

# LGA Liberal Democrat Group Standing Orders and Contract changes 2022

4.1 Changes are **in red** to reflect changes to postal voting (Standing orders and election regulations) and provide extra clarity on what is expected of elected members and substitute members (group contract). This will be discussed at the LGA Liberal Democrat Group AGM at the LGA Harrogate Conference on June 28 2022, but is attached for information.

## LGA Liberal Democrat Group Standing Orders

*Adopted: July 2014*

*Revised/Reviewed: July 2016*

*Revised/Reviewed July 2017*

*Revised/Reviewed July 2018*

*Revised/Reviewed April 2020*

*Revised/Reviewed March 2022*

### **1 Aims**

The aims of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group (“the Group”) shall be:

- 1.1 Collectively to advance the cause of the Liberal Democrats (“the Party”) (as set out in the Preamble to the Constitution of the Party) within the Local Government Association (“the Association”) through the expression of a co-ordinated and cohesive viewpoint.
- 1.2 To secure the implementation of Liberal Democrat policies and principles as applied to local government.

- 1.3 To increase the effectiveness of members as representatives of their local authorities.
- 1.4 To work and communicate effectively with the local, regional, national and federal organisations of the Party and their elected members, Liberal Democrat groups on other local authority associations, and the relevant councillors' organisation(s).
- 1.5 To represent English and Welsh local government within the Party.

## **2 Membership**

- 2.1 Membership shall consist of:
  - 2.1.1 All councillors who are members of the Party and who are councillors on an authority which is a member of the Association. All councillors must maintain their membership of the Party throughout their period of elected office.
  - 2.1.2 All directly elected Mayors, Mayors of Combined Authorities and London Assembly Members in authorities which are members of the Association. They must maintain membership of the Party throughout their period of elected office.
  - 2.1.3 Members shall only have one vote regardless of how many authorities they serve on.
- 2.2 A member shall be excluded from the Group if they have conducted themselves in a manner which conflicts with the provisions of section 1 (Aims), section 8 (LGA Liberal Democrat Group Contract), section 9 (Group Loyalty) or of section 11 (Interests) of these Standing Orders, and a motion to exclude him/her has been passed by a two-thirds of the entire Group Executive. The Member shall have the right to address the meeting and can appeal to the next scheduled full Group meeting who can overturn an exclusion with a simple majority of those voting (if quorate).
  - 2.2.1 A member excluded from the Group shall also be stripped of any LGA positions they hold on behalf of the Group, including membership of Association Panels, Commissions, Task Groups, Boards, the County Councils Network (CCN) and District Councils Network (DCN).
  - 2.2.2 If a member's Party membership is suspended pending investigation, then their membership of the Group is suspended and they are neither eligible to remain in office, stand for election or vote in any Group elections.

- 2.3 Any member who has doubts about their future commitment to the Liberal Democrat Group should discuss the matter with the Group Leader or Group Chair.
- 2.4 All members are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles). They must treat others with respect and must not bully, harass or intimidate any Party member, member of staff, Party volunteer or member of the public. Such behaviour will be considered to be bringing the Party into disrepute.
- 2.5 Members must not give or express support for non-Liberal Democrat candidate(s).

### **3 Officers**

- 3.1 The Group shall elect:
  - 3.1.1 A Group Leader, who shall be a Group member under Standing Order 2.1.1.
  - 3.1.2 A Deputy Group Leader who shall be a Group member under Standing Order 2.1.1.
  - 3.1.3 A Group Chair
  - 3.1.4 A Group Secretary/Whip.
- 3.2 To meet LGA Governance arrangements, following elections the new Group Leader, Deputy Group Leader, Group Chair and Group Whip will take office from the date of the LGA General Assembly.
- 3.3 The roles and responsibilities of these posts are set out in the Group Election Guide
- 3.4 The election shall be conducted in line with the election regulations adopted by the Group. (See appendix 1).
- 3.5 The Group Executive shall have the powers to co-opt up to two other principal councillors, Peers or MPs onto the Executive.

