

Constitution  
of  
The Women's Equality Party

*As amended by emergency motions resulting from the governance  
review*

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## **Part 1: The Women's Equality Party's Mission Statement**

The Women's Equality Party is a non-partisan force in UK politics uniting people of diverse ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, beliefs and experiences in the shared determination to see women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men so that all can flourish.

The Women's Equality Party believes equality for women isn't a women's issue. When women fulfil their potential, everyone benefits. Equality means better politics, a more vibrant economy, a workforce that draws on the talents of the whole population and a society at ease with itself.

The Women's Equality Party is working towards such a society.

WE are pushing for equal representation in politics, business, industry and throughout working life. WE expect equal pay for equal work and will look for ways to tackle the existing imbalances that leave many women who are unwaged caregivers or in low paid jobs especially vulnerable. WE are pressing for equal parenting and care-giving, enabling everyone to share opportunity and responsibility in the workplace and at home. WE urge an education system that creates opportunities for all and an understanding of why this matters. WE strive for equal treatment of women by and in the media. WE seek an end to violence against women.

WE will bring about change by winning – support, votes and seats. WE do not try to present ourselves as a party with an answer on every issue and a full palette of policies and will never take a party line on issues outside our remit: to bring about gender equality. WE are a focused mainstream party and WE will not stop until all other mainstream parties embrace and adopt our agenda of equality – and take action to achieve it.

## **The WE Code**

Because WE know that women's equality is better for everyone

I am WE

WE are non-partisan

WE are diverse and inclusive

WE are making change happen

Women's Equality Party

So that all may thrive.

## **Part 2: The Constitution**

### **1 Name**

The political party described in this Constitution is named the Women's Equality Party (hereinafter referred to as the “**Party**” or “**WE**”).

### **2 Principles and Objectives**

**2.1** The principles and objectives of the Party form an integral part of this constitution.

**2.2** The objectives of the Party shall be:

**2.2.1** to fulfil the Party’s mission statement as set out in Part 1;

**2.2.2** to deliver on the six Core Objectives set out in this Article 2.2.2 and as further detailed in the WE Policy Document:

WE are pushing for equal representation in politics, business, industry and throughout working life;

WE are pressing for equal pay and an equal opportunity to thrive;

WE are campaigning for equal parenting and care-giving and shared responsibilities at home to give everyone equal opportunities both in family life and in the workplace;

WE urge an education system that creates opportunities for all children and an understanding of why this matters;

WE strive for equal treatment of women by and in the media;

WE seek an end to violence against women and girls; and

**2.2.3** to secure the election of Women’s Equality Party candidates to the Westminster Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, international decision-making bodies as applicable, and local elected public authorities or executive positions (together,

“elections”). WE also work with other political parties and elected representatives on proposals that serve the six Core Objectives.

### **3 Membership**

#### **3.1 Categories of Membership**

3.1.1 There are two categories of Membership of the Party, namely:

- a) Full Member, and
- b) Affiliate Member, together, the “**Membership**”.

#### **3.2 Basis of Membership**

3.2.1 Full Membership shall be open to individuals who share the objectives of the Party, are 14 years of age or older, are not members of another political party, and are committed to the WE Code.

3.2.2 Affiliate Membership shall be open to individuals who share the objectives of the Party, are 14 years of age or older, may be a member of another UK political party registered with the Electoral Commission subject to Article 3.2.8 below, and are committed to the WE Code.

3.2.3 All those who joined the Party before the end of October 2015 are known as Founding Members.

3.2.4 All those who joined or will join the Party in or after November 2015 are known as Members.

3.2.5 Lifetime Membership is also available.

3.2.6 An applicant shall become a Member or Affiliate Member of the Party upon payment of a monthly or annual subscription, the levels of which shall be determined by the Executive Committee. A separate level of subscription, which shall be a one-off payment, shall be determined by the Executive Committee for Lifetime Member status.

3.2.7 Cessation of payments will lead to the cessation of Membership [except in the case of a fallow period being declared by the Executive Committee, when Membership will carry on for such period until](#)

payment is renewed. If a Founding Member's payment lapses and is resumed, the status of Founding Member is retained.

- 3.2.8 Affiliate Membership shall not be available to those who are a member of a political party whose aims and values are fundamentally incompatible with the Party's aims and values, as determined by the Steering Committee.
- 3.2.9 Members' and Affiliate Members' (the "**Members**") rights and responsibilities are the same, unless otherwise specified in this Constitution (see Article 7.1.8). They are entitled to participate in Party Conference and to elect the Party Leader and, if relevant, other Appointed Officers.
- 3.2.10 The names and addresses of current Members of the Party shall be entered on the Membership list, which is maintained by the Chief of Staff, and shall be the definitive list of Members.
- 3.2.11 Members whose Membership address is in the UK shall be members of the local Branch for that address or of any other local Branch which is prepared to accept that person as a member.
- 3.2.12 The Membership list is confidential sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act 1988, as amended, and subsequent legislation, and shall be treated as such. The Executive Committee shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that information contained in the Membership list is used solely for Party purposes and is not disclosed to any person other than persons authorised by this Constitution or by the Executive Committee.

