

# **Autumn Conference**

## **Conference Daily**

**Saturday 17th September 2011**

### **Large Print Version**

This large print document contains the text from the published Conference Daily. Photographs, graphics, advertisements and complex page layouts have been omitted.

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### **Conference Daily**

Information from the Conference Committee for Saturday 17th September and final timings for conference sessions. Please read in conjunction with the Conference Agenda.

**Saturday 17th September**

10.00–12.30 Consultative sessions Local Government Finance, May 2011 Elections, Mid-Term Review

14.30–14.40 F1 Party business Formal Opening of the Federal Conference by Cllr Paul Tilsley MBE

14.40–15.10 F2 Report Federal Conference Committee

F3 Report Federal Policy Committee

15.10–15.55 F4 Policy motion Lords Elections by 2015

15.55–16.15 F5 Speech Lynne Featherstone MP

16.15–17.00 F6 Policy motion Employment and Support Allowance and Work Capability Assessments

17.00–17.20 F7 Report Federal Executive

F8 Report Federal Finance and Administration Committee

17.20 Close of session

Please note that timings are approximate only. Some items of business may occur earlier than indicated.

Conference representatives wishing to speak in any of the debates are requested to fill in and submit a speaker's card as soon as possible.

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## **Saturday 17th September**

### **F2 Report of the Federal Conference Committee**

Q1. Submitted by Gareth Epps

The agenda for this Federal Conference features a record number of speeches and non-debate items. Compared to the Conference at the same stage of the last Parliament, almost two hours' debating time has been taken away.

- a) Why?
- b) What role in FCC's deliberations on the balance of the agenda did the need for policy development as part of the Mid-Term Review play?

Q2. Submitted by Leonora Brace

Disabled members of the party who are also conference representatives face specific problems relating to their disability in coming to conference that other members of the party don't. Some require part or full time care at conference. Why is there currently no pass category for carers and is this a reasonable

adjustment the party could make in the future so that they don't deter disabled party members or disabled conference representatives for SAOs or local parties?

Q3. Submitted by Andrew Hudson

How many people were arrested in the vicinity of the Spring Federal Conference at Sheffield?

Q4. Submitted by James King

- a) Have the police recommended that the FCC bar anyone from attending this conference?
- b) If so, how many?
- c) In how many cases, if any, did the FCC overrule them?
- d) How many of those prevented from attending conference, if any, are voting representatives?
- e) Without breaching individuals' privacy or the necessities of security, could the FCC give us a rough idea of why these individuals were thought to be a security risk?

Q5. Submitted by Peter Tyzack

- a) Some while ago I raised the question of the procedure of debating amendments to motions. I pointed out the inconsistency with the practise elsewhere, particularly in local councils, where commonly the procedure is to deal with any amendments at the start of each debate, and then to debate the resulting substantive motion. I was promised this would be looked at.
- b) Please advise when we might expect to see a conference agenda which includes a proposed amendment to standing orders, so that

conference may decide how to deal with this apparent anomaly.

c) Why do we not have reports to Conference from the Membership Department and from the Campaigns Department? It would seem to me that as significant parts of the organisation they should be expected to report to us each year about their 'progress'.

Q6. Submitted by Gareth Epps

a) What Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out by the Police on behalf of FCC, in order to provide evidence whether or not the accreditation process is discriminatory? Can its contents be summarised in reply to this question?

b) How many party members who applied to attend conference have been refused accreditation:

i) Due to the police refusing to accredit them because of some detail in their application?

ii) For other reasons?

Q7. Submitted by Jonathan Hunt

The committee appears to have usurped the democratic process whereby delegates chose the emergency motions they wish to debate, and seemingly taken those powers to itself; while also reducing the amount of debating time with Tory-style speeches and stage-managed Q&A sessions. Can we have our conference back, please?

Q8. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

a) In previous years it has been the usual practice that Conference Representatives have been sent a report of the business transacted shortly

after conference. No report appears to have been produced after spring conference 2011, why was this?

b) Is Federal Conference Committee satisfied that the current party constitution and Conference standing orders provide sufficient powers to allow the operation of any enhanced security procedures necessary as a result of our being in government?

c) At Liverpool conference, whilst there was security screening at the entrance to the conference hall, no security checks on admission whatsoever (ie. no bag or badge checks) were in place at the conference hotel just a few yards across the walkway. Did this arrangement result in any lapses in security?

d) A number of questions tabled to reports at Spring conference have remained unanswered. What steps does Conference Committee take to ensure that party bodies provide answers to questions tabled and will they consider “naming and shaming” bodies who fail to do so in future?