- 3.6 Any officer will be deemed to have retired if at a Group meeting called pursuant to Standing Order 5.5 a vote of no confidence in them has been carried by a simple majority of the voting membership present.
- 3.7 The highest placed candidate in an election for places on an Association body shall be offered the highest position attainable by the Group, from Spokesperson to Chair.
- 3.8 Due to proportionality discussions at the LGA we sometimes do not know what our exact allocation of places would be on the LGA executive and this can change on a yearly basis. In this case the LGA Lib Dem Group Executive will elect by STV from amongst its members to any additional places. If the individual concerned receives or would receive more than one LGA Special Responsibility Allowance he/she can choose which one they receive, but only one at any one time during their term of office.
- 3.9 The Spokesperson should normally convene meetings of Group members before each meeting, and shall act as co-ordinator for the Group. They shall be responsible in consultation with the Group Chair for membership of sub-committees, other relevant appointments to LGA bodies and representation on outside bodies.
- 3.10 Spokespersons on the LGA Cities Board and People and Places Board shall be elected from all Liberal Democrat councillors who are on LGA authorities, but the candidate coming top of the list may only do the job if their council was signed up to the relevant Board. .
- 3.12 The Group Executive shall comprise the Group Officers, all chairs, vice and deputy chairs of LGA boards, panels and commissions, 1 nominee from ALDC, the National Lead Peer, Lib Dem nominations to Local Partnerships and the Leadership Centre, the Lib Dem lead member of the County Council Network and the District Councils Network.
- 3.13 The Jointly appointed LGA/ALDC Member to the Liberal Democrat Federal Board will have a voting place on the LGA Group Executive if they don't already occupy a place on the LGA Lib Dem Group Executive in a different role. This person will be appointed in line with a jointly agreed protocol between the LGA Lib Dem Group and ALDC.
- 3.14 All Group Executive members shall ensure they are paid up members of both ALDC (Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors) and the Liberal Democrats throughout their term of office.

- 3.15 No member of the Group Executive can hold the same position for more than three consecutive two-year terms although they may take up a different position on the Group Executive.
- 3.16 If a Group Officer resigns, is suspended from membership, or ceases to be a councillor on an LGA member authority during their term of office and is therefore ineligible to serve on the Executive, the remaining members of the Executive will appoint to that role from among their number until the next ordinary Group election.

#### **4 The Role of the Executive**

- 4.1 The Group Executive shall be responsible for decisions on behalf of the Group in between Group Meetings in accordance with the policies of the Full Group.
- 4.2 The Group Leader will be responsible for the general co-ordination of Group activity in conjunction with the Executive Committee. The Group Leader will be the spokesperson for the Group as a whole and for liaison with other political parties and with the organisations referred to in Standing Order 1.4.

The Group Leader shall hold the highest Association position attainable by the Group and shall be the group spokesperson on the LGA Executive.

- 4.3 The Deputy Group Leader will undertake all the duties of the Group Leader in his/her absence and will be responsible with the Group Leader for political strategy and group relations.
- 4.4 The Group Chair will be responsible for chairing Group Meetings and for liaison with Group members.
- 4.5 The Group Secretary/Whip in consultation with the Group Chair will be responsible for calling Group meetings, preparing and circulating agendas and minutes where necessary and any other administrative arrangements connected with the Group.

- 4.6 Group officers will be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses, if agreed with the Head of the Group Office in advance.
- 4.7 All final decisions concerning internal group business and policy matters are made by a simple majority vote of the Group Executive except where the need for a decision is urgent, in which case a decision on such matters will be taken by the Group Officers. All members under 2.1.1 should be entitled to observe and speak at Group Executive meetings.

## 5 Group Meetings

- 5.1 **Delegates to General Assembly, LGA Bodies, the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Executive, Panels, Commissions, Task Groups, CCN and DCN** are expected to attend Group meetings. If they are unable to attend they should inform the Group Secretary/Whip or the Group Office.
- 5.2 The election for LGA Liberal Democrat Executive and office holders should be held by electronic ballot with the option to vote by post.
- 5.3 The Group Executive shall meet to discuss the agenda of the Group meeting and other business brought forward by members of the Group. The Chief Whip will email all Group members seeking suggestions for the AGM agenda. In examining the agenda the Group Executive will:
  - 5.3.1 Ask members of various Panels, Commissions, Boards, the CCN and DCN to report on and answer concerning their association bodies.
  - 5.3.2 Make appropriate arrangements for amendments and speakers in debates, and for questions to be asked.
  - 5.3.3 Ensure by discussion that members are united on matters of concern to Liberal Democrat policy and principles so far as may be compatible with individual conscience.
  - 5.3.4 Prepare for initiatives in future meetings of committees or of the Group.

