

# **Liberal Democrat Lawyers Association/Rights-Liberties-Justice Constitution**

## **1. Name, Objects and Definitions**

- I. The name of the Organisation shall be *Rights-Liberties-Justice* (which may be abbreviated to R-L-J) also known as the *Liberal Democrat Lawyers Association* (Which may be abbreviated to LDLA).
- II. The Objects of LDLA shall be:
  - A. to devise means for ensuring that power in the United Kingdom is exercised openly and responsibly under law, and that those who exercise it are accountable to those whom their decisions will affect;
  - B. to further the development of a modern and coherent constitutional framework for the United Kingdom, securing respect for and observance of fundamental rights and freedoms;
  - C. to seek to achieve the objects set forth in the Preamble to the Federal Constitution of the Liberal Democrats;
  - D. to promote the progressive reform of the law and its institutions and to ensure that legal processes are fair and readily accessible to all;
  - E. to support, directly or indirectly, the election of Liberal Democrats as Members of Parliament and members of local and other elected public authorities;
  - F. to admit and actively recruit new members to the Liberal Democrats, and encourage existing members to renew their membership;
  - G. to participate in the formulation of the policy of the Liberal Democrats, particularly on constitutional and legal matters;
  - H. to promote diversity of cultures and to ensure the interests and rights of under-represented groups are respected under the law;
  - I. to conduct research and to participate in public discussion and education;
    - J. to cooperate with other organisations whose objects are similar.
- III. "Federal Party" shall refer to the Federal Party of the Liberal Democrats.

## **2. Membership**

- I. Membership of LDLA shall be regulated by Membership rules and code of conduct as passed by the LDLA executive committee and in agreement with the Liberal Democrat Federal People and Development Committee (or its

successor(s)). Any such rules and code of conduct shall accord with the provisions that:

- A. Membership of LDLA shall open to all persons who agree with its fundamental values and objectives without discrimination as to age, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation;
  - B. Members of LDLA must treat others with respect and must not bully, harass, or intimidate anyone; and
  - C. Members of LDLA must abide by the Members Codes of Conduct of the Liberal Democrats.
- II. Only members of the Liberal Democrats, or one of its sister parties, who are members of LDLA may:
- A. hold the role of officer, including Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Officer;
  - B. sit on Federal Liberal Democrat Committees;
  - C. access Liberal Democrat Party data;
  - D. receive financial or sensitive political information, relating to the Liberal Democrats; or
  - E. Participate in elections or votes withinLDLA.
- III. Any member of LDLA must agree to be subject to the Complaints Process of the Liberal Democrats in the event that a complaint is made to which they are a party. If someone refuses to accept the jurisdiction of the Complaints Process, or fails to respond to its requirements, this shall automatically revoke their membership of LDLA.
- IV. Members of LDLA who are not members of the Liberal Democrats shall otherwise hold the rights of Registered Supporters of the Liberal Democrats. This provision shall not apply to anyone whose membership of the Liberal Democrats is refused, revoked, or suspended, but shall apply should such sanctions be lifted.
- V. Membership shall be acquired through application to the LDLA Executive Committee (by methods decided upon by the committee), subject to the Membership rules of the Liberal Democrats and code of conduct.
- VI. If a member of LDLA Is a member of the Liberal Democrats and their membership status is altered by any decision of the Party's Complaints or

Appeals procedures, that same change shall take effect to their membership of LDLA. No person may be simultaneously suspended or expelled from the Liberal Democrats and be a full member of LDLA.

### **3. Officers and Executive Committee**

- I. The Officers of Rights, Liberties, Justice shall be the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Membership Officer, and Treasurer.
- II. The Secretary shall not later than 2nd January and within seven days after any subsequent change notify the names and email addresses of all Officers to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party
- III. There may be an Honorary President to be elected by the Annual General Meeting ("AGM").
- IV. The general and financial business of LDLA shall be controlled and carried on by the Executive Committee, subject to the decisions of General Meetings and in compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The Executive Committee shall consist of:
  - A. The Chair - to chair all General and Executive Committee Meetings (in the event of a tied vote the Chair shall have an additional casting vote); to be jointly responsible with the Treasurer for compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and any other legal or regulatory requirements;
  - B. The Vice-Chair - to chair General and Executive Committee Meetings if the Chair is unable to do so;
  - C. The Secretary - to handle the Affiliated Organisation's correspondence; to maintain minutes of meetings;
  - D. The Treasurer - to handle the Affiliated Organisation's financial business and present financial reports to Annual General Meetings; to be jointly responsible with the Chair for the Affiliated Organisation's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and any other legal or regulatory requirements
  - E. The Membership Officer - to:

1. receive all notices of application for membership and refer them to the Executive Committee for acceptance;
  2. maintain a membership register;
  3. hold and maintain all LDLA data; and
  4. ensure compliance with data protection legislation.
- V. The Executive Committee shall meet not less than once a quarter. The Executive Committee shall, at its first meeting, adopt Standing Orders.
- VI. The Executive Committee may, by rules it determines via its Standing Orders, establish sub-committees as it deems necessary to support its work but may not delegate its decision-making authority or responsibilities.
- VII. The Executive Committee may co-opt up to 5 additional 'Ordinary' members, for a term expiring not later than the next following AGM. Co-opted members may speak but not vote.
- VIII. Members of LDLA shall be entitled to attend, but not necessarily to speak, at meetings of the Executive Committee, as agreed by the Executive Committee. The Chair shall decide if speaking rights are given to any such members attending
- IX. The Executive Committee may fill any vacancy occurring among the Officers or the Ordinary Members. Any vacancy in the Chair shall be filled from amongst the existing Executive Committee members. The Secretary shall within seven days notify any change of Officers to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- X. The Officers shall convene a meeting of the Executive Committee within one month after taking office. The Executive Committee shall meet at least quarterly and not less than four times in a year. Any of these meetings may take place at the same time as the AGM. The Secretary shall give at least 7 days notice of meetings to all members of the Executive Committee. One-third of its members shall form a quorum.
- XI. In urgent circumstances the Officers may act on behalf of the Executive Committee. They shall report on such actions to the next meeting of the Executive Committee
- XII. Minutes shall be kept of any meetings of the Executive Committee. In the absence of an Executive Committee member charged with the duty, the Meeting shall appoint a member to take minutes.

## 4. Elections of Officers and Executive Committee

- I. The Executive Committee shall consist of Officers and Ordinary members only. Officers and Ordinary members, except those which are co-opted, shall be elected using Single Transferable Vote by and from the members of LDLA. This election shall typically take place at the time of the AGM.
- II. The term of office of Officers and Ordinary Members shall be from the 1st January following their election until the 1st of January 3 years after that. They shall be eligible for re-election, save that the Chair shall not serve consecutive terms, and shall not be eligible for re-election as Chair for two terms after leaving Office.
- III. Nominations for election shall be invited in the notice summoning the AGM, and shall close at the AGM, but not before the reception of the Executive Committee's report. They must be proposed and seconded and shall be in writing, or digitally signed by the proposer, seconder and candidate and accepted by the Chair or, if the elections are contested, the Returning Officer.
- IV. Where elections are contested, the Chair shall ensure that an independent Returning Officer is appointed. That Returning Officer must have Returning Officer, Senior Returning Officer, or Assistant Returning Officer status within the Liberal Democrats, and shall conduct the election using whatever process, subject to any necessary alterations, is currently used by the Liberal Democrats for committee elections. All contested elections under this constitution shall be by secret ballot using the Single Transferable Vote method in accordance with election rules made under the Party Constitution.
- V. No person may be elected to hold more than one Office. Elections for Officers shall be counted in the order listed in Section 5.1 and for Ordinary Members after Officers. Any votes cast for candidates already elected to Office shall be transferred according to the voters' subsequent preferences.
- VI. Accidental failure to despatch notice of the AGM or a ballot paper in due time or at all to a person entitled to vote shall not invalidate an election or be treated as an irregularity, unless a substantial number of persons entitled to vote have not received notices or ballot papers at all or have received them too late to make it practicable to attend the meeting or return the ballot paper in due time by first-class post.
- VII. An unsuccessful candidate who alleges that there has been or may have been an irregularity in the election may within one calendar month after the declaration of the result ask for an investigation by the Federal Liberal Democrats in

accordance with the Investigation procedure . Subject to any order made after such an investigation, no irregularity shall invalidate an election.

- VIII. The Returning Officer may extend the time for distribution and return of ballot papers where there are special circumstances making it necessary to do so.
- IX. If no member of the LDLA fulfils the following criteria,
- A. is a member of LDLA;
  - B. is willing to act as Treasurer;
  - C. is duly elected; and
  - D. is considered capable of the role of Treasurer, as determined by the Compliance team of the Federal Liberal Democrats ("Compliance").

The Chair shall urgently report to Compliance and, in consultation with Compliance, arrange for the Executive Committee to co-opt a Treasurer who fulfils at least criteria B-D.

- X. If LDLA fails by 15th January to notify the Chief Executive of the Federal Party of the appointment of a Chair and a Treasurer, its Affiliated Organisation status shall be automatically suspended. This suspension shall be automatically lifted once the CEO confirms that the roles have been duly filled.
- XI. In exercising the right of the LDLA to make nominations for candidates in Federal Liberal Democrat internal elections, the decision to nominate a candidate shall be made by the Executive Committee by simple majority vote.