### 3.3 Registered Supporters

- 3.3.1 The Party shall also maintain a list of Registered Supporters, who have expressed an interest in and support for the Party, but are not yet Members. Registered Supporters are entitled to participate in Party Conference as further detailed in Article 4.6.3, to receive Party communications, and attend branch meetings and Party events.

3.3.2 Registered Supporters may be invited to participate in decision-making upon the approval of Party Conference or of the Steering Committee on its behalf, including in leadership elections.

3.3.3 The Registered Supporters list is confidential sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act 1988, as amended, and subsequent legislation, and shall be treated as such. The Executive Committee shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that information contained in the Registered Supporters list is used solely for Party purposes and is not disclosed to any person other than persons authorised by this Constitution or by the Executive Committee.

#### 3.4 Refusal or Revocation of Membership and status as Registered Supporter

3.4.1 The Party reserves the right to reject the application of any individual for Membership, to terminate, as a last resort, the Membership of any Member, and to remove any supporter from the Registered Supporters list, if that individual's actions could reasonably be considered:

- (i) a breach of the terms of this Constitution; or
- (ii) bullying, defamation, harassment or intimidation.

3.4.2 The decision to reject or terminate Membership or status as a Registered Supporter will be taken by the Executive Committee and can be appealed to the Appeals Body, as outlined in Article 10, whose decision shall be final. In the case of expulsion paid membership fees will not be refunded.

3.4.3 No-one who has been expelled from Membership of the Party shall be eligible for readmission without the prior approval of the Steering Committee.

### 4 Party Conference

4.1 The Party will hold a party conference ("**Party Conference**") annually or ~~biannually~~ **biennially**, at a time and place decided by the Steering Committee.



- 4.2 Party Conference shall be the supreme governing body of the Party, saving only in those areas in which the Steering Committee has the final say (including Articles 3.4.3, 7.1.4, 7.5.4, 7.5.6, 7.5.7, 7.5.10~~3~~, 7.5.18, 7.5.20, 8.4, 8.5, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.6 and 9.7), and is responsible for policy- and decision-making, subject only to the terms of this Constitution.
- 4.3 Party Conference shall be quorate when at least 70 voting delegates are present in the conference hall, but debate may continue in the absence of a quorum, as long as no vote is taken until sufficient delegates are present to form a quorum.
- 4.4 Party Conference may send proposals to the Steering Committee or to the Policy Group.
- 4.5 The Steering Committee is the responsible body for Party Conference but may appoint committees to oversee certain parts of the conference preparation and execution, such as a Conference Committee, Agenda Committee and a Standing Order Committee.
- 4.6 Delegates
- 4.6.1 Party Conference delegates will be WE Members and they shall have voting rights at Party Conference.
- 4.6.2 The Steering Committee may limit the number of Party Conference delegates according to venue capacity. However, such limitation of delegate numbers cannot prevent Branch Leaders and Hub Co-ordinators from attending as voting delegates.
- 4.6.3 Registered Supporters are entitled to attend Party Conference, subject to Article 4.6.2 above, and to participate in debates, but cannot put forward motions or amendments to motions and do not have voting rights, unless that is specifically decided on by the Steering Committee.
- 4.6.4 Invited Observers who are not Members or Registered Supporters may attend Party Conference (except for closed sessions), but will not have voting rights or the right to put forward motions or amendments.

4.6.5 Conference Chair can limit the participation of Registered Supporters and Observers in Party Conference debates, including that of invited speakers.

#### 4.7 Conference Chair

4.7.1 The Conference Chair shall be appointed by the Steering Committee or a committee operating on its behalf, subject to the ratification of Party Conference, and is responsible for the running of the conference.

4.7.2 The Conference Chair has the final say on any disputes that may arise at Party Conference.

4.7.3 A comprehensive record of the proceedings and votes of Party Conference shall be kept by WE.

#### 4.8 Conference Agenda

4.8.1 The Steering Committee or a committee operating on its behalf shall be responsible for setting the content of the Party Conference agenda (the “**Conference Agenda**”), which shall include sessions for motions, emergency motions and amendments to motions for debate, and any other Party business.

4.8.2 The Steering Committee or a committee operating on its behalf can decide to close certain sessions to everyone other than voting delegates. During Conference the Conference Chair can temporarily close sessions to everyone other than voting delegates.

4.8.3 Motions and emergency motions for debate, or proposals relating to the Party's business, may be proposed by the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee, the Leader, the Policy Committee, the Conference Committee, any Branch or Branches working together, or not less than 20 Members working together. Amendments to published motions may be proposed by the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee, the Policy Committee, any Branch or not less than five Members working together.

- 4.8.4 The Steering Committee shall set deadlines for the submission of motions, amendments to motions and emergency motions and shall publish such deadlines to all conference delegates in reasonable time before Party Conference.
- 4.8.5 The Steering Committee or a committee operating on its behalf shall have the discretion to accept, amend or refuse a motion as follows:
- (i) refuse a motion that contravenes the six Core Objectives of the Party or the WE Code;
  - (ii) redraft a motion or amendment submitted to it in order to clarify its wording;
  - (iii) decide to treat any removable part of a motion or amendment as a separate motion or amendment;
  - (iv) create a composite of similar motions or amendments; and
  - (v) refuse a motion in order to maintain the Party Conference time-frame,
- in consultation with the proposers of the motions or amendments.
- 4.8.6 The Steering Committee or a committee operating on its behalf shall have the sole discretion to refuse to put proposed emergency motions on the Conference Agenda.
- 4.8.7 During Party Conference, the Conference Chair shall have the sole discretion to refuse, allow or propose emergency motions which are not on the Conference Agenda.
- 4.8.8 The proposers of a motion or emergency motion may challenge a decision to refuse a motion at Party Conference at their discretion, providing that they believe such motion or emergency motion needs the immediate attention of the Party and that a majority of Party Conference would support it. In such case, Conference Chair shall allow a vote in which the decision to refuse the motion can be reversed by a simple majority vote.

## 4.9 Standing Orders

- 4.9.1 Standing Orders shall govern the rules of debate at conference, and shall be adhered to by all those with business at Party Conference.
- 4.9.2 Standing Orders shall be subject to approval by Party Conference each time they are amended.
- 4.9.3 The Steering Committee shall ~~approve and~~ review regularly the Standing Orders for the conduct of business at Party Conference and shall submit amendments for Conference's approval.

#### 4.10 Suspension of Standing Orders

- 4.10.1 Any or all Standing Orders, subject to any exceptions detailed in those Standing Orders, may be suspended or their effect modified for a specific purpose by a motion proposed by not less than 10 delegates, seconded and passed with the support of a two-thirds majority of the delegates present and voting.
- 4.10.2 The Party Constitution (including this Article 4.10) may not be amended or repealed by a motion proposed under this Article 4.10, or under WE's Standing Orders.

#### 4.11 Electronic decision making

- 4.11.1 The Steering Committee may, at or between Conferences, decide to use electronic communications for decision-making on policy motions and for choosing members of the Steering Committee, the Policy Committee or any other WE committee. In the event of electronic decision-making on policies between Party Conferences, the proposed policies cannot contradict and will not supersede WE core policies or other policies that have been adopted by Party Conference.
- 4.11.2 The Steering Committee shall publish the rules on such decision-making.
- 4.11.3 All Members and Affiliate Members shall be invited to participate in such decision-making, including to vote if applicable.
- 4.11.4 The Steering Committee may also invite Registered Supporters to participate in such decision-making and may for that purpose offer

proportional voting so that a maximum 10% of the vote is allocated to Registered Supporters.

## **5 Special Conference**

- 5.1 A Special Conference of the Party may be called either by the Executive Committee or at the request of one-quarter of party Members.
- 5.2 A request for, and a statement giving the reason for and purpose of, the special conference shall be submitted to the Executive Committee who shall notify all Party Members within seven days of receiving the request.
- 5.3 The special conference shall be held on a date agreed between the Members requesting the special conference and the Executive Committee, as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- 5.4 A Special Conference is the same as a Party Conference and the same rules, procedures, and powers apply.

## **6 Party Structure**

- 6.1 Party Conference is the Party's governing body and functions as the ultimate policy- and decision-making body for the Party, subject to Article 4.2 and the terms of this Constitution.
- 6.2 The Party has a Steering Committee which is the Party's main decision-making body between Conferences and has the sole discretion to decide when and where to run for elections.
- 6.3 The Party has an Executive Committee which is responsible for the Party's operational decisions.
- 6.4 The Party has a Party Leader who is the chief spokesperson.
- 6.5 The Party's organisation is run by WE's Chief of Staff and the Treasurer (who may also be the Party's Chief Operating Officer), who are accountable to the Leader and to the Steering Committee and the Executive Committee respectively.
- 6.6 The Chief of Staff is responsible for the strategic, policy and communications functions of the Party and ultimately for the overall running of the Party's central office ~~operationalising the Party's strategy in~~

~~conjunction with the Executive Committee and for hiring other members of staff (“WE Central Party”).~~

- 6.7 The Party may recruit a Chief Operating Officer to be responsible for the running of the Party’s operations.
- 6.8 Such members of staff shall work under the direction of the Chief of Staff taking responsibility for certain aspects of the Party’s work.
- 6.9 The Party has Hubs that oversee and co-ordinate the functioning of local Branches in their area.
- 6.10 The Party has local Branches run by Party Members.
- 6.11 The Party has an Appeals Body which is responsible for hearing and ruling on appeals regarding Party matters.
- 6.12 All Appointed Officers, candidates and elected representatives will be subject to a relevant Code of Conduct as determined by the Steering Committee or any other committee operating on its behalf.

## **7 Party Organisation**

### **7.1 The Leader**

- 7.1.1 The Leader is the Party’s chief spokesperson and is responsible for developing and articulating the Party’s vision and strategy in consultation with the Steering Committee, the Policy Committee and the Executive Committee.
- 7.1.2 The term of office for the Leader of the Party shall be five years from their election as Leader. The incumbent may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms provided that they win a second leadership election.
- 7.1.3 The Leader shall be elected either by a general Membership vote or at Party Conference. The method to be used will be determined by the Steering Committee before each leadership election.

- 7.1.4 The Steering Committee may also invite Registered Supporters to participate in the election under proportional voting so that a maximum 10% of the vote is allocated to Registered Supporters.
  - 7.1.5 A vote of no confidence in the Leader may be passed by a simple majority of voting delegates at Party Conference or a Special Conference called for that purpose according to Article 5.1. Registered Supporters are not entitled to participate in a vote of no confidence.
  - 7.1.6 The Steering Committee shall initiate the election of the Party Leader and is responsible for publishing the timeline for the election.
  - 7.1.7 In the event of a leadership election, the Steering Committee, or a committee operating on its behalf, shall oversee the election and shall publish Procedural Guidelines and a Code of Conduct for candidates and staff.
  - 7.1.8 Only Full Members of the Party aged 18 or over will be eligible to stand for election as Leader. Nominations must be supported by exactly 30 Members.
  - 7.1.9 In the event of a vacancy due to death, incapacity, disqualification or expulsion, the Steering Committee shall appoint an interim Leader and arrange for an election to be held within 20 weeks of the post being vacated.
- 7.2 Life President and Life M.C.**
- 7.2.1 There are two lifetime posts on the Steering Committee: the Life President of the Party, who is Catherine Mayer, WE's co-founder, and the Party's Life M.C., who is Sandi Toksvig, WE's co-founder.
  - 7.2.2 These two posts may only be terminated if an incumbent chooses to retire or due to death or incapacity. In such case, the Executive Committee shall assume their obligations.
  - 7.2.3 The Life President and the Life M.C. may both serve as spokespeople for the Party.

### 7.3 Other Party Officers

#### 7.3.1 Chief of Staff

The ~~Executive Steering~~ Committee shall appoint a Chief of Staff who is accountable to the ~~Executive Steering~~ Committee for the running of the Party organisation. ~~The Chief of Staff is responsible for the hiring of staff, other than the Treasurer.~~

#### 7.3.2 Treasurer

The Executive Committee shall appoint a Treasurer for the purposes of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 who shall be responsible for ensuring the Party's compliance with the law and for the Party's finances in conjunction with the Executive Committee.

### 7.4 Executive Committee

7.4.1 The Executive Committee is responsible for the Party's operational decisions in conjunction with the Chief ~~Operating Officer of Staff~~ and for the Party's finances in conjunction with the Treasurer.

7.4.2 ~~The Executive Committee may appoint a Chief Operating Officer for the Party, who shall report to them regarding the running of the Party's operations.~~

7.4.3 The Executive Committee shall ensure operational decisions take account of the difference between legal systems in the four countries of the United Kingdom.

7.4.4 The Executive Committee shall consist of: ~~the Leader~~, the President, the M.C. and ~~five~~~~three~~ additional Members from the Steering Committee, selected by a simple majority vote of the Steering Committee.

7.4.5 ~~The Executive Committee shall act on the request of the Steering Committee, and shall report to the Steering Committee.~~

7.4.6 The Executive Committee shall meet monthly or as deemed necessary, either in person or remotely. Meetings of the Executive Committee are chaired by the Party President or another chair



elected by the committee by a simple majority vote. The Leader, Treasurer, Chief Operating Officer, and the Chief of Staff may sit in on meetings but are not entitled to vote.

7.4.7 The Executive Committee shall seek to make all decisions with the approval of all its members present. In the event of a tied vote, the Leader, the President and the M.C. shall together agree on have the casting vote.

## 7.5 Steering Committee

7.5.1 The Steering Committee is the Party's governing decision-making body between Conferences and in specific areas as outlined in this Constitution (see Article 4.2).

7.5.2 The Steering Committee is chaired by the Party Leader or another chair elected by the committee by a simple majority vote, who shall convene its meetings.

7.5.3 The Steering Committee shall meet at least twice a year either in person or remotely. An Emergency Meeting can be called with no less than 24 hours notice by the Leader, the Executive Committee or by one third of the Steering Committee members.

7.5.4 The Steering Committee is responsible for the strategic decision-making of the Party and for setting and approving the budget for each financial year. The Steering Committee has the sole discretion to decide when and where to stand WE candidates in elections.

7.5.5 The Steering Committee may appoint task-based committees to work in accordance with Party policy and to execute the Party's strategy. Such committees shall preferably only be appointed temporarily and shall have an end date upon which the committee is dissolved. The Steering Committee shall inform Party Conference about the work of the committees it has appointed.

7.5.6 The Steering Committee shall agree standing orders for committee procedures, which the Executive Committee may develop.

- 7.5.7 The Steering Committee shall issue guidance for candidate selection processes.
- 7.5.8 The Steering Committee shall appoint five members (increased from three) of the Steering Committee to the Executive Committee, the majority of whom must have been elected to the Steering Committee by members at Conference.
- 7.5.9 The Steering Committee shall receive reports from the Executive Committee and the Policy Committee.
- 7.5.10 The Steering Committee shall approve the manifestos and policy proposals prepared by the Policy Committee.
- 7.5.11 The Steering Committee is responsible for initiating the election of the Party Leader as outlined in Article 7.1.6 by a method of its choosing.
- 7.5.12 The Steering Committee membership is made up as follows:
- (i) the Party Leader;
  - (ii) the Party's Life President and Life M.C.;
  - (iii) Hub Co-ordinators, who may nominate a proxy to take their seat subject to approval from the Branches that form the Hub;
  - (iv) ~~ten~~ five WE Members, who shall be elected individually by a simple majority vote of Party Conference (unless otherwise decided in accordance with Article 4.11) for a term of office of three years or until the next Party Conference following, or shortly before, the expiry of that three-year term, unless otherwise decided in accordance with Article 7.5.9 below;
  - (v) five WE Members who are selected at random through the Party's Member database for a term of three years or until the next Party Conference following, or shortly before, the expiry of that three-year term, unless otherwise decided in accordance with Article 7.5.9 below. If a selected Member declines the role it will be passed randomly on to another Member until all positions have been filled; and

(vi) five WE Members recommended by the Steering Committee, each subject to Party Conference's approval by a simple majority vote, for a term of office of three years or until the next Party Conference following, or shortly before, the expiry of that three-year term, unless otherwise decided in accordance with Article 7.5.9 below.

7.5.13 Members of the Steering Committee joining under Article 7.5.7(iv), (v) and (vi) above may sit on the Steering Committee for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

7.5.14 The Steering Committee shall take all necessary steps to ensure coherence within the committee. In the case of a number of vacancies the Steering Committee shall suggest to Party Conference varying the length of term of office for new members, but no term of office shall ever be longer than three years.

7.5.15 If a Steering Committee member retires before their term of office comes to an end, the Steering Committee shall nominate an interim member to serve until the following Party Conference.

7.5.16 Elected representatives of the Party may sit in on Steering Committee meetings but do not have voting rights.

7.5.17 In the event of a tied vote of the Steering Committee, the Leader, the President and the M.C. shall together agree on the casting vote.

7.5.18 The Steering Committee may remove appointed members of the Executive Committee by a two-thirds majority vote.

7.5.19 The Steering Committee shall ensure security of tenure for the Appeals Body, subject to Article 10.1.18.

7.5.20 The Steering Committee shall appoint a Nominating Officer for the purposes of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

## 7.6 Policy Committee

7.6.1 The Policy Committee shall consist of the Leader (as Chair of the Committee) and 18~~4~~ Members elected individually by a simple

majority vote at Party Conference (unless otherwise decided in accordance with Article 4.11), as follows:

- (i) ~~six~~seven policy spokespeople, one for each of the policy areas listed in the Preamble;
- (ii) ~~six~~seven policy movement-builders, one for each of the policy areas listed in the Preamble, who shall build support and momentum for the Party's policies;
- (iii) one policy spokesperson for Scotland;
- (iv) one policy spokesperson for Wales; and

#### 7.6.2

- (i) one policy movement-builder for Scotland, who shall build support and momentum for the Party's policies in Scotland, and
- (ii) one policy movement-builder for Wales, who shall build support and momentum for the Party's policies in Wales.

7.6.3 The Policy Committee shall work with the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee in close consultation with the Leader and shall be responsible for:

- (i) ensuring the coherence and consistency of policy proposals;
- (ii) monitoring policy developments in the six core policy areas, both UK-wide and in the four countries of the United Kingdom;
- (iii) ensuring the Leader and the spokespeople are up to date with new developments within the six core policy areas;
- (iv) building alliances with organisations that share the objectives of the Party;
- (v) preparing manifestos for elections the Party contests, subject to approval by the ~~Executive~~Steering Committee; and
- (vi) preparing policy proposals for Party Conference, subject to approval by the ~~Executive~~Steering Committee.

- 7.6.4 In addition to the responsibilities outlined in Article 7.6.2 above:
- (i) each movement-builder shall actively reach out to organisations and individuals working in their respective policy area; and
  - (ii) each spokesperson shall participate in public debates on behalf of the Women's Equality Party in their respective policy area in consultation with the Party Leader or the Chief of Staff on the Leader's behalf.
- 7.6.5 The Policy Committee may not develop policy proposals that contravene the Core Objectives or other policies that have been approved by Party Conference.
- 7.6.6 The Leader, Hubs and the Steering Committee may submit policy proposals to the Policy Committee for its review, in which case the Policy Committee shall respond to the request in reasonable time. Individual Members and Branches may also submit policy proposals to the Policy Committee for consideration, in which case the Policy Committee has the sole discretion on whether to take that proposal forward.
- 7.6.7 Upon approval by the Leader, or the Chief of Staff on their behalf, the Policy Committee can send out statements and participate in public debate, as long as the content is in full agreement with the Party's policies.
- 7.6.8 The Chief of Staff, or a nominated member of staff on their behalf, shall convene the Policy Committee and chair its meetings.
- 7.6.9 Members of the Executive Committee have the right to sit in on Policy Committee Meetings and participate in debates but do not have voting rights.
- 7.6.10 The Policy Committee can meet either in person or remotely and shall aim at making all its decisions by consensus. In the event of a tied vote, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

## 7.7 Hubs

- 7.7.1 Hubs are formed of local Branches in a designated geographical area which shall altogether have 500 or more Members and Registered Supporters assigned to them.
- 7.7.2 Hubs shall:
- (i) facilitate collaboration between local Branches;
  - (ii) identify areas where it is feasible to set up new Branches and support the establishment of new Branches;
  - (iii) ensure effective campaigning by the Branches, including during election periods; and
  - (iv) work to maximise the impact of Branches, through training, capacity building and strategic planning.
- 7.7.3 The ~~Executive~~ Steering Committee or the Chief of Staff operating on its behalf shall be responsible for deciding on the formation of national and regional Hubs and for the number and coverage of such Hubs, in consultation with the Branches within the respective Hub area.
- 7.7.4 Each Hub shall have a Hub Co-ordinator and a Data Manager, both of whom shall be nominated by the Executive Committee upon the recommendation of the Branch Leaders that work within the respective Hub area. In the case of a dispute between Branches, the Executive Committee has the sole discretion to decide who shall be nominated.
- 7.7.5 The Hub may appoint other officers in consultation with the Executive Committee, if deemed necessary.
- 7.7.6 The Hub Co-ordinator and the Data Manager and any such other Appointed Officers shall sign the Code of Conduct for Appointed Officers.

7.7.7 Hub Co-ordinators and Data Managers shall serve a term of office of three years and may serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms, unless the respective Branches decide otherwise.

## 7.8 Branches

7.8.1 Members in any constituency or group of constituencies shall be able to establish a local Branch of the Party, subject to the proposed area having at least 100 Members and Registered Supporters (except at the exceptional discretion of the Executive Committee), and to the approval of the Executive Committee or the Chief of Staff operating on its behalf.

7.8.2 Branches shall form an essential component of the Party's efforts to achieve women's equality in the UK, working in their communities to gain supporters, turn those supporters into Members, and Members into WE volunteers; to disseminate information about the Party; and to campaign for change according to WE policies in the local area.

7.8.3 Branches shall meet a minimum of four times a year and the meetings shall be open to all Branch Members and Registered Supporters.

7.8.4 At such open meetings Branches shall select a minimum of three Appointed Officers, which shall include: a Branch Leader; a Data Manager, who shall be responsible for operating the local WE Membership database; and a Treasurer who shall be the registered treasurer of the Local Party in terms of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and any subsequent legislation. The Branch may select a Branch Secretary, or may determine that that role shall also be carried out by the Data Manager. The Branch may appoint other officers, including temporarily, for specific tasks related to the Branch's development. Branch Members may insist on a secret ballot to elect candidates. All candidates must be Party Members. All Appointed Officer and other Branch roles shall be open to role-sharing arrangements, with the exception of the role of Treasurer. People who share an Appointed Officer role shall each be Appointed Officers.

- 7.8.5 All Appointed Officers shall sign the Code of Conduct for Appointed Officers. Anyone other than Appointed Officers handling communications on behalf of the branch shall sign a Volunteer Agreement.
- 7.8.6 In accordance with this Constitution the Branches may decide on local rules to govern their internal affairs.
- 7.8.7 Each Branch must ensure its own compliance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 and any subsequent legislation, in consultation with the Executive Committee and the Party Treasurer.
- 7.8.8 Branches can participate in public debate at the local level and shall ensure such participation is entirely consistent with WE policies and the Code of Conduct for Appointed Officers.
- 7.8.9 If a Branch wishes to contest an election, it shall, in collaboration with the relevant Hub, submit a request with adequate notice to the Steering Committee, whose decision is final.
- 7.8.10 Where a local Branch proposes to support the Party's fundraising activities or to fundraise to finance local campaigning it shall agree a governance process with the Treasurer to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and the Party's aims.
- 7.8.11 A Branch's boundaries shall be determined and may be redrawn by the Executive Committee, upon consultation with Branch Leaders.

## 7.9 Candidates and elected representatives

- 7.9.1 The Executive Committee or the Chief of Staff on its behalf shall publish Procedural Guidelines on the nomination of candidates for election and a Code of Conduct for candidates and staff.
- 7.9.2 The Executive Committee or the Chief of Staff on its behalf may decide to maintain a register of approved candidates for the Party (the "**Candidates Register**"). The Candidates Register may, if the Executive Committee chooses, differentiate between those approved to stand for election to the Westminster Parliament, the Scottish



Parliament, the Welsh Assembly, international decision-making bodies as applicable, and local elected public authorities or executive positions.

7.9.3 Individuals holding public office as a representative of the Party will be expected to prioritise at all times activities that further the Core Objectives of the Party as set out in Part 1.

7.9.4 Where more than one individual has been elected to a particular public authority, the Party will expect its elected representatives to act together and agree a common position in line with Party policy on any issues directly or indirectly affecting gender equality. However, candidates and elected representatives will be free to adopt diverse positions on other issues where the Party has not, nor seeks to have, a policy. In this event Party representatives should not claim to be voting according to the Party line.

#### 7.10 Individual sanctions

7.10.1 The Executive Committee can censure any Appointed Officers, candidates for elections or elected representatives in the name of the Party, including the Leader, if, in the view of the Executive Committee, that individual's actions could reasonably be considered:

- (i) a breach of the terms of this Constitution; or
- (ii) bullying, defamation, harassment or intimidation; or
- (iii) bringing the Party into disrepute; or
- (iv) to make them unsuitable to represent WE; or
- (v) to demonstrate, through their conduct, fundamental disagreement with the core values and objectives of the Party.

7.10.2 The Executive Committee shall have sole discretion as to the appropriate sanction in the event of such censure, which can include suspension from office or candidacy or, as a last resort, expulsion from the Party.

- 7.10.3 The Executive Committee's decision shall be effective immediately but may be appealed to the Appeals Body according to Article 10, whose decision shall be final.
- 7.10.4 Following any suspension, the Executive Committee shall make such arrangements as may be necessary to restore the function of the Party's organisations as soon as possible.
- 7.10.5 Should any member of the Executive Committee commit a breach according to any one of the conditions in Article 7.10.1 above, they shall be temporarily suspended from the Executive Committee and the matter sent to the Appeals Body to decide sanctions. The Appeals Body's decision is final.
- 7.10.6 Should any Member of WE claiming to act in the Party's name act in a way that could reasonably be considered to breach Articles 7.10.1(i) – (v) above, the Executive Committee may decide whether to impose sanctions up to and including expulsion from the Party. Such sanctions may be referred to the Appeals Body according to Article 10, and their decision shall be final.

## **8 Finances**

- 8.1 The Steering Committee is responsible for setting and approving the budget for each financial year. The Executive Committee holds the responsibility for the day-to-day finances of the Party. The Treasurer shall keep a proper set of financial records, and holds overall responsibility for the drawing and paying of moneys, and for all the Party's monetary transactions.
- 8.2 The Treasurer shall sit on any committee appointed to oversee the finances of the Party, and has the right to address any meeting of that committee, the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee, the Policy Committee or Party Conference on the financial implications of any proposal before a decision is taken on that proposal.
- 8.3 The Executive Committee shall in conjunction with the Steering Committee ensure the effective monitoring of financial performance against the agreed

budget, taking any action necessary to contain excessive expenditure and manage any shortfall in income.

- 8.4 The financial accounts of the Party shall be reviewed annually by an independent auditor who is a qualified accountant appointed by the Steering Committee for that purpose. The financial year of the Party ends on the 31st December of every year, to which day the accounts of the Party shall be balanced.
- 8.5 The Steering Committee has the power to establish a company to acquire, hold and dispose of the assets of the Party. Directors of such company ~~shall~~ ~~may~~ include all Executive Committee Members appointed by the Steering Committee, the Chief of Staff and the Treasurer, ~~unless there is a potential conflict of interest~~. Company board meetings may be held in conjunction with meetings of the Executive Committee. The Steering Committee shall have the power to appoint and remove the Directors of such a company and shall ensure the board is sufficiently qualified at any given time.

## 9 Elections

- 9.1 The Steering Committee shall determine which elections shall be contested by the Party's candidates ~~based on the recommendations of~~ in consultation with the Executive Committee.
- 9.2 The ~~Executive Steering~~ Committee, or any sub-committee established for this purpose, shall consult with the Hub and local Branches on the process of selecting candidates for elections, and may publish guidance to the selection procedure. In the event of a dispute, the ~~Executive Steering~~ Committee will have the sole discretion to decide on the process.
- 9.3 In the event of a parliamentary by-election the Steering Committee shall have the sole right to choose prospective candidates.
- 9.4 Where the Party does not propose to field a candidate in an election, the Party may choose to endorse a candidate of another political party, or an independent candidate, where that candidate shares the values and goals of the Party, subject to Article 9.6 below.

- 9.5 Where a candidate agrees to endorse the Party's core policies and agrees to abide by the WE Code, the Party will permit that candidate to run on a joint ticket, subject to Article 9.6 below.
- 9.6 Any such endorsement or joint candidacy must be authorised by the Steering Committee by a simple majority vote and after agreement of any relevant local Branch.
- 9.7 Where the candidates of more than one other political party in a constituency share the values and goals of the Party, the Steering Committee shall exercise its discretion as to which, if any, candidate or candidates to endorse, subject to the agreement of any relevant local Branch.

## 10 Appeals

### 10.1 Appeals Body

- 10.1.1 The Party has an appeals body (the "**Appeals Body**") which shall hear and rule on disputes on any matters specified in this Article 10 about which a Member, a Branch or any other body provided for in this Constitution has a grievance.
- 10.1.2 The Appeals Body shall consist of five Members of the Party who are appointed for a term of four years. No member of the Appeals Body shall hold another office within the Party, or be a member of staff, or an elected representative, or a candidate for elections or an active member of any other political party. Of the five members of the Appeals Body at least three shall sit on any given dispute. The Appeal Body's meetings can be held either in person or remotely.
- 10.1.3 The Appeals Body shall function independently of the Steering Committee and the Executive Committee, subject only to Articles 10.1.4 – 10.1.6 and 10.1.8 below.
- 10.1.4 The members of the Appeals Body shall be appointed by the Steering Committee, subject to approval by Party Conference. In making such appointments, the Steering Committee shall ensure they have relevant academic/professional qualifications or experience, e.g. in

the fields of diversity, law, human relations and politics. The Appeals Body shall elect its own chair who shall convene its meetings and decide which members sit on any given dispute.

10.1.5 The Steering Committee shall take all necessary steps to ensure coherence within the Appeals Body. In the case of many vacancies the Steering Committee shall suggest to Party Conference different lengths of term of office for new members, but such terms of office shall never be longer than four years.

10.1.6 When a vacancy arises on the Appeals Body, a new member will be appointed as soon as reasonably possible, according to the procedure in Article 10.1.3 above. If such vacancy leaves the Appeals Body with fewer than three members, the Steering Committee will appoint a Party Member to the Appeals Body on a temporary basis until a new full member is selected.

10.1.7 No member of the Appeals Body may sit on a dispute in which that member has or declares an interest.

10.1.8 A member of the Appeals Body may only be removed during their term of office by a two-thirds majority of members voting at conference. Should an Appeals Body member's actions reasonably be considered a breach of Article 7.10.1(i) – (v), a vote will be tabled by the Steering Committee at the Party Conference following such action to determine whether they should remain on the Appeals Body. That Appeals Body member may not sit on any appeals pending such a vote.

## 10.2 Who may appeal?

Appeals may be initiated by Party Members and/or Party Organisations (the “**Appellant**”).

## 10.3 Eligibility for appeal

10.3.1 Disputed matters eligible for appeal shall be those:

- (i) under this Constitution;
- (ii) about the interpretation of this Constitution; or

(iii) on which in this Constitution or in the Code of Conduct it is stated that an appeal may be made to the Appeals Body.

10.3.2 The Appeals Body may, at its discretion, rule on other disputes where:

(i) that dispute is between Party Members and/or Party organisations and concerns Party matters; and

(ii) all parties to that dispute agree to appeal to the Appeals Body.

10.3.3 The Appeals Body has the discretion to refuse to hear an appeal if, in its opinion, that appeal is not deemed eligible according to this Article 10. The Appeals Body can in such an instance decide to refer the matter to the Steering Committee to determine if any further action is needed.

#### 10.4 Appeals mechanism

10.4.1 Prior to making an appeal to the Appeals Body, any internal complaints procedure must be exhausted. Appeals must be made in writing to the Appeals Body as soon as possible and no later than **six weeks after the final decision of such internal complaints procedure** ~~three months after the cause of the dispute~~, by the Appellant.

10.4.2 The Appeals Body shall determine and publish its own procedures and make the process clear to all Party Members. In addition, any Appellant and the person or the body with which the Appellant has a grievance shall be given clear guidance on the procedure.

10.4.3 **Other than in exceptional circumstances, the Appeals Body will decide appeals on the basis of written material only and without parties being present. All appeal hearings will take place in private.**

10.4.4 The Appeals Body shall keep a record of its decisions and shall present a report on its activities to Party Conference.

10.4.5 The Appeals Body may at any given time seek advice from experts and invite them to attend and contribute to meetings.

10.4.6 The decision of the Appeals Body is final.

## **11 Dissolution of the Women's Equality Party**

The Women's Equality Party may only be dissolved if a proposal to that effect is passed by:

- 11.1 a vote by a three-quarters majority of voting Members at a properly convened Special Conference called for that purpose; or
- 11.2 a four-fifths majority vote in an electronic or postal ballot of the Membership.

## **12 The Constitution – Approvals and Amendments**

- 12.1 This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of those voting Members present at Conference.
- 12.2 Amendments to the Constitution may be proposed by the Steering Committee, the Executive Committee, the Conference Committee or any Branch having so voted at an open meeting of Members, or by not less than 20 Members of the Party working together.

## **13 Interpretation**

If there is any question as to the interpretation of this Constitution, or if a matter arises on which the Constitution is silent, the Executive Committee shall give a ruling which may be reversed by a two-thirds majority of those Members present and voting at Conference.