The decision to initiate the investigation of the affairs of any Local Party shall be reserved to the full Regional Executive. For the purposes of any such investigation, the Regional Executive shall appoint one or more persons (who must be members of the Party but not necessarily of the Regional Party) to act as investigators. No such person shall be a member of the Local Party concerned. At least one of such persons shall be a member of the Regional Executive and of the Local Parties Panel, and any such member shall take no part in any subsequent proceedings of the Executive or of the Local Parties Panel relating to action to be taken in consequence of the investigation. The investigators shall have such access as they require to the books and records of the Local Party concerned. The Local Party concerned shall be informed of any allegations against it and given a reasonable opportunity to reply or to take corrective action.

6.5. The decision to initiate the investigation of the affairs of any recognised Council Group shall be reserved to the full Regional Executive. For the purposes of any such investigation, the Regional Executive shall appoint a person (who must be a member of the Party but not necessarily of the Regional Party) to act as an investigator. No such person shall be a member of the Local Authority concerned nor of any Local Party covered by the authority. The investigator shall have such access as they require to the books and records of the Recognised Council Group concerned. The Recognised Council Group and any affected councillor shall be informed of any allegations against it and given a reasonable opportunity to reply or to take corrective action

6.6. The Regional Executive shall receive a report on any investigation under this Article and shall be responsible for the implementation, so far as may be thought fit, of any recommendations resulting from the investigation and for such purpose the Regional Party may act on behalf of and in the name of the Local Party (or any organ thereof).

6.7. The Regional Party may suspend a Local Party if the Regional Executive is satisfied that the Local Party is not adhering to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or to the Party (or its own) Constitution or that events in connection with the affairs of the Local Party which are or may be seriously detrimental to the Party have taken place or are likely to take place if preventative action is not taken. The Regional Party may order that a specified Local Party officer vacate his or her post if the Regional Executive is satisfied that the officer concerned is not adhering to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or to the Party (or its own) Constitution or that by their actions, events are occurring or about to occur in connection with the affairs of the Local Party which are or may be seriously detrimental to the Party. Such power shall not be exercised without the Local Party and the affected Local Party Officer being informed of what is proposed and offered a reasonable opportunity to reply or take corrective action. In case of urgency the power of the Regional Executive may be exercised on its behalf by the Local Parties Panel which shall forthwith report the action it has taken to the Regional Executive.

6.8. There shall be a right of appeal to the Appeals Panel for England against the suspension of a Local Party or the ordering of a Local Party Officer to vacate his or her post on the ground that the suspension was unreasonable. The Regional Executive may direct that the suspension shall take effect pending the appeal.

6.9. The Regional Party may de-recognise a formerly recognised Council Group if the Regional Executive is satisfied;

(a) There is persistent or serious non-adherence on the part of the Council Group either to the Liberal Democrat Federal Party Constitution, the constitution of the Liberal Democrats in England, or its own Standing Orders, or

(b) By the actions of the Council Group, events are occurring or about to occur in connection with the affairs of the Council Group which are, or may be, seriously detrimental to the Liberal Democrats.

Such power shall not be exercised without the Council Group being informed of what is proposed and offered a reasonable opportunity to reply or take corrective action. Any member of the Council Group concerned or any Local Party covered by the authority concerned may appeal to the English Appeals Panel against a decision to de-recognise.

6.10. The Regional Party, through the Local Parties Panel, shall have the following powers and responsibilities with regard to any constituency where no Local Party has been recognised, or the Local Party has been suspended under the Party Constitution:

(a) to exercise the functions of the Local Party under the Party Constitution

(b) to ensure, in consultation with local members, that a prospective candidate is in place for any Parliamentary Election, unless the Local Parties Panel is satisfied that this is not appropriate for the time being;

(c) to take such steps as may be appropriate, in consultation with local members, to organise the fighting of local authority elections;

(d) to act as an enrolling body for new members under the Party Constitution;

(e) to summon and supervise meetings of members to form a Local Party or reconstitute a Local Party as soon as possible;

(f) to hold and manage the assets of the Local Party for the benefit of the members of the Local Party or of any Local Party to be formed in place of the Local Party; and

(g) to rule on disputes and give directions under the Party Constitution as to proposed combinations of constituencies. Members in any constituency in the proposed combination shall have the right to appeal to the English Council.

6.11. Where the Region has directed a Local Party officer to vacate office the Local Parties Panel shall either direct that there is to be a by-election for that post, in which case the previous incumbent would be ineligible to stand and the Local Parties Panel shall nominate a Returning Officer, or it may appoint a suitably qualified member of the Party (but not necessarily the Local Party) to the role.

6.12. The Local Parties Panel on behalf of the Region may in accordance with the Party Constitution and the Membership Rules made under it revoke the membership of any member of the Party in the Region on one or more of the following grounds:

- (a) material disagreement, evidenced by conduct, with the fundamental values and objectives of the Party;
- (b) conduct which has brought, or is likely to bring, the Party into disrepute;
- (c) standing against the candidate of the Party in any election to public office;
- (d) membership of or support for another political party in Great Britain.

