

## **PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE OXFORD BRANCH OF THE OXFORD WEST AND ABINGDON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

### **1. Motion submitted for approval to the Oxford Branch Annual General Meeting on Friday 2 October 2020.**

- 1.1 This Annual General Meeting resolves to approve the proposed red-lined amendments and to adopt with immediate effect the amended version as the constitution of the Oxford Branch of the Oxford West and Abingdon Liberal Democrats.

### **2. Explanatory notes**

- 2.1 The constitution of the Oxford Branch has not been updated for many years. This motion proposes revisions to bring it up to date in light of changes in ward boundaries, the latest version of the English Party's Model Constitution for Branches, and to align the constitution with the way the Oxford Branch operates in practice.
- 2.2 The proposed revisions to section 3.1 update the Branch area to reflect the latest ward boundaries.
- 2.3 The proposed insertion of new sections 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 and 8.5 (and consequent renumbering of subsequent sections) are to reflect the latest version of the English Party's Model Constitution for Branches:
- (a) In accordance with long-standing practice in the Branch and Local Party, the version proposed for 8.3(c) and 8.3(f) from the Model Constitution for selection of candidates are for them to be chosen by members resident in the electoral area at a General Meeting (i.e. a hustings and vote).
  - (b) Section 8.3(e) provides for the Branch Executive to select a Returning Officer (as opposed to the Local Party).
  - (c) Section 8.6 of the Model Constitution has not been included in the proposed revisions as the Branch is not responsible for selecting Mayoral, Greater London Authority, Parliamentary or European candidates.
- 2.4 The proposed amendment to section 5.1 formalises the Branch's practice of electing a Vice-Chair in addition to the Chair each year. The first proposed amendment to 5.2(c) allows for a greater representation of county councillors on the Branch Executive if (as we hope) we win more seats in May 2021.
- 2.5 The amendments to 7.2(g), 9.4 and 9.5 reflect the long-standing practice of not appointing a separate independent reviewer for the accounts in addition to the Local Party into which the Branch accounts are incorporated. In addition, it is proposed that the permitted approach within the Model Constitution of submitting the accounts for adoption to the Annual General Meeting is chosen instead of requiring the Branch to hold an additional General Meeting in the first quarter of each year.
- 2.6 Minor changes to tidy up the text to improve clarity have been proposed to sections 1.1, 5.2(c), 6.3, 7.3, 7.4 and 10.2.

## **CONSTITUTION OF THE OXFORD BRANCH OF THE OXFORD WEST AND ABINGDON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

### **1. Name**

1.1 The name of the Branch shall be ~~the~~ “~~The~~ Oxford Branch Liberal Democrats”.

### **2. Objectives**

2.1 The objectives of the Branch shall be to further the objectives of the Oxford West and Abingdon Liberal Democrat Constituency Party (the “Local Party”) within the area covered by the Branch.

### **3. Branch area**

3.1 The Oxford Branch Area will be that part of the area of the Local Party in ~~the Holywell,~~ Carfax ~~& Jericho,~~ ~~and Osney & St Thomas,~~ ~~North Walton Manor,~~ ~~St. Margaret’s,~~ Summertown, ~~Cuttleslowe & Sunnymead,~~ and Wolvercote wards.

### **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) 7 Ordinary Members, elected annually;

- (c) Up to 24 representatives, elected annually by and from the Branch members on Oxfordshire County Council, and 2 representatives elected annually by and from the Branch members on from the Oxford City Council, representing wards/divisions falling wholly or partially within the Branch area;
  - (d) The Executive may invite as a non-voting member of the Executive a representative of the Oxford University Liberal Democrat Society.
- 5.3 The Executive may co-opt 7 additional members, for a term expiring not later than that of the next AGM.
- 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 at the next meeting of the Executive.

## **6. Election 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> January following their election until the following 31<sup>st</sup> December.
- 6.3 The Executive shall appoint a Returning Officer for the election of Officers and Ordinary Members before the 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 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.
- 6.5 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> September and not later than 30<sup>th</sup> November. 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:

- (e) To receive reports from all the Officers on their activities in the last year;
  - (f) To receive reports from councillors representing wards or divisions falling wholly or partially within the Branch area;
  - (g) 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;~~  
~~To appoint a person to produce an independent report on the accounts for the current financial year;~~
  - (h) To consider any motion that has been submitted by any two members of the Branch to the Secretary in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM;
  - (i) 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 or the Branch's membership. Such a meeting shall be convened within 28 days of being requested, and with members ~~having~~ 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 a 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), the Local Party or adjoining constituency 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, city, town or parish 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 General Meeting in which all members who are resident in the electoral area concerned 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 Executive 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 General Meeting 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.~~

## **8.9. Finance**

~~8.19.1~~ The Branch's accounting period shall be the same as that of the Local Party.

~~8.29.2~~ 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.

~~8.39.3~~ The Treasurer shall ensure that no donation over £200 is accepted except from a permissible donor and shall keep records and submit donations reports to the Treasurer of the Local Party.

~~8.49.4~~ The Treasurer shall annually submit the 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. ~~The Treasurer shall provide full access to the accounting records to the Local Party Treasurer and to the Local Party's independent reviewer.~~

~~8.59.5~~ The Treasurer shall submit the accounts of the Branch ~~together with an independent report to a~~ the Annual General Meeting ~~to be held not later than 31<sup>st</sup> March.~~

~~8.69.6~~ The authorised signatories on any Branch bank account shall be at least two in number and shall not come solely from the members of any one family.

## **9.10. Constitution and interpretation**

~~9.110.1~~ Amendments to this constitution may only be made by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting. Details of any proposed changes shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting

~~9.210.2~~ 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.

[9.310.3](#) A copy of this constitution shall be kept by the Secretary and sent to the Local Party Secretary.

[9.410.4](#) 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.

[9.510.5](#) The Branch may choose to dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a General Meeting, or it may be dissolved following the procedure laid out by 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.

[9.610.6](#) The Executive shall perform the same functions as that of a "Branch Committee" under the Local Party's constitution.

[9.710.7](#) The Branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Local Party.