- 5.3.5 Any member may place an item on the agenda for a Group meeting by notifying the Group Secretary/Whip of the item at least seven clear working days before the date of the meeting.
- 5.3.6 An agenda will be circulated by the Group Secretary/Whip before each Group meeting.
- 5.4 The Group Chair shall then ensure adequate discussion and consideration of Group strategy over the General Assembly Agenda at the Group meeting.
- 5.5 A special Group meeting may be called by any five members, each from different local authorities, who shall submit a duly signed request specifying the reason to the Group Secretary/Whip. Such a meeting must be held within fourteen working days of the Group Secretary/Whip's receipt of the request, and except in the case of an emergency, seven calendar days' notice must be given to the rest of the Group. Notice can be served on members using email to their last known email address.
- 5.6 The quorum for a Group meeting is 25 members or one quarter of the Group membership whichever is the smaller.

## **6 Voting at Group Meetings**

- 6.1 All votes taken at Group meetings shall be on the basis of one vote for each member of the Group (as set out in section 2.1 of the Standing Orders).
- 6.2 In the case of equality the member chairing the meeting has a casting vote in addition to any vote he/she may have already been given.

## **7 Group Elections**

- 7.1 Group elections shall be conducted in line with the election regulations adopted by the Group. (See attached at Appendix 1)
- 7.2 The Group shall hold elections to determine all places to Association Boards, Panels, Commissions and any other bodies deemed appropriate by the Group Executive.

## **8 LGA Liberal Democrat Group Contract**

- 8.1. All candidates standing for election to positions on the Group Executive, LGA Boards, Panels, Commissions, the CCN, DCN or appointed by the Group are expected to sign the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Contract. Failure to do this will make their nomination for election void and they will not be able to take up a position they had been appointed to.
- 8.2 Failure to comply with the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Contract could result in action under Standing Order 2.2 of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Standing Orders

## **9 Group Loyalty**

- 9.1 Members are expected where possible to support Group decisions. These are of three main types:
  - 9.1.1 Members are expected to support Group decisions on organisational matters such as the appointment of members to Association bodies, nomination of members as chairs or vice-chairs of Association bodies, and appointments to outside bodies.
  - 9.1.2 On matters of policy fully discussed and agreed by the Group, members are expected to support the Group. The Group recognises the right of any individual member to oppose the Group on matters of deeply held conviction or on matters which seriously conflict with the interests of the member's own authority, but in other circumstances members are expected to refrain from speaking or voting against the Group.
  - 9.1.3 Members are expected to support members of the Group on local member authority matters that have little or no impact outside that member authority and little or no impact on the overall use of the Association's resources, recognising that where decisions are quasi-judicial it may not be possible to support the views of the member authority. When raising matters in an Association body relating to a member authority without members of the Group on that Association Body, members are asked to find out the member authority's views.

If a member is unable to support the Group on any matter falling within the above three categories, he/she should inform the Group Leader or Executive Spokesperson as appropriate in advance.

- 9.2 Group members who fail to attend a Group meeting and do not make their intentions known on matters to be discussed at the Group meeting are expected to abide by Group decisions.
- 9.3 Members are expected to discuss with the Group Leader and appropriate Board, Panel or Commission, Network Spokesperson any suggestions for Notices of Motion before submitting them.

## **10 Attendance at Association Meetings and Substitutions**

Any member who cannot attend a meeting of the Association or one of its bodies must inform the Group Office or relevant spokesperson beforehand. Members of LGA Boards, Panels, Commissions or Networks should attempt to find a substitute from a list provided by the Group office and in the event of those Members not being able to attend either should try to find a Liberal Democrat Councillor of their choice. If a substitute still cannot be found, the Group office should be informed.

## **.11 Interests**

At all Association (including Group) meetings members shall declare interests in full compliance with the *National Code of Local Government Conduct and the seven principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles)*. For those appointed to external bodies members must ensure they comply with the appropriate declarations of interest for the respective body.

## **12 Press Statements**

National press statements on subjects likely to be controversial in the Group or generally should be cleared prior to issue with the appropriate Board, Panel or Commission Spokesperson and Group Leader where appropriate.

## **13 Amendments to and Suspensions of Standing Orders**

- 13.1 Amendments and additions to these Standing Orders may be made only at Group meetings and by a two-third majority of those present and voting provided that they comprise the

necessary quorum as set out under Standing Order 5.6 (and noting the exception in 13.3 below). Notice of amendments must be received at least seven clear calendar days before consideration by the Group.

13.2 These Standing Orders may be suspended only by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting provided the meeting is quorate as set out in Standing Order 5.6.

