

KINGSTON BOROUGH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
APPROVAL AND SELECTION PROCEDURES
FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS

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Section 1: PRELIMINARIES

The processes and procedures in this document relate to the approval and selection of Liberal Democrat candidates for local council elections in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames.

1.1 CONSTITUTION

The Borough party Constitution can be found at www.kingstonlibdems.org/constitution. Section 9 deals with Candidates for and Elections to Public Office. The clauses relevant to this document state:

9.2 The Executive Committee shall seek to ensure that, so far as practicable, all seats within the Borough on Principal Local Authorities are contested by members of the Party, unless the Executive Committee is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the Party in any case not to do so.

9.3 When it is necessary to select one or more local government candidates for an electoral area, the Branch, or, if there is no Branch, the Local Party, shall hold a postal ballot in which all members who are members of the Branch may vote, and may select any member from a list of approved candidates maintained by the Executive Committee, or may select any other member conditionally upon subsequent approval by the Executive Committee. The timetable and procedure for selection shall be agreed by the Branch Committee and the Executive Committee, or, where there is no Branch, by the Executive Committee.

9.4 In any electoral area, in which the eligible electorate for voting in the selection does not exceed 10, the electorate shall be expanded to constitute the members living in the electoral area plus the Branch Committee or, if there is no Branch, the Executive Committee.

9.5 In any case in which time does not permit the holding of a postal ballot the Branch Committee, or if there is no Branch the Executive Committee may select the candidate.

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

This document includes the procedure for selection as referenced in Sections 9.3 of the Constitution. It will be adopted by all Branches in the local party.

1.2 APPOINTING THE APPROVAL AND SELECTION TEAM

The Borough Executive appoints the Approval and Selection team. This should happen soon after the local elections, so that the team can be in place throughout the four year cycle.

The team should have a minimum of six members, including current councillors and former councillors as well as campaigners who have not been councillors.

The Approval and Selection team oversees the processes for any Council by-election that occurs, as well as planning for the four yearly local council elections.

1.3 INFORMATION PACKS

Early in the four year cycle the Approval and Selection team will draw up an information pack for prospective candidates. This will include:

- The pre-amble to the Liberal Democrat constitution
- Outlines of local and national Liberal Democrat policies
- The approval and selection procedures in Kingston
- The structure of the local party
- A job description of a councillor, plus a statement of what it means to be a councillor

This information pack should be available on the Borough Party website and in hard copy.

1.4 FINDING CANDIDATES

It is the responsibility of all wards to search for and encourage suitable candidates. These could be found from:

- Current activists
- Current members who are not activists
- Deliverers and other helpers who are not members
- Strong Liberal Democrat supporters (as identified on Connect) who have not been actively involved in the party
- Community activists who are sympathetic to the party
- Councillors' casework

The Approval and Selection team, in conjunction with the Borough Executive and the campaigns organiser(s), should encourage all wards to be on the lookout for potential candidates at all times, and to undertake focused searches at least two years before the local elections.

The local party should participate in any initiatives and training that encourage people to consider themselves as potential candidates, whether run by the party or by the local authority.

1.5 CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Confidentiality and respect for data protection should be observed by the Approval and Selection Team, by Returning Officers when carrying out elections, by the Borough Executive Committee when dealing with appeals or the withdrawal of approval, and by the President when handling appeals.

Section 2: APPROVING CANDIDATES

2.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE APPROVAL AND SELECTION TEAM

Advice and guidance

The Approval and Selection team should provide advice and guidance to prospective candidates and to wards as they search for candidates.

Ensuring all candidates are approved

All candidates must be approved before they can run for election. Normally approval precedes selection, but it is possible to select a candidate conditional on approval in some very limited circumstances (see Sections 3.4 and 3.5).

Candidates mailing list

The Approval and Selection team should set up a mailing list of all approved candidates. Its prime purpose is to announce ward selections, but it can also be used to provide support and campaigning advice for candidates.

Interview panels

The team should set up an interview panel for each interview. The panel should consist of two members of the Approval and Selection team - ideally one individual who has had Council experience and one person who is an active campaigner. The team should arrange a suitable date for each interview and ensure that the candidates submit the paperwork in good time.