6.13. The member shall be notified of the reasons why revocation is to be considered. Where the Local Parties Panel is considering the revocation of membership of any person, it may in accordance with the Party Constitution and the Membership Rules made under it suspend membership if there are urgent reasons for doing so or if sub-paragraph (c) above applies.

6.14. The decision of the Regional Party whether or not to agree to the admission or re-admission to membership of a person whose membership has been refused or revoked may be made by the Local Parties panel or the Regional Executive where no Panel has been appointed for the purpose.

6.15. The Regional Party shall not use the information contained in the Register of members except for the proper purposes of the Party and shall comply with the Party's rules in relation to the Party's Data Protection Act registration.

6.16. The Local Parties Panel shall report on its activities to the Regional Executive, but it shall not be open to the Regional Executive to vary or reverse decisions taken by the Local Parties Panel on matters delegated by this Constitution to the Local Parties Panel.

ARTICLE 7: PARLIAMENTARY AND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATES

7.1. There shall be a Candidates Committee of the Regional Party which shall comprise the Chair of the Regional Candidates Committee (who shall be an Officer of the Region elected in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 of this Constitution) and 6 other members elected by the Regional Conference. The Regional Candidates Committee may co-opt up to 2 additional members and shall use its power of co-option to ensure that the members of the Candidates Committee include at least one member who has contested a Parliamentary or European Parliamentary election on behalf of the Party within the previous ten years, at least one member who is an approved Parliamentary Candidates assessor and at least one member who is an accredited returning officer for parliamentary selections.

7.2. The Candidates Committee shall exercise the Region's powers and duties under the Party Constitution in relation to the approval and selection of candidates for Parliamentary and Regional Assembly elections.

7.3. The Candidates Committee shall, if English Candidates Committee has delegated this function to Regions, determine applications to the Region for inclusion in the Lists of Approved Candidates for Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections and in any event shall exercise all the functions of the Regional Party relating to the approval of Parliamentary candidates.

7.4. Any applicant to the Region whose application is refused may request to be reassessed and/or may appeal under the Party Constitution.

7.5. The Candidates Committee shall maintain a list of approved candidates for Regional Assembly elections. It shall determine and publish procedures to be followed by persons wishing to be included in such list and shall determine applications to the Region for inclusion in such List.

7.6. The Candidates Committee may remove any person from the Lists of Approved Candidates for Parliamentary, European Parliamentary or Regional Assembly elections subject to the appeal procedure set out in the Party Constitution. No person shall be removed from any List without being notified of the grounds upon which the Committee is considering such removal and being given

- (a) a reasonable time within which to reply and make representations in writing; and
- (b) a right upon request to a personal hearing before the Committee.

7.7. The Regional Candidates Chair shall appoint Returning Officers for the selection of prospective Parliamentary candidates and shall decide whether a selection should proceed where sufficient applicants of each sex are not forthcoming or withdraw following the composition of the short-list. The Candidates Committee shall undertake all other functions of the Region under the rules for the selection and adoption of prospective Parliamentary candidates. In particular, the Candidates Committee shall decide, in case of disagreement, whether a new selection should be held as a result of boundary changes substantially affecting a constituency.

7.8. The Candidates Committee shall appoint the Selection Committee for the selection of prospective European Parliamentary candidates for the Region.

7.9. The Candidates Committee shall prepare for approval by the Regional Executive rules for the approval and selection of candidates for the Regional Assembly. Such rules shall provide for the selection to be by a ballot in which all members of the Party in the relevant electoral area have the opportunity of voting.

7.10. The Candidates Committee may make recommendations to Local Parties within the Region for procedures to be followed for the approval and selection of candidates for local government elections, and shall exercise any functions in respect of such approvals and selections which Local Parties wish to delegate to the Candidates Committee.

7.11. The Candidates Committee shall be responsible for the provision of training to members of the Regional Party who are, or who wish to become, members of assessment panels, returning officers or prospective Parliamentary, European Parliamentary or Regional Assembly elections; and for encouraging both men and women, and members of ethnic minorities, to apply for inclusion in the Lists and for selection.

7.12. The Candidates Committee shall report on its activities to the Regional Executive and to the Regional Conference, but it shall not be open to the Regional Executive or Conference to vary or reverse decisions taken by the Candidates Committee on matters delegated by this Constitution to the Candidates Committee.

ARTICLE 8: REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE

8.1. There shall be a Regional Policy Committee which shall comprise the Chair of the Regional Policy Committee (who shall be a member of the Regional Executive) elected by and from voting members of Regional Conference, 3 members elected by and from Regional Conference and 3 members elected by the Regional Executive.