### **F3 Report of the Federal Policy Committee**

Q1. Submitted by Leonora Brace

a) When government policy or Conservative party policy is different to Liberal Democrat party policy, how do the party’s parliamentarians and FPC find a way through this on controversial issues, as the Lib Dem voters in the General Election and party members don’t fully understand the difference between Lib Dem party policy and government policy when the Liberal Democrats are a party of government?

b) It is sad the recommendations arising out of the Strategy, Positioning and Priorities motion have been delayed to the Spring conference; what reassurances can FPC give that these will be ready in time for the Spring conference and does FPC think that the party’s current arrangements are

sufficiently democratic for a party of government rather than a party of opposition?

Q2. Submitted by Adam Corlett

It's been reported that David Laws, Danny Alexander and others are working on the party's tax strategy for this decade ("Tax 2020?"). How does this fit in with the FPC, the planned taxation consultation/policy papers mentioned in its report, and the democratic nature of the party on this most important issue?

#### **F4 Lords Elections by 2015**

Amendment One

Women Liberal Democrats, Glasgow North, Staffordshire Moorlands and 39 conference representatives

Mover: Jo Shaw

Summation: Dinti Batstone

After v) (line 13), insert:

- vi) That women continue to be egregiously under-represented at Westminster, with men constituting four-fifths of parliamentarians.
- vii) The success of one-off zipping used by the party in 1999 in delivering sustained gender balance in the Liberal Democrat European Parliament group.

After 4. (line 28), insert:

With specific regard to gender balance, conference calls on Liberal Democrat

parliamentarians to:

- i) Ensure the reformed House begins its mandate with in-built gender balance.
- ii) Pilot modern flexible working practices in the reformed House.
- iii) Ensure any further interim appointments mitigate, rather than perpetuate, the current gender imbalance.
- iv) If an appointed element is retained, press for a transparent skills and competency based approach to new appointments.

## Amendment Two

Cheltenham

Mover: Dennis Parsons

Summation: To be announced

After line 16, insert:

Conference nevertheless expresses its disappointment at the Government's proposals to include the possibility of up to 20% of members being appointed and not elected; and reaffirms its commitment to previous conference motions and its 2010 Manifesto pledge to 'replace the House of Lords with a fully-elected second chamber'.

In 4. (line 28), at end add: '(given that it is existing Liberal Democrat policy to have a 100% elected second chamber).'

## Amendment Three

25 conference representatives

Mover: Arnie Gibbons

Summation: Peter Kunzmann

After 4. (line 28), insert:

Conference opposes, in the event of the retention of a small appointed element, any seats in Parliament being reserved for any group or individual on the basis of their beliefs, religious or otherwise.

Background briefing

This motion reaffirms existing party policy as set out in the 2010 election manifesto, Change That Works For You, and policy paper 83, For the People, By the People (2007).

## **F6 Employment and Support Allowance and Work Capability Assessments**

Federal Conference Committee has accepted the following drafting amendment to the motion:

In ii) (line 5), delete: '70%', and insert: '39%'.

Amendment One

Glasgow North and 19 conference representatives

Mover: James Sandbach

Summation: To be announced

After C. (line 25), insert:

D. That vulnerable cases like this, where a welfare recipient's income is threatened, should qualify for free legal representation.

Delete 2. (line 35) and insert:

2. Liberal Democrats in Government to oppose an arbitrary time limit on how long claimants can claim contributory ESA.

In 3. (line 36), after 'representation' insert: 'and expert advice, and for Government to reconsider the exclusion of welfare benefits casework such as this from the scope of legal aid.

After 3. (line 36), add:

4. A presumption that ESA claimants with serious and uncontrollable life-threatening conditions should be allocated to the support group rather than the work related activity group.

5. A review of ATOS performance in delivering the Medical Services Agreement contract with DWP in respect of the quality of medical assessments.

6. Effective contract compliance for contractors carrying out ESA eligibility assessments to avoid poor performance, and a presumption that in future ESA eligibility will be carried out by the public sector or non-profit organisations.

Background Briefing

This motion creates new policy.

## **F7 Report of the Federal Executive**

Q1. Submitted by Leonora Brace

- a) Which section/s of the party will bear the costs of VAN licences and when will it be rolled out? Will it be replacing EARS or used alongside EARS?
- b) Will directly elected police commissioners be elected at the parliamentary constituency level, local authority area or just one for an entire police authority area?

Q2. Submitted by Peter Tyzack

Do I take it correctly, from the last sentence of the first paragraph on page 11 of the Reports booklet, that Tim Farron and Norman Lamb, and their vice-chairs, are not currently on speaking terms?

Q3. Submitted by Andrew Hudson

What steps did the working group take to ensure that SAO's and AO's were properly consulted and what steps were taken to ensure that they were adequately informed of the information that the working group required to be submitted?

Q4. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

Does the party's target for a 2015 General Election remain to double our MPs from 2007 (ie to 126)?

Q5. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

What discussions have FE had about achieving this target, what obstacles to achieving this target have been identified and what proposals have been discussed to overcome them?

Q6. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

What recommendations of the Bones report (Party Reform Commission) are still to be implemented and what discussions have FE had about plans for implementing any still outstanding?

Q7. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

What target is aimed for in responding to emails and other correspondence sent to Nick Clegg as leader of the Party. Is this target being met?

Q8. Submitted by Lorna Dupré

The Membership Data Online system has failed to provide local and regional parties with up-to-date membership information for a large part of 2011. Why has it not been possible to take swifter action to remedy this, using volunteer effort from one or more of the many IT experts in the party if necessary, and what is being done to ensure that Membership Data Online can be relied upon in future?

Q9. Submitted by Suzanne Fletcher

The report on page 12 gives the welcome news that “CCC believe that the Party needs to rapidly improve its communications”. This is to be applauded,

and thank you. I would like more information though on just what is going to happen, and when. I spoke in the Strategy debate at spring conference on the urgent need for better communications and said I would be back in Birmingham asking about actual progress. We need in simple format accessible to all members information on what have we achieved, what have we influenced and what have we tried to get, but not there yet. We need to be able to get answers to “is it true that ?” from allegations by constituents, the labour party and the media. We need to know who to contact and how for information. We need the website to distinguish in its searches between pre and post May 2010. We urgently need a MYTHBUSTER section of the website. Nobody disagreed in spring when I called for us to act out our new slogan “We keep in touch all rear round not just at sending out appeals time”. Can we have a timetabled response to the above points please ?

Q10. Submitted by Susan Heinrich

Why are the details missing regarding the minor compliance issue not made clear in this report when motion F30 provides more, if not complete, information on the matter?

## **F8 Report of the Federal Finance and Administration Committee**

Q1. Submitted by Peter Tyzack

Why is it that ‘membership recruitment’, ‘membership communications’ and ‘campaign management’ are included within the report on the finance and administration of the Party? Whilst these aspects of the party’s activities obviously have financial and administrative implications, surely the skills of recruitment, communication and campaigning are very different from those of accounting and administration.

Q2. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

- a) The amount received from ministerial tithes is budgeted to fall by 25% (from £40,000 to £30,000) for 2012. Why is this?
- b) Which ministers are making ministerial tithes and how much are they contributing?
- c) The Bones report made an 'urgent' recommendation in 2008 that it be a condition of becoming an elected Liberal Democrat (at all levels) that you tithe to the party. Is the Chair of FFAC satisfied that all our MPs and MEPs have complied with this recommendation? What discussions has he had with the Whips of the relevant parliamentary parties about achieving full compliance with this recommendation?

Q3. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

Would the President be happy had his employer treated him in the way Campaigns Department staff were treated in May and June of 2011?

Q4. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

How many campaigns staff were employed by:

- i) The Federal Party.
- ii) The Federal Party jointly with regional parties.
- iii) Regional parties solely.

In September 2010 and September 2011?

Q5. Submitted by Hywel Morgan

A series of redundancies in the Campaigns Department were announced to

staff with little warning at the debrief meeting shortly after the local elections. In the weeks prior to that staff had almost certainly worked well over any contracted hours to get the best results possible for the party. Staff who applied for new positions then had to apply for these on a very short timescale at a time when most would have, very reasonably, been considering holidays or a break from work. When PriceWaterhouseCoopers reviewed human resources policy and practice what comments did they have any comments to make about whether this procedure represented either acceptable practice or best practice for dealing with employees?