Retaining paperwork

One copy of each of the documents used in an interview should be retained and stored securely. All other copies (apart from the candidate's own copies) should be shredded immediately after the interview.

2.2 STANDARD PROCEDURES FOR APPROVING CANDIDATES

Normally candidates will be approved at least six months prior to the election, and ideally up to two years before.

The standard procedures should be used at least six months before the election for:

- An existing councillor
- A candidate who wishes to stand in a target ward
- A candidate who wishes to stand in a non-target ward only

Where approval is needed less than six months before an election, for example in a by-election or where a selected candidate has withdrawn, then the fast track procedure may be used (see Section 2.3)

For the candidates, the approval procedures is broadly a three-stage process:

- Documentation, to be submitted prior to interview
- Interview with an interview panel
- Notification of outcome

The approval procedures will begin long before the target wards have been identified. It is recommended that in the early stages all candidates are deemed to wish to stand in a target ward. Their level of activity will help to determine whether a ward should be designated a target ward or not.

Note that for 2022, initially at least, all wards are considered as potential target wards.

The table on the next page outlines the main steps for existing councillors and other candidates.

	Existing Councillors	Other candidates	Candidates who wish to stand in a non-target ward ONLY
Forms	Complete approval form	Complete approval form	Complete approval form
		Question 18 may be submitted after 6 months, if new.	Question 18 may be omitted
	Complete diversity form	Complete diversity form	Complete diversity form
Interview	Questions, as above	Questions, as above	Questions, as above. Discussion of how to handle things if unexpected elected
	Give: full approval <i>or</i> conditional approval to be reviewed in 6 months (if there are concerns) <i>or</i> no approval.	Give: full approval (for experienced campaigners who have completed all forms and done well at interview) <i>or</i> conditional approval (for those whose experience is lacking) <i>or</i> no approval.	Give: full approval for non target seat only <i>or</i> no approval.
	Complete Approval Record Sheet	Complete Approval Record Sheet	Complete Approval Record Sheet
After 6 months	Those given conditional approval to submit a summary to the interviewers showing how concerns have been addressed.	Those given conditional approval to submit a summary to the interviewers showing how recommendations have been taken forward.	
	References taken up	References taken up	
	Give: full approval <i>or</i> no approval.	Give: full approval <i>or</i> no approval.	
	Update Approval Record Sheet	Update Approval Record Sheet	

Approval application forms

The forms used in 2018 have been revised to include some areas which have been highlighted in recent years as needing attention. Such revisions include:

- A question about campaigning, to replace the summary of activities used previously
- A question about community involvement, which should reflect tasks undertaken during lockdown
- A question for councillors about what they have achieved since elected
- Inclusion of My Campaigning Commitments, to replace the supplementary form used previously
- A Diversity monitoring form

The interview

Before an interview the interviewers would be provided with:

- the Candidate Approval form completed by each candidate
- a list of questions to be asked to all candidates
- an advice document setting out the manner in which interviews are to be conducted
- a check-list setting out the documentation that needs to be seen or signed at interview
- an Approval Record Sheet on which to record the outcome and to note any particular encouragements or concerns

At the end of the interview, interviewers will use the record sheet and notes to make a decision about each candidate. It is anticipated that each interview will last 30 minutes for existing councillors and 45 minutes for others, after which the interviewers will spend 15 minutes discussing the candidate's suitability – longer can be allocated if necessary but experience shows that 15 minutes is generally ample time for interviewers to come to a decision.

After the interview

Once a decision is made, the panel will complete the Approval Record Sheet and share with the chair of the Approval and Selection team. Any additional paperwork will be shredded. The chair will feed back the decision to the candidate.

When a candidate is approved s/he will be added to the approved candidate list.

Approval remains valid for one year after the date of the election (to avoid the need to re-approve candidates in the case of a by-election that crops up unexpectedly very soon after the main election).

Appeals

It is hoped that the above process will result in measured and fair decisions, however there always needs to be provision for an appeal.