8.2. The Policy Committee shall be responsible for:

- (a) the formulation of party policy on issues relating exclusively to the Region, for presentation to the Regional Conference;
- (b) preparing policy proposals on other issues relating primarily to the Region, and reporting to the Regional Conference on these and other policy issues;
- (c) actively promoting consultation within the Region on the development of policy by the Federal Policy Committee;
- (d) the consideration of policy proposals on which the Regional Party is consulted by the Federal Policy Committee, and the submission of policy proposals to that Committee;
- (e) the preparation and submission to the Federal Conference Committee of policy motions for the Federal Conference;
- (f) the expression of the initial views of the Regional Party on topical issues;
- (g) if so instructed by the Regional Executive, the preparation for approval by the Regional Executive of a regional manifesto for Parliamentary Elections;
- (h) the preparation for approval by the Regional Executive of a manifesto for elections to the Regional Assembly;
- (i) liaison with other regional parties on policy issues affecting the Region and such other regions;
- (j) assisting Party Groups on principal local authorities with policy development by such Groups and liaison on policy issues between principal local authorities within the Region;
- (k) stimulating and co-ordinating the policy-making activities of Local Parties;
- (l) encouraging the participation by members of the Regional Party in the development and making of Party Policy.

ARTICLE 9: FINANCE

- 9.1. The Region's accounting period shall be annual, ending on 31st December each year.
- 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 Finance and Administration Committee and to Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- 9.4. The Treasurer shall annually produce accounts, which shall be approved by the Finance and Administration Committee and by the Regional Executive, and if required by the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act 2000 shall be audited and submitted to the Electoral Commission.
- 9.5. The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Regional Party together with an independent report or the report of the auditors to the Annual General Meeting.
- 9.6. A copy of the annual accounts shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Party in England and to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- 9.7. The Regional Party shall maintain one or more bank or other appropriate accounts in the name of the Regional 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 Regional Party may maintain further accounts for the deposit of money not required for the time being, requiring the same signatures.
- 9.8. The Finance and Administration Committee shall make arrangements in accordance with the Party's fundraising and data protection policies for the raising of funds to meet any expenditure of the Regional Party in excess of the proportion of subscription income to be remitted by the Party in England, and may also raise funds for distribution to Local Parties in the Region. For this purpose the Finance and Administration Committee may request the Regional Executive to appoint a Fundraising Sub-Committee with appropriate membership and terms of reference. The Regional Executive may, subject to compliance with the Data Protection Act, authorise the Finance and Administration Committee or the Fundraising Sub-Committee to use the list of members in the Region for fundraising purposes.

ARTICLE 10: ELECTIONS

10.1. All contested elections under the provisions of this constitution shall be by secret ballot and by the Single Transferable Vote method in accordance with election rules made under the Party Constitution.

10.2. Where the Regional Party is entitled to representation on any other body (other than the English Council) the Regional Executive Conference shall determine whether the representatives are to be elected by the Regional Conference or by the Regional Executive.

10.3. The elections of Officers, Ordinary Members of the Regional Executive, members of the Regional Candidates Committee, Regional Policy Committee and Regional Conference Committee and the members of the English Council and representatives on other bodies to be elected by the Regional Conference shall take place at the time of the Annual General Meeting. The Regional Conference Committee shall invite nominations in the notice convening the Meeting, with a closing date of the date of the Meeting. All voting members of Regional Conference shall not more than 14 days after the date of the meeting be sent ballot papers for those positions where the number of valid nominations exceeds the number of vacancies. The ballot papers shall be returnable to the Returning Officer within a month from the date of the Annual General Meeting, and shall be counted as soon as possible thereafter.

10.4. Nominations for election must be in writing, signed by a proposer and seconder (who must be members of the Regional Party) and countersigned by the candidate.

10.5. Whenever three or more persons are being elected, not less than one-third or, if one-third is not a whole number, the whole number nearest to but not exceeding one-third ("the Specified Number") shall be men and women respectively, provided that there is at least twice the Specified Number of male and female candidates respectively validly nominated by the close of nominations.

10.6. The Regional Executive shall appoint some disinterested person to receive nominations and act as Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of ballot papers, their receipt and counting on return, and the declaration of the results.

10.7. An unsuccessful candidate who alleges that there has been or may have been an irregularity in the election may within one month after the declaration of the result appeal to the Appeals Panel for England. Subject to any order made on such an appeal, no irregularity shall invalidate an election.

ARTICLE 11: AMENDMENT AND INTERPRETATION

11.1. Amendments to this constitution, including any amendment by which the Region seeks recognition as a State Party for the purposes of the Party Constitution, may be made only by the vote of at least two-thirds of those voting on a motion for amendment at a meeting of the Regional Conference. No amendment shall be made which conflicts with the Party Constitution. Motions for amendment shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Regional Conference in time for circulation with the notice convening the meeting.

11.2. In the event of any question of interpretation arising, or any question on which this constitution is silent, the Regional Executive shall have power to act according to its interpretation of the constitution, or at its discretion, without prejudice to the provisions of the Party Constitution relating to the resolution of conflicts.