13.3 Temporary Amendments to Standing Orders

In light of the Party's reviews into inclusivity, standards, behaviour in public life, for example, the Alderdice and Morrissey Reports, the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Executive may make temporary amendments to these Standing Orders in so far as doing so is necessary to comply with Party Policy. Any such amendments will be reported to the next annual Group Meeting, which will determine if the amendments continue to be needed and should be made permanent.

## 14 Group Discipline

14.1 Members of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Executive, representatives on LGA bodies, Boards, Commissions, Networks and Panels are expected to attend meetings of the Group Executive (arrangements are available for phone conference participation) or submit apologies.

14.2 Each member of the Executive is expected to ensure timely written reports on their activity and the work of their LGA body is presented to Group Executive meetings.

14.3 With good reason and in exceptional circumstances, and with the prior agreement of the Group Secretary/Whip a report may be postponed or combined into a report at the next Group Executive.

14.4 Failure to attend meetings or submit reports will be recorded by the Group Office and reported both to the Annual Group Meeting at the LGA Conference and in material circulated as part of the Group's election processes for LGA positions.

14.5 In cases of non-attendance/non reporting for a period of three meeting or three months (whichever is the shorter) the Group Secretary/Whip will prepare a report setting out the circumstances for the next available meeting of the Group Executive.

14.6 The member subject of the report will have the opportunity to address the meeting personally or submit a written explanation.

14.7 The Group Executive will have the authority to apply such sanction as it regards appropriate, from censure to removing the person from the LGA position they hold either permanently or temporarily or as a neutral act while pending investigation.

14.8 In such cases where a person is removed, the vacancy created will be offered to the person with the next highest number of votes in the election or the post will be advertised across the members and an appointment made by the Group leadership until the next ordinary election or the period of temporary suspension comes to an end.

#### *Group*

*The LGA Liberal Democrat Group consists of all Liberal Democrat Councillors across England & Wales in line with Standing Order 2.1.1*

#### *Group Officers*

*Group Officers are those officers elected in accordance with Standing Orders 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.14*

#### *Group Executive*

*The Group Executive comprises of all posts outlined in Standing Order 3.9*

#### **The seven Principles of Public Life:**

- 1. Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.**
- 2. Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.**
- 3. Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.**
- 4. Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.**

**5. Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.**

**6. Honesty - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.**

**7. Leadership - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.**

## Appendix 1

### Election Regulations: March 2022

1. The LGA Liberal Democrat Group shall elect by an all English and Welsh councillor electronic, **or on request, by postal** ballot:

- The officer posts of the Group (Leader, Deputy Leader, Chair and Whip - elected individually).
- Members for each of the Programme Boards: Children & Young People; Community Well-being; Culture, Tourism & Sport; Environment, Housing, Economy and Transport; Improvement; Resources Board.
- For the Boards the election shall be counted to elect block of board members plus a substitute (STV count for total vacancies) and then subsequently counted (AV 1 vacancy count) to determine the lead and substitute places.
- The Lead and Deputy Lead for the Lib Dems on the Cities and People and Places Board and spokesperson on Fire issues (elected as blocks of two).

2. Terms of office will last for two years. Terms of office may be altered should changes in the political composition of the LGA alter the positions available. Maximum combined terms of office for any one post will be 6 years.

3. The electorate shall comprise all principal authority Lib Dem councillors in England and Wales whose authorities are in membership of the LGA Group. Individuals who are members of more than one such principal authority shall only receive one set of ballot papers.

4. Any Liberal Democrat councillor who was a councillor on 30 April of the year of election on an authority in membership of the LGA Group is eligible to stand for the above positions providing that they are also a paid-up member of the Liberal Democrats and the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors and provided they have a proposer and a seconder (who must also be Liberal Democrat councillors on authorities in membership of the LGA). The proposer and seconder must sit on different authorities from each other.

5. All candidates seeking election will need to sign the LGA Liberal Democrat Group Contract. Failure to do so will make their nomination invalidated.

6. Nominators may not sign forms for more than one person per body/position.

7. No member should take a place on more than one board or panel. In the event that a member wins election to more than one, they will be asked to choose one preferred position and will be withdrawn from other contests, with those elections then being re-counted accordingly. Membership of the LGA Executive is not included for the purposes of this rule.

- Note that membership of this Executive is also subject to special rules under Section 4 of the Standing Orders.

8. The Group Executive shall appoint a Returning Officer and a Deputy Returning Officer and shall approve a timetable each election year for the receipt of nominations, organise the ballot and the counting of the votes for the elections. This timetable should include written notice of the poll 6 months in advance of the scheduled opening of nominations, along with a clear description of each role to be filled.

