

# HILLINGDON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS



## SPRING CONFERENCE DISCUSSION

10.00 am – 12.30 pm 11<sup>th</sup> March 2017  
Compass Theatre Ickenham

The Party's Spring Conference in York consists of six policy motions, four policy consultations, speeches by leading Liberal Democrats, campaigning training and fringe meetings organised by a variety of party and lobby groups. Any party member is welcome to register and attend. The Agenda and Policy papers can be found at <http://www.libdems.org.uk/spring-conference-2017-policypapers>.

In preparation, all local members are invited to discuss the policy motions. Included below is a summary of the key elements of the resolutions. Full Texts can be found at: <http://www.libdems.org.uk/spring-conference-2017-agenda>

### **AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS**

- The most controversial motions are likely to be
  - Decriminalisation of prostitution
  - The Role of Faith Schools
- Highly topical resolutions are proposed on
  - Associate Citizenship of the EU
  - The Crisis in Health & Social Care
  - Overcrowding in Prisons
- Important but unlikely to win prizes from the Plain English Campaign:
  - Towards a World Free of Nuclear weapons
- Consultations:
  - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy
  - Education
  - Rural Communities
  - International policy post-Brexit

- Focus law enforcement on non-consensual activity
- Strengthen the law on coercion into sex work including trafficking
- Provide support for those trying to leave sex work
- Quash past convictions for anything subsequently decriminalised
- Oppose government plans for age verification for access to online pornography as unworkable, a danger to privacy and illiberal.
- Use a multi-agency approach to combat crimes against sex workers and the wider community (The Merseyside+ Model)

### **F16 THE ROLE OF FAITH IN STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS**

In 1870, the Liberal Party split over the role of religion in schooling. We are still arguing over the subject as the inconsistencies in this resolution indicate. The resolution suggests that religious organisations should be allowed to sponsor state schools with a religious character but

- Religious education should cover all religions and non-religious world views
- Religious instruction should not be compulsory

### **F4 A RATIONAL APPROACH TO HARM REDUCTION**

Based on a detailed policy paper, the resolution argues that criminalisation of sex work drives it underground and prevents those vulnerable to abuse and coercion receiving help. It proposes to

- Segregation of school children based on religion may prevent community integration

It proposes that:

- Religious education is included in OFSTED inspections
- Staff can only be employed on merit rather than religion except those mainly providing religious instruction
- Religious schools be allowed to hold services but removes the obligation to do so from non-religious schools
- Schools providing services or religious instruction be required to allow mature students to opt out

In addition the motion offers a choice between:

- Phasing out admissions on the basis of religion over six years
- Allowing religious schools to use faith criteria for admissions provided that they can demonstrate that it is not used as a proxy for socio-economic or racial discrimination
- Reducing selection by faith to 50% of intake or if currently less to retain the lower limit.

### **F11 TOWARDS A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Proposed by the Federal Policy Committee this too is backed by a policy paper but rather jargon heavy. The motion argues that Britain should maintain its commitment to NATO and other alliances and to a 'cost effective minimum nuclear deterrent while seeking to kickstart new multilateral talks' to reduce nuclear stockpiles and operational weapons. It suggests that we do not need 'the same hair-trigger posture as during the Cold War' with four submarines as a 'Continuous At-Sea Deterrent', though a submarine weapons system should be retained with a 'medium readiness responsive posture'. Key proposals are to:

- Use the P5 (permanent members of the UN Security Council) negotiating process to 'build a regime for de-alerting nuclear weapons', strengthen the legal

framework for disarmament and develop verification processes.

- Use the 2020/21 defence review to consider how best to deliver medium readiness
- Investigate the feasibility of lower readiness postures
- Investigate the impact on the schedule for maintaining the Vanguard fleet
- Scrutinise the costs of the Dreadnought programme, (the replacement submarines for Vanguard)

### **F17 ASSOCIATE CITIZENSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The proposers note a proposal to create associate citizenship of the EU and calls on the government to ensure that

- British citizens can apply for associate EU citizenship
- This provides as many of the rights of full EU citizenship as possible
- Any fee charged is as low as possible

### **F8 THE CRISIS IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

The resolution will be proposed by Norman Lamb. It argues from the crisis experienced by the NHS this winter, a £1.9bn funding shortage and the cuts in pharmacy budgets that

- The government should establish a cross party NHS and Care convention involving all interested bodies in agreeing a long term settlement.
- That there should be an emergency injection of funds directed particularly to social care and mental health services aimed at improving integration and modernising services.

### **F5 TACKLING OVERCROWDING IN THE PRISON SYSTEM**

The motion notes the near doubling of the prison population since 1990, the 30% cut in prison officers since 2010 and the 45% re-offending rate in the first year after release.

It argues that the prison system is only effective in reducing crime when it provides education training and health care. These

services are currently overstretched. It notes that LD policy of decriminalising personal use drug possession would help tackle prison overcrowding.

The motion calls for

- A drastic overhaul in sentencing policy and the release of prisoners on indeterminate sentences who have completed their minimum term
- The Home Secretary to increase the number of prison officers above the extra 2500 already promised

## **CONSULTATIONS**

- The **21<sup>st</sup> Century economic policy** consultation is considering policy against a background of an aging population, rising inequality and the move to a 'gig economy'. How can workers be empowered, concentration in digital industries be reduced and infrastructural investment secured?
- The **education** consultation is concerned largely with schools, their funding and teacher recruitment but also covers the post 16 transition to adulthood.
- The **Rural Communities** consultation ranges widely over, broadband provision, tourism, access, education, housing, flooding and most importantly Brexit – how will EU infrastructure grants be replaced and what should be done about agriculture?
- The **Britain in the World Consultation** covers all aspects of foreign policy in a post Brexit decision world though reiterating that we would be better off in the EU.

**Tony Little**