If a candidate disagrees with a decision, they have the right to appeal to an appeal panel.

1. **Initial appeal.** An initial appeal can be made to the Approval and Selection team. Two members of the Approval and Selection team who were not involved in the initial interview will review the interview notes and re-interview the candidate. They should focus on the

questions where the interviewee feels the original interviewers may have misunderstood their answers or inappropriately imposed conditions. The appeals panel can recommend to the chair of the Approval and Selection team that a decision be altered.

2. **Second appeal.** If the initial appeal panel uphold the decision of the original interviewers, and the candidate wishes to take the matter further, a second level of appeal is available. In such cases, the appeal will be referred to the Borough Executive Committee who will be responsible for appointing two experienced party members to listen to the concerns of the candidate.

2.3 FAST TRACK PROCEDURES FOR APPROVING CANDIDATES

The standard procedures are to be used for all candidates who apply for approval at least six months before the election, but there will be times when such a timescale proves impossible.

Where approval is needed less than six months before an election, for example in a by-election or where a selected candidate has withdrawn, then the fast track procedure must be used. This varies from the standard procedure in one aspect only: that the approval processes can only result in a decision of full approval or no approval.

The only exceptions to this would be if there were small, easily-managed conditions to fulfil. For example, if an experienced campaigner in good standing with the party had accidentally let their membership slip, it would be acceptable to offer conditional approval on the condition that membership is renewed within a month.

2.4 WITHDRAWAL OF APPROVAL

The Borough Executive may withdraw approval for a candidate if the candidate acts against the interests of the Liberal Democrats.

If the candidate has already been selected to stand in a ward, whether target or non-target, they will automatically be de-selected and will not be permitted to put their name forward for selection in any other ward.

Appeals

A member may appeal against a decision to withdraw approval. The appeal should be submitted in writing to the Chair of the English Party.

Section 3: SELECTING CANDIDATES

3.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOROUGH EXECUTIVE

Returning officers

The Borough Executive should authorise two or more Returning Officers who are familiar with the conduct of STV elections.

Branch members

According to Section 9.3 of the local party Constitution, 'all members who are members of the Branch may vote ' in the selection of a candidate'.

The local party constitution states:

8.2 The members of the Branch shall be:

(a) All members of the Local Party whose Registered Membership Address (as defined in the Membership Rules of the Liberal Democrats in England) 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 Committee and the Local Party Executive Committee agree.

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

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

All Branch members must hold valid membership four weeks before the hustings meeting. The Data Officer should provide the Branch with a list of valid members.

3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE APPROVAL AND SELECTION TEAM

Advice and guidance

The Approval and Selection team should have oversight of the selection processes undertaken by the wards, and provide advice and guidance as necessary.

Candidates mailing list

The Approvals and Selection team should maintain a mailing list of all approved candidates. All calls for candidates should be made through the candidates mailing list. Anyone on the list of approved candidates may respond to a call for candidates in any ward in the Borough.

Nominations

Blank nomination forms should be sent to everyone on the candidates list. A template is given in the appendix.

3.3 STANDARD PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING CANDIDATES

The standard procedures should be used

- In all target wards
- In wards that hope to become target wards.

The standard procedures may also be used in non-target wards if there is sufficient time, and the Branch wishes, but the simpler procedures in Section 3.6 are also permissible in those circumstances.

Approval

Under the standard procedures, candidates should normally be approved before they are nominated. A ward that has been designated as a target ward may not select a candidate who has been approved to stand in a non-target ward only.

Preparing for selection

The Branch officers should arrange a hustings meeting and appoint a Returning Officer from those approved by the Borough Executive. Note that the Returning Officer cannot vote in the selection.

The Branch officers should prepare a specification, describing the ward and its issues and needs, and the skills they would welcome in a candidate (see template in the Appendix). This must not be constructed to favour specific candidates. The specification should be approved by the Returning Officer.

The Returning Officer should inform the Approval and Selection team of the arrangements for the proposed selection.

Selection announcement

Four weeks before the hustings meeting the Approval and Selection team should put out a call for candidates through the candidates mailing list, together with the specification. This should give the date and time of the hustings meeting and the contact details of the Returning Officer. The deadline for nominations should be three weeks before the hustings meeting.