## **5. Annual General Meeting**

- I. The Annual General Meeting shall be on a day appointed by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may postpone the AGM if it would conflict with a Parliamentary Election, or for other urgent reasons.
- II. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall consist of all members of LDLA.
- III. The business of the AGM shall include:
- A. a business session to which the Executive Committee shall report;
  - B. The consideration of, and if thought fit, approval of the annual accounts for the previous financial year and a report from the Treasurer including an outline budget for the following year;
  - C. to appoint for the current Financial Year auditors if required by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000;

- D. to transact any other business specified by the Constitution, or directed by the Executive Committee;
  - E. to consider any motion which has been duly submitted per the AGM Standing Orders; and
  - F. To receive nominations and elect officers of the Executive Committee.
- IV. The AGM of LDLA at which this Constitution is adopted, shall, by a two-thirds majority vote, adopt a set of Standing Orders. Those Standing Orders shall be amendable by a two-thirds majority vote of subsequent AGMs only.
  - V. The Secretary shall give all members at least 21 days written notice of the time and place of the AGM. Such notice shall specify all business to be conducted at the meeting.
  - VI. The AGM may by a two-thirds majority agree to consider urgent or important business which has arisen since notice of the AGM was given.
  - VII. A special General Meeting may be convened by the Executive Committee and shall be convened by the Secretary so as to be held within 28 days of the decision being made. At least 14 days written notice shall be given to all members of the special General Meeting. The meeting shall only consider business stated in the notice convening it. In an emergency, the Officers may convene a meeting giving such notice as they consider sufficient in the circumstances. The quorum rules during a special General Meeting shall be the same as for an Annual General Meeting.
  - VIII. 10 members shall form a quorum at any AGM. A quorum is not required to receive reports and accounts.
  - IX. Notice and minutes of all Annual and Special General Meetings shall be sent to the Chief Executive of the Federal Liberal Democrats. Minutes shall be maintained of all proceedings of all AGMs. Notice shall be provided at least seven days before the AGM and minutes provided at most 28 days after the meeting.

## **6. Finances and regulatory reporting**

- I. The LDLA accounting period shall be annual, ending on 31st December each year.
- II. The Treasurer shall keep, maintain for six years, and pass to their successor accounting records which shall be available for inspection in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

- III. The Treasurer shall ensure that no donation of over £200 is accepted except from a permissible donor and shall keep records and submit donations reports to the Executive Committee and to Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- IV. The Treasurer shall annually produce accounts which shall be approved by the Executive Committee and if required by the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act 2000 shall be audited and submitted to the Electoral Commission. A copy of the annual accounts shall be sent to the Chief Executive of the Federal Party.
- V. LDLA will abide by the provisions of the Liberal Democrats Financial Escalation Policy, as if it were a local Party reporting directly to the Liberal Democrat Federal Board.
- VI. LDLA may maintain one or more bank or other appropriate accounts, for which the mandate for withdrawal shall require the approval of at least two Officers who shall not come solely from members of any one family. LDLA may maintain further accounts for the deposit of money not required for the time being, requiring the same signatures.
- VII. LDLA will at all times comply with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, the Electoral Commission, the Information Commissioners Office and any other relevant legislation or regulator. As an accounting unit of the Liberal Democrats, LDLA will comply with requests made of it by relevant Federal Liberal Democrat Staff and the Party Registered Treasurer.

## **7. Constitution and interpretation**

- I. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote at any duly called General Meeting. Any such amendment shall be reported to the Liberal Democrat Federal People and Development Committee or its successor(s).
- II. Details of any proposed amendment shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.
- III. If the model constitution for Affiliated Organisations is amended, any provision of this constitution shall be deemed to be correspondingly amended, unless the LDLA resolves at a quorate General Meeting held within six months of receiving notice of the amendment not to accept it.

- IV. Matching copies of this Constitution, updated following any amendments, must be kept by the LDLA and provided as soon as it is available to the Federal Party Chief Executive.
- V. In the event of any question of interpretation arising, or any question on which this Constitution is silent, the Executive Committee shall have power to act according to its interpretation of the Constitution, or at its discretion, subject to Article 14 of the Constitution of the Federal Party. Conflicts arising from such interpretation shall be resolved under the procedure for resolving conflicts set out in the Federal Party Constitution.
- VI. No word or construction in this Constitution shall be taken to imply any discrimination whatsoever with regard to race, ethnicity, caste, heritage, class, religion or belief, age, disability, sex, gender or sexual orientation or any other ground other than political belief or practice.
- VII. LDLA, for as long as it is an Affiliated Organisation, shall be subject to the review and Investigation procedures created under Article 9.6b of the Liberal Democrat Federal Constitution.
- VIII. In the event of the dissolution or suspension of LDLA the assets of the LDLA shall vest in the Federal Party on trust for the future reconstitution of LDLA unless explicitly provided otherwise by a General Meeting.