

Scottish Liberal Democrats - Standing Orders - Remote Conference

- A. In the event the Scottish Executives determine it is impossible to hold a conference under the normal rules, and instead summons a special meeting of the conference to be held remotely, or the Committee otherwise directs that a conference shall be conducted remotely, these Standing Orders shall apply.
- B. A remote conference shall be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders that apply to a conference not conducted remotely ('the original Standing Orders'), save that:
- a) All references in the original Standing Orders to votes, whether by ballot, show of hands or show of voting cards, shall instead be conducted via an online poll or alternative secure method of online voting, designated by the Committee. Similarly all references to speakers cards shall be taken to mean electronic speakers' cards.
 - b) Any communications with the Chair must be made via an online channel designated by the Committee for that purpose and advertised to voting members prior to the commencement of a debate.
 - c) Voting (Section 7) – all voting will be carried out electronically by members registered for conference and eligible to vote, thus removing the requirement for a counted vote.
 - d) Points of Order and Procedural Motion (Section 8) – will be submitted electronically to the chair within the timescales laid out in the Standing Orders.

Standing Orders for a Remote Conference

1. The Conference Committee

1.1. The Conference Committee shall be constituted as specified in Section E10 of the Constitution. The annual election of members by the conference shall be by Single Transferable Vote in a ballot of all members of the Party registered to attend Conference ('Conference Representatives').

1.2. The Conference Convener shall be the Chair of the Conference Committee. At its first meeting after a new election under Section E10 of the Constitution, the Conference Committee may elect one or more Vice-Conveners.

2. The Timetable and Agenda - Virtual Meetings

2.1. The Agenda for a virtual meeting of Conference shall include time for one or more of the following items:

- Motions;
- Emergency motions;
- Topical motions;
- A business session or sessions; and
- any other business deemed appropriate by the Conference Committee. The time to be allocated to each type of business and the order of business shall be decided by the Conference Committee.

2.2. The Conference Committee shall, before each meeting of the Conference, prepare a timetable which includes:

2.2.1. The closing date for the receipt of motions (other than Emergency or Topical motions), which shall not normally be less than eight weeks before the start of the meeting;

2.2.2. The due date for the publication of the Agenda, which shall not normally be less than six weeks before the start of the meeting;

2.2.3. The closing date for the receipt of Topical Motions, which shall not normally be less than two weeks before the start of the meeting; and

2.2.4. The closing date for receipt of amendments which shall not normally be less than two working days before the start of the meeting.

2.2.5. The Conference Committee may, in special circumstances, specify dates later than the normal dates under this Standing Order. It shall report to the Conference its reasons for doing so.

2.3. Submitting organisations shall detail at the time of submission the name and contact details of a person authorised to agree any redrafting of a motion or amendment and the name of the mover and summator of the motion or amendment, should it be selected for debate at Conference.

2.4. The Conference Committee shall decide which of the motions duly submitted shall be included within the Agenda. The proposers of the motions selected for debate shall be informed of the Conference Committee's decision. The Agenda shall be circulated to Local Parties and other bodies entitled to submit motions and amendments under the provisions of Section E19 of the Constitution so that amendments can be tabled to these motions by such bodies. Copies of motions not selected for inclusion in the Agenda shall be available for inspection.

2.5. The Conference Committee shall meet the day after the deadline for submission of amendments to motions on the Agenda and shall decide which amendments should be accepted and those rejected. The proposers of the amendments selected for debate shall be informed of the Conference Committee's decision.

2.6. The Conference Committee shall also meet as soon as practicable after the closing date for the receipt of topical motions and shall decide which of the topical motions duly submitted shall be debated, and the proposers of topical motions selected shall be informed of the Conference Committee's decision. The text of any topical motions selected for debate shall be circulated to Conference Representatives, Local Parties and bodies authorised to submit motions.

2.7. The Conference Committee shall also prepare an agenda for the business session of each meeting of Conference. The Committee shall circulate this, with the text of proposed amendments to the Constitution in accordance with Section L of the Constitution, amendments to Standing Orders, and other party business motions, with the Agenda as per Section 2.4

2.8. The Party's Principal Committees may submit holding motions, which shall identify the issues to be dealt with within the motion but which may be amended and expanded upon later. Standing Orders 2 and 3 shall apply to holding motions as they would apply to ordinary motions, except that:

2.8.1. the final version of the motion shall be submitted not less than two weeks before the start of the meeting of Conference;

2.8.2. The text of the final version shall be circulated to Conference Representatives, Local Parties and other bodies authorised to submit motions under the provisions of Section E19 of the

Constitution, who may submit amendments no later than two working days before the start of the meeting of Conference; and

2.8.3. The Committee shall make available to Conference Representatives the text of the final version and any amendments chosen for debate, either by their publication in the Conference Daily Bulletin or by any other means the Committee considers most appropriate

2.9. The Conference Committee may, if the circumstances require, propose to Conference a variation in the order of business as set out in the Agenda. Such variation shall be put to the vote and shall take effect if approved by a majority of those voting.