9. All elections shall be conducted by secret ballot and the alternative or single transferable vote. Counts shall be conducted in accordance with the current edition of the Electoral Reform Society's publication How to Conduct an Election by the Single Transferable Vote.

10. Nominations must be accompanied by the written consent of the candidate (personal emails are acceptable). It is the responsibility of each candidate to ensure that their nominations are submitted before the close of nominations. The Deputy Returning Officer will check each nomination to ensure that it is signed properly, proposed and seconded, that the candidate is eligible, and that neither the proposer and seconder has signed another candidates papers for the same position or body. Where possible, nominations will be checked within 24 hours of submission. Candidates should be aware that any nominations submitted on the final day, as laid out in the schedule of election, may be checked after the deadline and therefore incorrect nominations may be too late to be corrected.

11. Each candidate shall be entitled to a personal electoral address of one side of an A5 sheet in PDF portrait format, to be distributed by the election administrator. This must reach the election administrator at an address and by a date to be notified on the Group's nomination form. It should be noted for the printed booklet that the maximum image size is 20cm x 13.8 cm.

13. No candidate may incur further commercial expenses on campaigning at any time before or after the close of nominations, nor may they send any additional printed material to electors, either personally or by post.

14. It is acceptable for personal email and phone communication, as is the use of social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. However, candidates should not incur personal expenses such as the use of phone banks or commercial emailing.

15. Endorsements of the candidate by others are not permitted and will be excluded from official election addresses. However, each candidate's proposer and seconder can be featured on an individual candidate's manifesto.

16. Discretion on matters of dispute will be a decision of either the Returning Officer or the Deputy Returning Officer only. Any such decisions shall be final, and shall be recorded and subsequently reported to the Group Executive following the election.

17. Lists of names and addresses of eligible councillors shall not be released by the LGA Liberal Democrat Office for the purposes of the election.

18. The lead member elected for each body will be offered the most senior LGA role available to the group on each respective body. The negotiation process which allocates these amongst the political groups will commence after the elections, within the LGA and will normally be ratified by the LGA. This may mean there is a slight delay in confirming positions as these negotiations can sometimes take a while as dependent on LGA proportionality discussions

19. Casual vacancies for places on an LGA body shall be filled by agreement of the Group Executive.



## LGA Liberal Democrat Group Contract

This contract applies to Liberal Democrat councillors elected or appointed to serve on LGA Boards, Committees, or associated organisations. It also applies to Substitute members when they are serving as or acting as a full member of the Board, Committee or associated organisation. The contract also applies to the LGA Liberal Democrat Executive officers.

As a condition of my continued membership of the LGA Liberal Democrat Group,

I .....will:

- 1) Work collaboratively with other Liberal Democrats serving on the Board, Committee or associated organisations and within the wider Liberal Democrat family.
- 2) Attend the following events
  - i) All LGA boards and committees to which I have been appointed
  - ii) Liberal Democrat Local Government Conference or equivalent event
  - iii) If I am a new member, the LGA New Member Induction Event
  - iv) Any other events at which I am expected to be present in the role to which I am appointed

- a) Unless
  - i) I have good reason for my absence **and**
  - ii) I have arranged a substitute where necessary to attend in my place
- 3) If I am a lead member, provide a report to every LGA Liberal Democrat Group Executive on my work and that of my board or committee, no less than one week prior to the meeting of the Executive.
- 4) If I am a lead member, I will consult the Liberal Democrat Group Whip and Head of the Group Office before putting forward nominations on appointments to outside bodies;
- 5) If I am a lead member I will organise and facilitate any preparation meeting required prior to board meetings **and ensure the substitute member(s) are involved and at least have copies of the Board reports/agendas.**
- 6) If I am a lead member for either Resources or Fire Services Management Committee I will consult with LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leadership Team when conducting negotiations regarding pay and conditions on behalf of the Local Government Association.
- 7) **If I am a substitute member, I will keep myself up to date with the work of the Board, Committee or associated organisation.**
- 8) Maintain my membership of ALDC for the duration of the term for which I am appointed.
- 9) Keep my declaration of interests up to date for the duration of the term for which I am appointed
- 10) Adhere to my home local authority's code of conduct when undertaking LGA business

I confirm that I have **received, read and accept** the Group's Standing Orders.

Signed.....

Date.....

## **Contact Details for LGA use:**

Mobile number (best number to contact you on):

Best email address:

## **For Lib Dem Office Use:**

Alternative telephone number (e.g. PA, adviser, home number):

Alternative email address:

Date of birth: