

## **Bridgnorth Local Party**

Conference is against:

- the introduction of the Criminal Court Charge, which came into effect in April 2015.

Conference believes that:

- This legislation, which introduces charges levied on those convicted of an offence after a court appearance and those who simply want to appear in court and state reasons why they committed an offence, are imposed irrespective of means and lead to sentences which are out of all proportion to the offence.
- The charges are designed solely to fund the criminal justice system. These charges are in addition to the punitive fines and compensation orders that a court is bound to impose.

Conference notes with concern that:

- Such charges are likely to be levied on some of the poorest in our society, including those on benefits, migrants, asylum seekers, those with mental health problems, the homeless and other disadvantaged groups, who are unlikely to have the means to pay and who will therefore be further criminalised.
- Since the introduction of the charges a significant number of magistrates have resigned in protest, as they have felt unable to impose charges that are unlikely to ever be collected.
- That the scale of charges give an incentive to defendants to plead guilty, thereby applying undue pressure that may lead the innocent to plead guilty for fear of incurring additional costs.
- The Criminal Court Charge makes justice harder to achieve for the poorest in society and further penalises the most disadvantaged.

Conference believes that

- Such charges are inconsistent with Liberal Democratic principles, which aim to:
  - i. Build a society where no one is enslaved by their own poverty
  - ii. Build a society that is free and fair and where liberty and equality are available to all, regardless of their means.

Conference calls for:

- Liberal Democrat Parliamentarians to press the government to repeal this legislation and to fund the criminal justice system properly and fairly.
- For the West Midlands Regional Party to submit this policy to Spring Federal Conference in 2016, taking on any new information as relevant.