

STANDING ORDERS

JOINT REGIONAL CONFERENCES OF DEVON & CORNWALL AND WESTERN COUNTIES

1.0 Validity

Nothing in these Standing Orders can overrule any provision of the Constitutions of either the Devon and Cornwall or the Western Counties Liberal Democrats, and all definitions are as set out in those Constitutions. These Standing Orders were made jointly by the Conference Committees under the provision of the aforementioned Constitutions.

2.0 Deadlines

The Joint Conference Committee shall specify:

- a) **The closing date for the receipt** of policy and business motions, Constitutional amendments and amendments to Standing Orders. This shall be at least 3 weeks before the start of the Conference.
- b) **The closing date for receipt** of amendments to the motions, Constitutional amendments or amendments to Standing Orders. This shall be at least one week before the date of the Conference.
- c) **The closing date for the submission** of emergency/topical motions. This shall be at least two days before the start of the Conference.

3.0 Registration

3.1 All persons wishing to take part in a Conference meeting must register in such a manner as the Joint Conference Committee may require including the payment of registration fees where required, and must comply with such directions on entry and security as the Joint Conference Committee may give.

3.2 Conference members shall produce such evidence of their status as may be reasonably required by the Joint Conference Committee.

4. The Conference Agenda

4.1 The Joint Conference Committee shall:

- (a) Set out the Agenda for the Conference, including the time set aside for the A.G.M. (When applicable);
- (b) Choose the venue and domestic details for the Conference subject to the advice of the Regional Executives;
- (c) Select the Chairs for the Sessions.

4.2 Right to submit Agenda items

- a) **Reports to Conference** may only be submitted by the Regional Executives, Regional Officers, or Regional Conference Committees.
- b) **Business and policy motions** may be submitted by five voting members of Regional Conference, or Local Parties, Specified Associated Organisations, Liberal Democrat Groups on principal local authorities or on the Regional Assembly or by the Regional Executives.

4.3 How motions and amendments are submitted

All motions and amendments must be submitted in writing to the Joint Conference Committee. They must be typed clearly and accompanied by the name, address and telephone number(s) of a person authorised to agree to their being composited or redrafted. Motions submitted by Conference representatives must be accompanied by all their signatures, names and addresses.

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4.4 The Preliminary Agenda and short listing of motions

The Joint Conference Committee shall draw up a Preliminary Agenda and shall decide which of the motions duly submitted shall be included in it. The Joint Conference Committee may allocate time for one or more policy motions to be selected by ballot. The Preliminary Agenda shall be issued not less than 3 weeks before a Joint Regional Conference.

4.5. The Final Agenda

The Joint Conference Committee, in consultation with the Regional Chair, shall draw up a final agenda for the Regional Conference. This Final Agenda may be issued on the day of the Conference, but must be available to all representatives attending at the time of registration.

4.6 Redrafting and Compositing of Motions

The Conference committee may;

- (a) treat any separable part of a motion or amendment as a separate motion or amendment;
- (b) redraft a motion or amendment so as to improve expression removing inaccuracy or superfluity or take account of new developments and or;
- (c) composite similar motions or amendments.

4.7 Rejection of motions and the right of appeal

- (a) The Joint Conference Committee may refuse to select a Motion for the amendment of the Constitution or Standing Orders, if in the opinion of the Committee it is similar in effect to another motion which has been selected for debate or a ballot at the same meeting of the Conference, or has been rejected at the previous Conference meeting. All other Motions in these categories must either be selected for debate or included in a ballot, to allow Conference to determine the order of priority for allocating time. Nothing in this Standing Order shall detract from the power of the Conference to determine whether it wishes to debate such motions.
- (b) No amendment shall be selected if in the opinion of the Conference Committee it is insubstantial, outside the legitimate scope of the motion or tantamount to a direct negative of the motion.
- (c) The Joint Conference Committee shall provide written explanations to any Local Party, Council Group, or group of 5 Conference representatives whose motion has been rejected.
- (d) The movers of any motion or amendment which has not been selected may appeal to the Regional Chairs. If an appeal is allowed the motion or amendment shall be treated as an emergency motion or amendment notwithstanding that it does not comply with Standing Order 5.0.

