

# **Constitution of the “ Bury St Edmunds Branch of the West Suffolk Liberal Democrats”**

## **1. Name**

1.1 The name of the Branch shall be “Bury St Edmunds Branch Liberal Democrats.”

## **2. Objectives**

2.1 The objects of the Branch shall be to further the objects of the West Suffolk Liberal Democrats (the “Local Party”) within the area covered by the Branch.

## **3. Branch area**

3.1 The Bury St Edmunds Branch area lies within the St Edmundsbury Borough Council boundaries and consists of the County Electoral Divisions of Tower, Eastgate and Moreton Hall, Hardwick, Thingoe South, Thingoe North, Blackbourn.

## **4. Members**

4.1 The members of the Branch shall be:

(a) All members of the Local Party whose Registered Membership Address (as defined in the English Party Membership Rules) is within the Branch area, unless they have opted to be a member of another Branch;

(b) Any councillor who represents a ward or division falling wholly or partially within the Branch area and who opts to be a member of the Branch;

(c) Other members of the Local Party who wish to be members, if the Branch’s Executive and the Local Party Executive Committee agree.

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

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

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

## **5. Officers and Executive**

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

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

of:

(a) The Officers;

(b) 6 Ordinary Members, elected annually;

(c) 2 representatives elected annually by and from the Branch’s members on St Edmundsbury Borough Council representing wards/divisions falling wholly or partially within the Branch area;

(d) 2 representatives elected annually by and from members of the Party’s Youth and Student Organisation who are also members of the Branch.

5.3 The Executive may co-opt up to 2 additional members, for a term expiring not later than that of the next AGM.

**Note: the number should not exceed the number of ordinary members.**

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

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

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

6.1 The Officers and Ordinary Members and any representatives to the Local Party's Executive Committee, as provided for in the Local Party's constitution, shall be elected by and from the members of the Branch at the time of the Annual General Meeting by the single transferable vote (STV) and secret ballot.

6.2 The term of office for Officers and Ordinary Members shall be from 1<sup>st</sup> April following their election until the following 31<sup>st</sup> March. They shall be eligible for re-election, save that the Chair shall not serve for more than three consecutive terms, and shall not be eligible for re-election as Chair for two terms after leaving Office.

6.3 The Executive shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election of Officers and Ordinary Members before the issue of notice of the AGM under 7.3. The Returning Officer will make any supplementary rules as they feel fit and are consistent with the Federal and English Party constitutions, the English Party's membership rules and any rules made by the local party.

6.4 Representatives from the party's councillors and the Youth and Student organisation shall be elected according to rules set by the relevant Council Group(s) and the Youth and Student organisation.

6.5 The names and addresses of all Executive members shall be kept by the Secretary and provided to the Secretary of the Local Party within 7 days of their election or of any change in any Officer.

6.6 The Executive may appoint substitute representatives to the Local Party's Executive Committee if there is a casual vacancy or an elected representative is not able to be present at a meeting.

## **7. General meetings**

7.1 The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be on a day and at a time and place decided by the Executive, not before 1<sup>st</sup> February and not later than 31<sup>st</sup> March. The Executive may postpone an AGM if it would conflict with any public election involving the Branch's area. The Local Party may require the AGM to be held before the AGM of the Local Party or before some other particular date.

7.2 The business of the AGM shall be:

- (a) To receive reports from all the Officers on their activities in the last year;
- (b) To receive reports from councillors representing wards or divisions falling wholly or partially within the Branch area (if such people exist);
- (c) To consider, and if thought fit adopt, the accounts for the previous financial year together with an independent report on those accounts and the budget for the current financial year;
- (d) To confirm or reject the appointment recommended by the Local Party of a person(s) to produce an independent report on the accounts;
- (e) To consider any motion which has been submitted by any two members of the Branch to the Secretary in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM;
- (f) Any other business specified by the constitution, or directed by the Executive.

7.3 The Secretary shall give all members at least 14 days written notice of the time and place of the AGM.

7.4 A Special General Meeting may be convened by the Officers, the Executive or on receipt of a requisition signed by at least one fifth of the Branch's membership. Such a meeting shall be convened within 28 days of being requested, and with members being given at least 14 days written notice of its time and place. It shall only conduct business stated in the notice calling it.