Each candidate for the selection must complete the nomination form, and be nominated and seconded by two Branch members.

Candidates are encouraged to provide a statement, maximum 300 words, with a head and shoulders photo in support of their nomination. Artwork is not required.

Nomination forms and candidates' statements should be sent to the Returning Officer for the ward.

Calling the hustings meeting

Two weeks before the hustings meeting, a ballot paper should be sent with a letter or email to all Branch members. This will announce the time and place of the hustings meeting, and will include the statements and photos from each of the candidates.

Voting

Members may vote by sending their completed ballot paper (on paper or electronically) to the Returning Officer before the meeting, or by attending the meeting and placing the ballot in a ballot box after the hustings.

The Returning Officer must take steps to ensure that no-one votes more than once. S/he should keep a record of who has voted before the meeting, but not how they have voted. At the hustings meeting s/he should also record other members as they place their ballot in the box.

Conduct of hustings meeting

Normally the meeting will be chaired by the Branch Chair, or by someone nominated by the Chair. The Returning Officer will check attendance at the hustings meeting against the list of Branch members.

Each candidate should be given 5 minutes to speak. Once all have made their verbal statements, a maximum of 30 minutes should be allowed for members to ask questions of the candidates. Most questions should be general and all candidates should be given the opportunity to answer them. It is permissible, though, for members to ask a few questions of specific candidates on matters relating to their written or verbal statements.

Method of voting

1. Where there are more candidates than vacancies in the ward

In this case the election will take place using STV. A template ballot paper using STV is given in the appendix

2. Where there are the same number of, or fewer, candidates than vacancies in the ward

The procedure here has been designed so that members may reject one or more candidates if they wish to. It is not possible to use STV in these circumstances, but a confirmatory ballot will be held instead.

- The ballot paper will list each candidate with the option to accept or reject each one individually.
- A candidates will be accepted if more than 50% of those who expressed a preference mark the accept box for that candidate
- A candidate will be rejected if 50% or more of those who expressed a preference mark the reject box for that candidate.
- If a candidate is rejected then that vacancy remains open and the ward will need to fill it at a future date.

A template ballot paper to be used in these circumstances is given in the Appendix.

Announcing the result

Normally, the Returning Officer should count the votes at the end of the hustings meeting. Candidates should be advised of the result and given the opportunity to examine the ballot papers if they wish before the result is declared to the ward members.

If it is not feasible to carry out the count at the meeting then candidates and ward members should be told when it will happen, and arrangements made to declare the results to all.

3.4 PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING A CANDIDATE FOR A BY-ELECTION

In the specific circumstances of a by-election it is advisable for the selection to be carried out by the Borough Executive in conjunction with the Branch.

Approval

Given the urgent requirement to select a candidate, it is permissible for the order to be reversed and for a candidate to be selected conditional upon approval. Approval should follow as soon as possible after selection.

Preparing for selection

The selection will be carried out by a panel on behalf of the Borough Executive. Normally the panel will consist of the Chair of the Executive Committee, the Chair of the Branch Committee and the Leader of the Council Group, or members nominated to represent them. The campaigns organiser should be invited to attend for advice.

The panel will arrange a meeting at which they will make their selection. They may wish to invite and consult with ward members if it can be done in time, but the ward members themselves will not be able to vote, because there will not be sufficient time to follow the procedures in Section 3.3.

Selection announcement

The panel should send a call for candidates to the candidates mailing list through the Approval and Selection team with a deadline for the return of nomination forms and statements. This should give the date and time of the selection panel meeting and explain the method being used. Other suitable candidates may be identified and invited from the local party membership.

Conduct of selection meeting

Each candidate should be given 5 minutes to speak. Questions may be asked of each candidate once they have spoken.

The panel will come to an agreement about which candidate to select, if any, and will inform the candidates, Executive and Branch members as soon as possible.

3.5 PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING CANDIDATES CLOSE TO AN ELECTION

These procedures may be used where there is a vacancy in a target ward close to the election, leaving insufficient time to use the standard procedures.