5.0 Emergency Motions and Amendments

5.1 **An emergency motion** must relate to significant developments which have occurred since the closing date for receipt of motions. It must be brief and specific.

5.2 **An emergency amendment** must be brief and specific and must be either:

- (a) an amendment to an emergency motion; or
- (b) an amendment to a policy motion which relates to significant developments which have occurred since the closing date for receipt of amendments.

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6. Chairing the Conference Sessions

6.1 Who chairs the Conference?

Either Regional President, if present, shall take the Chair at the formal opening and closing of Joint Regional Conferences; and when the Party Leader is making a formal speech from the platform. The appropriate Regional Chair will take the chair for the AGM of their Region, save that during the election of Regional Chair the President shall take the Chair and that the election of Officers during an AGM may be conducted by some independent person acting as Returning Officer.

All other sessions will be chaired by a person appointed by the Joint Conference Committee. Normally no person shall chair more than one session of any one Conference.

6.2 The Chair's Aide

The Joint Conference Committee may appoint an aide to assist the Chair of each session.

7. Conduct of Debate

7.1 The order of debate

- a) The Joint Conference Committee shall direct the order of debate. Generally, however, a motion will be moved and immediately thereafter any amendments to the motion will be moved in the order decided by the Joint Conference Committee. There will then be a general debate.
- b) The movers of amendments (or their nominees) shall have the right of reply in the same order, after which the mover of the motion (or the mover's nominee) shall have the right of reply.
- c) Votes shall then be taken on the amendments in the order in which they have been moved and, finally, on the substantive motion.
- d) A motion or amendment, or part of a motion or amendment, once moved, may not be withdrawn except by leave of Conference.
- e) The Conference Committee may direct that parts of any motion and/or any amendment or group of amendments may be the subject of a separate debate and/or vote.

7.2 Who may speak

Both voting and non-voting representatives may speak during debates on business motions, policy motions, Constitutional amendments, amendments to Standing Orders, or emergency/topical motions. Party members who are not elected representatives to the Regional Conference (e.g., Party members from other Regions) may be invited to speak at the discretion of the Chair.

The Joint Conference Committee may, with the agreement of the Regional Executives, invite any other person to **address the Conference as a guest.**

7.3 The selection of speakers

- a) Members wishing to speak in any debate shall submit a speaker's card, prior to the debate in which they wish to speak, stating whether they wish to speak for or against a motion or amendment or part of the motion. The Chair shall be responsible for the choice of speakers and shall attempt to provide a balanced debate between different viewpoints in the Conference. The Chair shall also endeavour to provide a gender-balanced range of speakers, subject to the pattern of cards submitted. The Chair shall have the discretion to vary this rule if there is an overwhelming preponderance of members wishing to speak on one side or of the same gender.

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b) Save as provided for in these Standing Orders, no person may speak more than once in any one debate.

7.4 The length of speeches

The Conference Committee shall set out in the Final Agenda time limits for speeches which shall be stated by the session Chair at the beginning of each session.. The Chair may propose to Conference a change in these limits.

7.5 Where to speak from

All speeches shall be made from the rostrum save that speeches by the Regional Presidents, the Party Leader, visiting MP's or MEP's or other guest speakers, may be made from the platform. During that part of a Conference being a Region's AGM., Regional Officers may present their reports from the platform.

The Chair of any session may, with the agreement of Conference, vary these arrangements, for example to facilitate speeches by disabled persons.

8. Voting at Conference

8.1 The method of voting

Voting cards shall be issued at each meeting of Conference to voting members. Provided that certain votes may be taken by ballot, all other votes at plenary Conference sessions shall be taken by show of voting cards.

8.2 Counting of Votes

A vote by show of voting cards shall be counted:

- a) if the Conference Committee so directs.**
- b) If the Chair of that session so directs.**
- c) As a result of a procedural motion under 8 below.**

A recount will only be held if the Chair is not satisfied that the first count was accurate.