7.5 Five members shall form the quorum at any General Meeting.

7.6 Notice and minutes of all General Meetings and Executive Meetings shall be kept by the Secretary and copies shall be sent to the Secretary of the Local Party.

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

8.1 The Branch shall perform the tasks prescribed by the constitution of the Local Party in connection with the selection of local government candidates for any electoral area within its area, and in conjunction with the appropriate adjoining Branch(es) or the Local Party for any electoral areas lying only partially within the Branch's area.

8.2 The Executive shall seek to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all seats within its area on Principal Local Authorities are contested by members of the Party.

8.3 Where it is necessary to select one or more local government candidates, for either Principal Local Authorities or parish or town councils:

(a) The Executive shall ensure that any candidate approval process specified by the Local Party is followed;

(b) The timetable for the selection shall be agreed by the Executive, in consultation with the Executive of the Local Party;

(c) The Branch shall hold a postal ballot, in which all members who are resident in the electoral area concerned or of the Branch may vote. If the eligible electorate does not exceed 10, the electorate shall be expanded to include members of the Branch Executive;

(d) The election shall be held by Single Transferable Vote (STV) and secret ballot;

(e) The Local Party shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election. The Returning Officer will make any supplementary rules as they feel fit and are consistent with the Local Party constitution, Federal and English Party constitutions, the English Party's Membership rules and any rules made by the Local Party.

(f) In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a postal ballot the Executive may select the candidate;

(g) Any candidate for election to public office standing as a representative of the Party must be a current member of the Party.

8.4 For the period of a local government election within its area, the Executive will resolve to suspend the activities of the Branch and to invest an Agent or Agents with the authority to act on its behalf in the conduct of the election campaign.

8.5 The suspension of the Local Party due to the holding of an election shall have the effect of also suspending the Branch's activities for the same period.

8.6 During the selection of Parliamentary and European candidates, the Branch and its members shall comply with the relevant selection rules.

## **9. Finance**

9.1 The Branch's accounting period shall be the same as that of the Local Party.

9.2 The Treasurer shall keep, maintain for six years, and pass to his or her successor accounting records which shall be available for inspection in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

9.3 The Treasurer shall ensure that no donation of over £200 is accepted except from a permissible donor and shall keep records and submit donations reports to the Treasurer of the Local Party.

9.4 The Treasurer shall annually produce accounts which shall be approved by the Branch Committee and shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Local Party by a date to be specified by the Treasurer of the Local Party.

9.5 The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Branch together with an independent

report to the Annual General Meeting.

9.6 The authorised signatories on any branch bank account shall be at least two in number, and shall not come solely from members of any one family.

## **10. Constitution and interpretation**

10.1 Amendments to this constitution may only be made by a two-third majority at a General Meeting. Details of any proposed change shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.

10.2 Any changes to this constitution shall only come into force after being approved by the Executive Committee of the Local Party. No amendment may be made or approved which would conflict with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 or with the constitutions of the Local Party, English Party, Federal Party or English Party's Membership Rules.

10.3 A copy of this constitution shall be kept by the Secretary and sent to the Local Party Secretary.

10.4 In the event of any question on which this Constitution is silent, the Constitution of the Local Party shall be followed. In the event of any question of interpretation arising the Executive shall have the power to act according to its interpretation of the constitution, or, if it does not cover the issue, at its discretion, subject to the duty of the Local Party to ensure the Branch's compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and with its Constitution, the Local Party Constitution and the English and Federal Party Constitutions and subject to Article 8 of the Constitution of the Liberal Democrats in England and Article 14 of the Constitution of the Federal Party.

10.5 The Branch may choose to dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting, or may be dissolved following the procedure laid out in the Local Party's constitution. The funds of the Branch shall, if dissolved, be applied first to paying its debts, with any surplus being added to the funds of the Local Party.

10.6 The Executive shall perform the same functions as that of a "Branch Committee" under the Local Party's constitution.

10.7 The Branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Local Party.

Agreed and adopted at the SGM/AGM on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2016