3. Submission of Motions and Amendments

3.1. The 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 at the same meeting of Conference. All other motions in these categories shall be circulated with the Agenda.

3.2. 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.

3.3. The movers of any motion or amendment that has not been selected shall be notified as soon as is practicable and may appeal to the Conference Committee in accordance with directions given by the Committee. 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.

3.4. This Standing Order and Standing Order 2 do not apply to procedural motions under Standing Order 8.

3.5. No Topical Motion may be selected for debate at Conference unless the Conference Committee is satisfied that the content of the motion is such that it could not have been submitted in time for the deadline as set out in Section 2.2 for ordinary motions. No Topical Motion can be a holding motion from a Party Committee.

4. The Agenda – Special Conferences

4.1. Special Conferences shall deal only with the business stated in the notice of requisition, save that the Conference Committee may allow time for emergency motions and for business which is formal or, in the opinion of the Committee, uncontentious.

4.2. The Conference Committee shall draw up an Agenda and circulate in line with Section 2.4. If the Committee deems it necessary the Agenda can be circulated with amendments to be submitted as Emergency Amendments.

4.3. The provisions of Standing Orders 2 and 3 shall, so far as they are not inconsistent with Standing Orders 4.1 and 4.2, apply to special meetings of the Conference.

5. Emergency Motions

5.1. An emergency motion or amendment must relate to significant developments which have occurred since the relevant closing date or so shortly before that date as to make it impracticable to submit a motion, Topical Motion or amendment in due time. It must be brief and specific.

5.2. An emergency motion or amendment may be submitted by five Conference Representatives or by any persons or bodies authorised to submit motions under the provisions of Section E9 of the Constitution.

5.3. The Conference Committee may, for each day of the meeting of Conference, set aside time convenient for the debate of Emergency Motions. In such an event, proposed Emergency Motions must be submitted to the Conference Committee, duly signed, by 5pm the day before they are to be debated. Emergency Amendments to motions already on the Agenda for that meeting of Conference must be submitted by 5pm the day before the motion is to be debated.

5.4. The Conference Committee may refuse to select an emergency motion or amendment if, in the opinion of the Committee, it is similar in effect to another motion which has been selected for debate at the relevant meeting of Conference.

5.5. The Conference Committee will choose the emergency motions or amendments which, in the opinion of the Committee, are most relevant to the concerns of the Conference and can be debated within the time available. The Committee shall make available the text of all emergency motions and amendments chosen for debate either by publication in the Conference Daily Bulletin or any other means the Committee finds most appropriate.

5.6. Amendments shall not normally be taken to the text of an Emergency Motion. However Conference Committee may consider amendments duly signed by 5 Conference Representatives or by any body authorised to submit motions under the provisions of Section E9 of the Constitution. These amendments must be brief, suitable for debate and of a similar emergency nature. The deadline for submitting amendments to an Emergency Motion will be listed in the Conference Daily Bulletin alongside the text of the Emergency Motion. The movers of the Emergency Motion must be given the opportunity to agree that the text of the amendment be accepted without debate or vote, and the text must be circulated to voting representatives before the start of the debate.

6. Conduct of Debate

6.1. Length of Speeches

6.1.1. The Conference Committee shall decide the time to be allocated for each debate. The Conference Committee shall determine the times allocated to speakers in debates.

6.1.2. Movers of motions shall normally be allocated not more than 12 minutes to move and summate on a motion. Movers of amendments shall normally be allocated not more than 8 minutes to move and summate on a motion. Movers of emergency and topical motions shall normally be allocated 5 minutes to move the motion. Speakers from the floor shall normally be allocated 3 minutes but this may be varied at the discretion of the chair of the debate.

6.1.3. The allocation of the time between moving and summing shall be at the discretion of the mover subject only to notification of the Chair of the debate before the start of the debate. In the

absence of such notification the Chair shall be entitled to limit speeches to three quarters of the time allocation for moving and one quarter for summation.

6.2. Order of Debate

6.2.1. The Conference Committee shall direct the order of debate. Generally, however, a motion will be moved and immediately thereafter the amendments will be moved in the order directed by the Committee. There will then be a general debate. The movers of amendments (or their nominees) shall have the right to summate in the same order, after which the mover of the motion (or their nominee) shall have the right to summate.

6.2.2. Votes will be taken on amendments in the order in which they have been moved and finally, a vote shall be taken on the substantive motion.

6.3. The Conference Committee may direct that parts of any motion or amendment or group of amendments may be the subject of a separate debate the Conference Committee may also direct that a debate may comprise of more than one substantive motion. In this case it shall be up to the discretion of the Chair as to the allotment of speakers, save that the rights of movers of motions or amendments shall not be infringed.

6.4. The Committee may authorise members of other State or Regional Parties to speak. The Committee may also, with the approval of conference, invite any person to address a Conference as a guest.