8.3 Separate votes

The Chair may direct separate votes on parts of a motion or amendment.

- a) at the direction of the Conference Committee.**
- b) at the discretion of the Chair.**
- c) as a result of a procedural motion under 10 below.**

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9. Points of Order

Any voting member may rise on a point of order which shall be taken immediately except that, during a vote no point of order may be taken that does not refer to the conduct of the vote. The Chair's decision on all points of order shall be final.

10. Procedural Motions

No procedural motion can be moved during a vote.

10.1 Next business

A voting Conference member may, during any full Conference session, propose that the Conference move to next business. The Chair may allow other speakers after which the motion on next business shall be voted on, a two-thirds majority of those voting being necessary to carry it. If such a motion is carried the current agenda item shall be abandoned forthwith and, at the discretion of the Chair, either the next agenda item shall be taken or there shall be an adjournment. If such a motion be not carried no similar motion may be moved on that agenda item. All speeches under this Standing Order shall be limited to one minute.

10.2 Reference back

- a) A voting member, who has not already spoken in the debate may, at any time before the Chair has asked the first speaker in reply to stand by, submit, in writing, a request to refer back the motion under debate. The submission shall state to whom the motion is to be referred back and the reasons, including reasons why voting against the motion would not achieve a similar result. Such submissions must not exceed 75 words.
- b) The Chair may take the request to refer back at whatever stage of the debate he/she considers appropriate. When such a request is taken the Chair shall read the statement of reasons and ask Conference if it wishes to debate the reference back. If Conference decides, by a simple majority, to do so the person who made the request may speak and the mover of the motion, or their nominee, may reply. Speeches on reference back shall be limited to one minute. If Conference decides not to debate the request for reference back, it fails.
- c) A reference back shall require a simple majority of those voting to be passed.
- d) If the substantive motion is referred back to the Regional Executive, or the Conference Committee, that body shall report to the next Conference meeting, what action it has taken on the reference.

10.3 Separate vote

A voting member of Conference may request that the Chair take a separate vote on a part of a motion or amendment provided that such a request is in writing and received before the speeches in reply to the debate. The Chair shall have complete discretion whether to take a separate vote.

10.4 Counted vote

Any voting member may ask for a counted vote which shall be taken if the request is supported by 12 members rising in their place and showing their voting cards.

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10.5 Suspension of Standing Orders

A voting member of Conference may, during any plenary session, move a motion for the suspension of Standing Orders. The mover shall submit the motion together with a written statement of its purpose, not exceeding 75 words, to the Chair who shall read them to the meeting.

No motion to suspend Standing Orders may suspend any requirement of the Federal Constitution or either of the Regional Constitutions, or any part of Joint Standing Orders which govern:

- a) the rights of, or timetable for, submission of motions and amendments.
- b) procedural motions for Next Business or Suspension of Standing Orders. No motion to suspend Standing Orders to introduce a motion or amendment on to the agenda can be taken unless the motion or amendment has been submitted to the Joint Conference Committee in accordance with the published timetable and, where a right of appeal against non-selection exists, the right has been exercised.

The Chair shall read the statement of purpose and, if the motion is allowable as above, ask Conference if it wishes to debate the request. If the Conference decides not to debate the request for suspension of Standing Orders it fails.

Conference may decide, by a simple majority, to debate the request. In that event the Chair shall ask the mover of the motion to speak and a representative of the Conference Committee may reply. The Chair shall have discretion to ask others to speak. All speeches on the motion will be limited to one minute.

At the end of the debate the motion shall be voted on by Conference and shall only be carried if supported by at least two-thirds of those present and voting. If the procedural motion is carried all Standing Orders shall remain in force except only for the purposes set out in the motion.

11. Amendment of Standing Orders

These Joint Standing Orders may be amended by a two-thirds majority of voting members of Joint Conference voting on a motion duly submitted and selected in accordance with these Standing Orders.

Subject to any such amendment they shall remain in force from meeting to meeting.