Approval

Under these circumstances, it is permissible for a candidate to be selected conditional upon approval. The approval process should be carried out as soon as possible after selection. Whilst it

is preferable for a candidate to be approved first, under pressured circumstances it is sometimes only possible to carry out approval after selection.

Preparing for selection

The selection will be carried out by a panel on behalf of the Branch members. Normally the panel will consist of the Branch officers, but if they are unavailable then the selection may be undertaken by a panel (which should include some ward members if possible) set up by the Borough Executive.

The panel will arrange a meeting at which they will make their selection. They may wish to invite ward members, and to ask for their views on the candidates, but the ward members themselves will not be able to vote unless the standard procedures are used.

Selection announcement

The panel should send a call for candidates to the candidates mailing list with a deadline for the return of nomination forms and statements. This should give the date and time of the selection panel meeting and explain the procedures being used.

Conduct of selection meeting

Each candidate should be given 5 minutes to speak. Questions may be asked of each candidate once they have spoken.

The panel will come to an agreement about which candidate to select, if any, and will inform the candidates and Branch members as soon as possible.

3.6 PROCEDURES FOR SELECTING CANDIDATES IN A NON-TARGET WARD

The standard procedures in Section 3.3 may be used in non-target wards if there is sufficient time, and the Branch wishes to use them. However in order to reduce the burden on non-target wards the abbreviated procedures in this section are also permissible in non-target wards.

Approval

All candidates must be approved before they are nominated.

Preparing for selection

The selection will be carried out by a panel on behalf of the ward members. Normally the panel will consist of the Branch officers, but if they are unavailable then the selection may be undertaken by a panel (which should include some ward members if possible) set up by the Borough Executive.

The panel will arrange a meeting at which they will make their selection. They may wish to invite ward members, and to ask for their views on the candidates, but the ward members themselves will not be able to vote unless the standard procedures are used.

Selection announcement

The panel should send a call for candidates to the candidates mailing list with a deadline for the return of nomination forms and statements. This should give the date and time of the selection panel meeting and explain the procedures being used.

Conduct of selection meeting

Each candidate should be given 5 minutes to speak. Questions may be asked of each candidate once they have spoken.

The panel will come to an agreement about which candidate(s) to select, if any, and will inform the candidates and Branch members as soon as possible.

3.7 POST-SELECTION MENTORING

All candidates in target seats who are not sitting councillors should be mentored both by the ward organiser (in relation to campaigning) and by an existing councillor (in relation to the role of a councillor).

3.8 WITHDRAWAL OF APPROVAL FOR A SELECTED CANDIDATE

Section 2.4 applies, but the Borough Executive may also withdraw approval for a candidate selected to stand in a target ward if there is evidence that the candidate has not been actively campaigning in the ward. The candidate will automatically be de-selected and will not be permitted to put their name forward for selection in another target ward.

Appeals

A selected candidate may appeal against a decision to withdraw approval. The appeal should be submitted in writing to the Chair of the English Party.

Section 4: TIMELINE FOR 2022 LOCAL ELECTIONS

2019: Borough Executive and branches to endorse amendments to the Approval and Selection Procedures, appoint the Approval and Selection team, and delegate tasks to them, including the production of the documents listed in the Appendix.

Early 2020: Discussions with existing councillors about whether they wish to stand in 2022.

June/July 2020: Approval interviews for existing councillors

Summer 2020: Information pack for potential candidates developed, approved and made available. Wards start actively searching for candidates.

September 2020: Information evening for other potential candidates, followed by campaign training and approval interviews.

March 2021: Start selection processes in wards when boundary changes known. Aim to have all candidates in target wards approved and selected by summer 2021.

APPENDIX

Approval documents

- Approval application form
- Diversity monitoring form
- Conduct of approval interviews
- Approval record sheet

Selection documents

- Nomination form
- Guidance to wards on selection
- Ward specification template
- Ballot paper templates
 1. Where there are more candidates than vacancies in the ward
 2. Where there are the same number of, or fewer, candidates than vacancies in the ward