6.5. On any topical motion, policy motion or emergency motion not moved on behalf of the Policy Committee, the Policy Committee shall have the right to nominate one of its members to report to the Conference its views on the motions and/or amendments under debate. Such persons shall be called to speak at any time up to the conclusion of the debate and before any replies and shall be entitled to speak for the same length of time as the mover of the motion. The Executive Committee shall have similar rights on business motions or motions to amend the constitution and the Conference Committee shall have similar rights in relation to motions to amend Standing Orders or motions otherwise relating to the proceedings of the Conference.

6.6. Save as provided in Standing Orders, no person may speak more than once in any debate.

6.7. All members wishing to speak in any debate, including the movers and summators of motions and amendments, must submit a speaker's card and indicate whether they wish to speak in favour or against a motion or amendment. The Chair of the session shall be responsible for providing a balanced debate between the different viewpoints in the Conference. In circumstances where there is a preponderance of members wishing to speak on the same side in any debate, the Chair may announce a departure from this rule.

7. Voting

7.1. Members eligible to vote and registered for a virtual conference will be issued electronic Voting cards. At the end of each debate eligible members will be asked to vote by the Chair of the debate. The time available to vote will be left open at the discretion of the chair. The result of the vote will be announced by the Chair.

7.2. In the event of a technical issue occurring during the vote, the Chair may ask for the vote to run a second time.

7.3. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair will ask for the vote to be run a second time. If this still results in a tied vote, the debate will be decided on the casting vote of the Chair of the debate.

8. Points of Order and Procedural Motions

8.1. Any member eligible to vote in the debate may raise a point of order electronically with the Chair (details of how to do this will be shared with members at the start of the virtual conference). A point of order shall be taken immediately, except that, during a vote no point of order shall be taken that does not refer to the vote itself. The decision of the Chair of the session on all points of order shall be final.

8.2. References Back

8.2.1. A voting member may, at any time before the end of speeches in reply to the debate, submit electronically a motion to refer back the motion under debate. Such a submission shall state to whom the motion is to be referred (e.g. Scottish Policy Committee; Scottish Executive) and shall include a short statement of the reasons.

8.2.2. The Chair may decide either to take the motion to refer back immediately or defer it until the end of debate. If more than one request for a reference back is received, the Chair shall have the discretion as to which to take but shall give consideration to the appropriateness of the bodies to which the motion is being referred, the degree to which the stated reasons for reference back reflect views expressed in the debate and the order in which the requests were submitted, before exercising the rights of discretion. No more than one reference back shall be taken to any motion.

8.2.3. The Chair shall, upon taking the motion to refer back, read it and the statement of reasons and ask conference whether it wishes to debate the motion. If the conference decides not to debate the reference back, the reference back automatically falls. If the conference decides, by a majority of those voting to debate the reference back the mover of that motion may speak and the mover of the substantive motion or their nominee may reply. The Chair shall have discretion whether to allow other speakers on the motion.

8.2.4. The reference back shall require a simple majority of those voting to be passed. If the substantive motion is referred to the Executive, Policy Committee or Conference Committee that body shall report to the next meeting of conference stating the action it has taken on the reference back.

8.3. Suspension of Standing Orders

8.3.1. A voting member may, during any session of a conference, move for the suspension of Standing Orders. The mover shall submit the motion together with a written statement of its purpose, not exceeding 100 words, to the Chair who shall read them to the Conference.

8.3.2. No motion to suspend Standing Orders may suspend any requirement of the Constitution, nor Standing Orders 2 and 3.

8.3.3. No motion to suspend Standing Orders to introduce a motion or amendment onto the Agenda can be taken unless the motion or amendment has been submitted to the Conference Committee in accordance with the published timetable and any right of appeal has been exercised.

8.3.4. The Chair shall read the statement of purpose and if the suspension is allowable, ask Conference whether it wishes to debate the request to suspend Standing Orders. If the Conference decides not to debate the request, it falls. If the Conference decides to hear the request the mover may speak and a representative of the Conference may reply. The Chair has the discretion to call other speakers and all speeches will be limited to two minutes.

8.3.5. A motion to suspend Standing Orders shall only be carried if supported by at least two thirds of voting members taking part in the vote. If the procedural motion is carried all Standing Orders shall remain in force except only for the purposes set out in the motion.

8.4. Separate Votes

8.4.1. A Separate Vote shall be taken on a part of a motion or amendment.

8.4.2. At the direction of the Conference Committee; or

8.4.3. At the discretion of the Chair, when requested to do so by a voting representative. Any voting representative may submit a request for a separate vote to the Chair of a debate. Such a request must be in writing and received before the commencement of the speeches in reply to the debate. The Chair has complete discretion in such a case on whether to take a separate vote.

8.5. These Standing Orders may be amended by a two-thirds majority of Conference Representatives present and voting on a motion duly submitted under the terms of Standing Order 3. Subject to any amendment they shall remain in force from Conference to Conference.