

Reports to Conference

Liberal 
Democrats

Autumn Conference
Bournemouth 2023

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Federal Committee Reports

Federal Conference Committee - Nick Da Costa (Chair)

The Federal Conference Committee is responsible for organising our two annual conferences, including selecting items for the agenda.

Autumn Conference: 2023 Bournemouth

Following the cancellation of our Autumn 2022 Conference due to the sad death of Queen Elizabeth II, I am delighted that we are back in Bournemouth since our last in person Autumn conference in 2019. I would like to thank all of those members who attended our online Conferences and also attended the Conference in York earlier in March.

I would like to thank those of you who have (or are about to) register for conference, and I would also like to welcome those of you who are first time attendees. I am also delighted to see so many of our exhibitors, fringe organisers and observers back at Conference. This year I am excited about our expanded exhibition offering and also fringes with organisations that may not have engaged with the Liberal Democrats before. I hope that members take the opportunity to visit the stands and attend the fingers.

Of course, I encourage everyone to take part in as much of the conference experience as possible - take advantage of the amazing training sessions, networking opportunities, fringes, exhibition and of course the debates in the auditorium.

If you are not able to attend in person, we have our online offering, which means for a small fee you can watch the auditorium sessions online and vote on auditorium items. Whilst this doesn't fully replicate a hybrid experience,

we are using this as part of the work the FCC's Innovation Working Group is doing to see what changes and improvements we can make to Conference in the future.

We understand that Conference is costly to attend, and to help with that, we administer the Conference Access Fund. This provides a means by which people can attend Conference who might not be able to attend. The Conference Access Fund can assist with a range of things, including grants towards accommodation, travel, and assistance with childcare costs. We are reliant on generous donations from members for this, and we are always impressed by the generosity of our members. If you are able to contribute to the fund, you can do so via: libdems.org.uk/conference-donate.

We also provide complimentary carers passes which members can request if they have a carer with them, or if they are coming with a partner who might not usually attend Conference and is assisting with child care.

The Agenda

As ever, we received many high-quality motions from all over the party for Conference. As outlined in my [previous report](#) we received 54 policy motions; two constitutional amendments; five standing order amendments; and three business motions.

Whilst the FCC offers drafting and language advice on motions submitted to Conference, they cannot always cover advice on policy matters. I recommend contacting members of the FPC; spokespeople; and the Party's Affiliated Organisations (AOs) for specific policy expertise and assistance with formulating policy. If you'd like to learn more about how to write policy, the FCC is undertaking a training session at Conference on how to write a good conference, details of which are in the Conference Directory.

Of the submitted motions, we selected nineteen policy motions; one business motion; one constitutional amendment; and three standing order

amendments. We have selected a Ukraine motion and due to the continual changes in the situation there, the FCC has agreed to a later deadline of 21 September at 13:00 for amendments to this motion. There will also be a slot for an emergency motion as well.

The Federal Policy Committee has put forward several policy motions; which will be covered in their report.

For the rest of the agenda, we have selected what we think is a varied and interesting field of motions, and we are looking forward to some lively debates.

We also are delighted to have some key-note speeches during the Conference period, including Kira Rudik (Leader of our sister party in Ukraine, Holos, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament and ALDE Vice President) who will be giving her maiden speech to Conference. She will be spending the whole conference session with us, and also taking part in a fringe session introduced by Layla Moran MP with John Sweeney the investigative journalist who has spent lots of time in Ukraine since the start of the conflict. We are also delighted to be hearing from our Deputy Leader, Daisy Cooper, Wendy Chamberlain MP, and Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Alex Cole-Hamilton, amongst others.

Every policy motion, constitutional amendment and standing order amendment can be amended. The deadline for submitting amendments is 11 September 2023 at 13:00 (with a later deadline for the Ukraine motion) and can be done via: https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference_submissions.

Deadlines for questions to reports are the same as per the amendments deadline and this can be done via:

https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference_submissions. We have allocated some time for Emergency Motions; these are short motions on issues that arise or where there have been significant developments since the original deadline for motions. This deadline is the same as for amendments and can

be submitted using the same web link above. We continue to provide a drafting advice service. Under that scheme, members of the Committee review motions and amendments that are submitted to it and provide comments and suggestions on the drafting. We do find that people who have used the service tend to be more successful in having their motions and amendments selected. The deadline for drafting advice is 22 August at 13:00 via the above weblink. The selected amendments, questions and other information about Conference will be listed in Conference Extra and Conference Daily. Conference Extra will be available the Tuesday in the week before Conference commences. You will also be able to access the same information through the Conference App which can be downloaded from the relevant App stores to your devices. We will continue to allow the submission of speakers cards online and you can find the link for this in the agenda. The FCC is here to help you make the most of Conference; please feel free to approach any of us at any time during Conference about any questions you may have about the agenda, conference sessions or speaking at Conference. You will be able to identify us by the badges we wear with FCC on them. You can also contact us via the FCC Helpdesk and the Lib Dem Conference Facebook group.

Innovation Working Group

As mentioned in my Spring Report the Federal Conference Committee has established an Innovation Working Group. This sub-committee will be looking at how we can enhance the member experience at Conference and bring about changes and innovation to Conference. So much of Conference happens outside of the auditorium and it is therefore important that we look at all aspects of Conference, not only the auditorium. The group will be meeting in mid-July to start formulating ideas and concepts. These will then need to be budgeted and scoped out. We will share more with members as we move ahead with this process.

Next Conference

Looking ahead, the FCC has announced next year's conferences: Spring Conference - 15-17 March 2024, York and Autumn Conference - 14-17 September 2024, Brighton

Thanks

The Conference Office is an amazing team of individuals who work so hard over the whole year making our conferences happen, and we are all so grateful for the hard work and dedication of the team. We would like to express our gratitude to Susie Murray, Wilma Robinson, Amy McClelland and Pilar Maroto Montalvo for their impressive hard work. We are also greatly supported by the party's Policy Team and want to thank Christian Moon and Joe Wright and JJ in the PAU for all the hard work (and long meetings) they do for the Federal Conference Committee. In addition, Lucy Yaqoob and Matt Clegg for their support on the online voting system. I would also like to express my thanks to Sian Waddington, Mike Dixon, Trudy Church and the whole team at Party HQ who help make Conference happen.

Stewards

We are delighted to welcome back our Stewards to Conference and you'll see them around our conference venues. They do an incredible job making sure that Conference is successful and are always really helpful. If you need any assistance, please speak to them. I want to thank them for their amazing work and also Mike Ross and Jodie Frapple, our co-Chief Stewards.

So much at Conference would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the members of the FCC, and I would like to express my personal thanks to all of the members of the committee. I owe a particular thanks to Cara Jenkinson and Jon Ball, the Vice-Chairs of the FCC.

Finally, I need to thank you – the members, as Conference would not happen if it wasn't for you. Thank you for making Conference so special and this party

such an amazing party. I hope you all enjoy your time at Conference and take advantage of the many different events and sessions over the conference period.

Federal Policy Committee - Lucy Nethsingha & Jeremy Hargreaves (Vice Chairs)

The Federal Policy Committee (FPC) is responsible for researching and developing policy and overseeing the Federal Party's policy-making process. This includes producing policy papers for debate at Conference and drawing up (in consultation with the parliamentary party) the Federal election manifesto for Westminster elections.

FPC's thoughts are increasingly beginning to turn to the manifesto for the next General Election. This is driving our consultation with members on it and the pre-manifesto we are bringing to this conference, as well as our policy working groups and other work, to engage as many members as possible in policy.

Manifesto process

The committee has spent considerable time developing for our pre-manifesto a core statement outlining our party's overall approach to the major policy challenges, in response to a demand for this from members and voters. Our aim is that it is an important statement about what the Liberal Democrats offer, which underpins all our specific individual policy proposals. We will particularly welcome comments and feedback from members on section two of the pre-manifesto. As well as setting out five key headline policies, the pre-manifesto then makes specific policy proposals in a wide range of different policy areas. The debate in Bournemouth will be a key opportunity for members to comment on this draft manifesto, and we look forward to hearing them, as well as any directly from members separately from Conference.

As always, we are strongly aware of the need for our final manifesto to be a fully costed set of proposals and we have begun our work to ensure we achieve this. We also have an ongoing programme to understand in detail the

public's attitudes to all parties including ourselves, and the ways of presenting our approach and policies which appeal most successfully to them.

We are very pleased that the programme of seven online manifesto consultation sessions over the last few months gave 750 party members an opportunity to contribute directly to the manifesto development process, as well as eleven thousand members who responded to a short online survey. This is one of the party's largest manifesto consultation exercises ever, and we hope will contribute to the party having a manifesto next year which the whole party feels is its own. We thank the party's operations, policy, membership and digital staff teams who have run these.

The manifesto writing group's chair, (Lord) Dick Newby is also continuing a wide programme of meetings with outside groups about our manifesto, both to hear their wishes and also to promote our approach to key specialist audiences.

Lastly, in a first for FPC, committee members took part in a Maraphone session during our July meeting, directly phoning voters in Somerton & Frome, obviously both supporting the by-election campaign and also gaining direct insight for the committee into voters' perspectives.

Policy working groups

The committee's selection of areas to develop full policy papers through working groups has been closely guided by both the desire to express the party's values in important areas, and to appeal to key voters. We are very grateful to the members of working groups who work over a year or more to consult members and a very wide range of external experts as they develop detailed policies. We carefully balance working groups to bring a diverse range of expertise, lived and professional experience, backgrounds and personal characteristics, so that our policies can be as broadly based as possible. We now regularly receive 100-200 applications to join each working group, which both demonstrates a keen interest from members in

policy-making, and allows us to appoint high calibre and diverse groups. Chairs of working groups in particular take on a very significant and challenging role for the party, and we are very grateful to them.

We are presenting to this conference for debate policy papers on A Better Start in Life (childcare and early years, developed by a group chaired by Cllr Dine Romero); Food and Farming (chaired by Stuart Roberts); Tackling the Housing Crisis (chaired by Cllr Peter Thornton) and Tackling the Nature Crisis (chaired by Richard Benwell). We have decided to pull out the animal welfare aspects of farming for a separate debate at Spring Conference.

We also plan to bring to Spring Conference in York next March policy papers on international security (from a group chaired by Dr Christine Cheng), and on opportunity and skills policy (chaired by Rosie Shimell). Their consultation papers remain available on the links below; please feel free to send any comments you may have on them to policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk. The consultation stage remains generally a much better opportunity to influence the final paper and proposals than seeking to amend it through the final debate on the floor of Conference.

We have also recently advertised for applications for and appointed high quality groups to develop policies on the Future of Work (chaired by Vinous Ali) and Science and Innovation (including AI), chaired by Dr Jonathan Everett. Further details about them are available on the link below. We hope to bring proposals developed by them to Autumn Conference next year.

Our full programme for developing policy papers is therefore currently as follows:

	Consultation session	Final debate
Pre-manifesto		Autumn 2023
Food & Farming	Spring 2023	Autumn 2023
Tackling the Nature Crisis	Spring 2022	Autumn 2023
Tackling the Housing Crisis	Spring 2022	Autumn 2023
A Better Start in Life	Spring 2022	Autumn 2023
International Security	Spring & Autumn 23	Spring 2024
Opportunity & Skills	Spring 2023	Spring 2024
Future of Work	Spring 2024	Autumn 2024
Science & Innovation	Spring 2024	Autumn 2024

Supporting members' discussion of policy

In addition to the manifesto consultation events outlined above, FPC is keen to do as much as possible to engage more members in policy-making and we are continuing to consider further initiatives. We would be very happy to receive any suggestions, comments or requests to policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk

Thanks to excellent work by the party's digital staff team, the new webpage libdems.org.uk/members/make-policy now offers an excellent up to date picture of party policy development and we urge interested members to take a look at it. In addition, the new pages at libdems.org.uk/conference/papers show all policy motions passed by Conference over the last fifteen years, as well as all policy papers. We hope this will be a helpful resource for the many party members who want to look up existing policies in specific areas. We also have a further project in hand to try and pull together all relevant policies in particular areas and hope to be able to publicise this during the autumn.

For those interested in following the ongoing work of the committee, we recommend facebook.com/groups/federalpolicycommittee which offers the

chance to ask questions of the committee as well as see regular reports from our meetings.

Conclusion

The work of the committee would not be possible without the efforts of around a hundred party members who have been part of working groups which have developed policies we are bringing to this conference, and as many more working towards future conferences, as well as of policy staff, especially Christian Moon and Joe Wright. Our hope is that the proposals we are bringing to Conference will help the party to achieve its political aims, and we look forward to hearing members' comments on them.

Federal Board - Mark Pack (President)

The Federal Board (FB) is responsible for directing, co-ordinating and overseeing the implementation of the Party's strategy and the work of the Federal Party.

The political landscape

Unlike the previous two occasions a Board report to Conference was written, this time there has been no change in Prime Minister since our last scheduled conference. But while Rishi Sunak is still there, he has not succeeded in restoring the Conservative Party's political fortunes.

We saw that spectacularly in the May local elections, gaining majority control of twelve extra councils. This is the highest number of council gains by our party since 1995, which came ahead of the sweeping gains against the Conservatives at the 1997 general election. Our projected national vote share with the BBC was also our best since 2010 and our 407 net gains, with net gains in every region, made it five rounds of local elections in a row in which we've made progress.

Another way of looking at our progress is the cumulative gains and losses so far in May elections during this Parliament:

- Lib Dems +637
- Greens +416
- Labour +318
- Conservatives -1,309

Behind the headlines of election wins, there was also another important piece of progress: a big increase in the number of Liberal Democrat candidates. We've got up to 60% of seats having a Lib Dem candidate (up seven points on last time around). It was our best showing for this part of the local elections

cycle compared with Labour since 2011 and compared with the Conservatives since 2007.

We still have some way to go to match the candidate levels of Labour and the Conservatives. But the combination of more Lib Dem run councils, more Lib Dem councillors and more Lib Dem candidates shows that we are not only growing in our areas of strength. We are also growing in previously much weaker areas too.

The challenge as the general election nears is to get the balance right between the short term imperative of doing well in our held and target constituencies and the long term necessity of growing more broadly as a party across the whole country.

It also shows how important it is to continue the growth in our local infrastructure right across the country so that we have the capacity to fully exploit the political opportunities now in front of us.

Our priorities

To help achieve that, the Board continues to focus on five organisational priorities, drawn from the strategy motion passed by conference earlier in this Parliament:

- Developing a compelling and distinctive narrative
- Campaigning excellence
- Improving our record on diversity and inclusion
- Giving our members and registered supporters an excellent experience
- Working together as one party

To help fund this work, we're continuing the plan to run down our surplus from the 2019 election by the time of the next general election. Within that, we have continued to prioritise investing in these priority areas, such as with the new Fleet and Targeted Email systems and the continued funding for

Project Stellar, supporting the next generation of candidates from under-represented ethnic groups.

Extra posts specifically geared towards the additional demands of a general election campaign are now starting to be filled, including for coordinating our direct mail operation and for increasing our membership activity.

A new set of priorities for our diversity and inclusion work has also been agreed, building on our recent progress in areas such as target seat Parliamentary candidates. For the next phase of progress, we'll be concentrating on targets such as improving the diversity of our local government base and who we speak with on the doorsteps. Both of these are important in their own right and also important for their knock-on impact. Who we have canvass data from and who our councillors are in turn affects much else that we do, such as who we then try to recruit as a member or who ends up on one of our committees.

To support these new priorities, our previous EEDI working group - which did great work to help get the previous diversity audit implemented - is being replaced by a new working group geared specifically to these new priorities.

Work is also continuing to further improve our main website, www.libdems.org.uk. The party's press releases now regularly appear on it for activists to be able to see and use too. More recently, another popular request has also been met: for an expanded policy section. It covers both how to get involved in our policy-making - a crucial part of our internal democracy - and what our latest policies are.

The Board also agreed on a plan to boost our legacy fundraising, including launching a new 'Future Fund' and giving the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee (FASC) the task of ensuring its funds are used appropriately. If you are interested in leaving the Party a gift in your own will, please do get in touch.

Federal Appeals Panel vacancy

There is currently one vacancy among the Federal Party appointees to the Federal Appeals Panel (FAP). After a public advertisement and interview process, the Board has selected Tom Hood and is reporting their name for confirmation by Conference. A short biography of them is at the end of this report.

The Board's other work

The Board has also continued to fill other posts in the party as casual vacancies have come up. These are always advertised on the party website in the 'Work for Us' section, and I cover news of vacancies and who has filled them in the monthly reports that appear in the 'News' section.

The Board has appointed Nick Manners to carry out the review of our internal elections held last year, and also the previous Vice President by-election. The start of the review has been delayed by an appeal resulting from the 2022 elections. However, as the next set of elections are not due until 2025, there is still plenty of time for the review and implementing its recommendations ahead of those.

At the time of writing this report, the Board is due also to review our own processes for filling the various party posts we have to look after. I will include an update on what we concluded in the verbal report at Conference.

Members of the Board regularly attend meetings of the Federal Council to answer their questions on our work, and we welcome the constructive approach taken by the Council under its chair, Antony Hook, to establishing the right working relationship between the two bodies.

Complaints process

The Disciplinary Sub Group (DSG) continues to work to support our complaints system. It is working on several possible improvements to how the

system operates but has not recommended any changes to the complaints process to make this time around. Therefore the Board does not have any changes to our official complaints process rules to report this time to Conference.

Liability limits

Having reviewed our compliance and legal obligations in the run-up to the Westminster general election, the Board is reporting to Conference setting the total limit for indemnities that the Board may issue for the general purposes of the Party at £500,000. Any use of part or all of this limit to grant an indemnity in a specific case will require the Board's agreement and there are no such indemnities currently in force.

Affiliated Organisations

Please see the report from the Federal People Development Committee (FPDC) regarding proposed new Affiliated Organisations and those migrating from our previous SAO/AO structures. For new applicants, the Board's power to confirm these is subject to approval by Conference and so we will be asking for such approval when presenting the Board report in Bournemouth.

The Board has also asked the FPDC to carry out the required annual review of Affiliated Organisations and will consider carefully any recommendations that arise from it.

Thank you

Thank you also to our staff under the leadership of our Chief Executive, Mike Dixon, who the Board works with and without whom our work would not be possible.

Thank you also to all our members and supporters, for all the work they put into making our party a growing force, better able to turn our policies into practical action that improves people's lives.

Federal Appeals Panel Nomination

Tom Hood

Tom is an aspiring barrister who is about to graduate from the Bar Vocational Course at City University of London. Tom has been involved with the Liberal Democrats from campaigning on the doorstep of Bromley, Central London, Cambridge and Peterborough to representing London on the English Council from 2017 - 2018. Tom founded and Chaired Neurodiversity in Law and developed policies with The Law Society. With the combination of his legal training, experience on the doorstep and within the Federal Party on policy and campaigns Tom will be an excellent member of the Federal Appeals Panel

Vice President - Amna Ahmad

The Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities is elected by all Party members and is a voting member of the Federal Board. They champion the voices of ethnic minority communities within the Party.

It is an honour to serve as your Vice President and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank those who have supported this work to date. As we approach the next General Election, we have much left to do and, as always, I look forward to hearing your ideas on how we continue to create a more diverse winning party which looks more like the people we want to represent.

To achieve this, I have been working with my colleagues on the Federal Board and the Federal People's Development Committee (FPDC). This is where responsibility for national diversity work sits.

In May 2023, following discussion with FPDC, the Federal Board adopted a new plan to increase diversity and inclusion in our party. In line with the strategy motion passed by conference earlier in this Parliament, the plans focus particularly on improving our diversity in respect of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. As Vice President, these are areas that I am passionate about and the hope is that, by bringing together our work in this space, we will make progress on these targets.

There are also opportunities for these targets to enhance the existing work on diversity currently going on in the party and amongst the membership.

We adopted targets in three areas:

1. increase the number of ethnic minority people elected as councillors, while maintaining our progress on Tier 1 and Tier 2 seat PPCs;
2. increase canvassing in target seat wards with high ethnic minority populations; and

3. increase the number of ethnic minority people becoming members by creating, and championing, an inclusive environment.

To support these targets, the EEDI (Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) working group is being replaced with a new group focused on these targets. EEDI members have done invaluable work in getting our diversity review implementation going and I'm so grateful to them for working in a voluntary capacity on these critical issues. The new group will operate as a sub-committee of FPDC, drawing in people from outside FPDC as best fits those three targets. The previous HQ staffing support for the EEDI group will be transferred over to this new group, to ensure we have the support needed to turn our plans into action.

I will keep you posted on how this new group develops. I am sure too that you will have ideas on the best ways of making progress on the targets and the best people to involve in doing so. I plan to work with FPDC members, including Affiliated Organisations, individuals and party activists, to consult on this, and it would be great to hear your ideas so we can make headway as a party in these vital areas.

I work with organisations across the Party so please get in touch on vice.president@libdems.org.uk if you'd like to meet to discuss these ideas.

Federal Finance and Resources Committee - Mike Cox FCA (Chair and Party Registered Treasurer)

The Federal Finance and Resources Committee (FFRC) is responsible to the Federal Board for planning and administering the budget and finances of the Federal Party, as well as overseeing the administration of the Federal Party. FFRC presents audited Annual Accounts to Conference and oversees the Party's compliance with external regulatory bodies, including the Electoral Commission. The FFRC is chaired by the Registered Party Treasurer, a statutory role under electoral law, with responsibility for money out. This role is distinct from the Party Treasurer who has responsibility for money in. 2023 Financial Progress and 2024 Outlook

The 2022 financial results whilst within budget were nonetheless disappointing given our increasing political successes. The cancellation of the Autumn Conference was a significant financial blow.

The Federal Board places significant focus on keeping the budgets balanced as much as possible. The Party's financial procedures allow us to monitor and control our finances in real-time and to spot upcoming problems. I am pleased to report that our performance against the budget has been on target. Tremendous thanks must go to Mike Dixon, our CEO, his team of staff and directors, Fern McLurg, our Financial Controller, and the HQ finance department for their continuing hard work and close attention to the financial detail. They have all helped the Party to achieve a better outcome than 2021 and more importantly better than might have been expected. Whilst we finished the year with a substantial deficit, we have continued to maintain a positive though much reduced cash balance which will help us as we prepare for the next general election and the various political events in the run-up to it.

Our financial loss for the year reflects in part the loss of Conference but also the deliberate decision to invest in people and technology which has modernised and rejuvenated the Party's processes and its ability to win.

As a Party, we are indebted and grateful for the generosity of our loyal members and supporters who have continued to support us throughout the last few difficult years. For that, I want to express my most sincere thanks. I would also like to add an additional note of gratitude to members who were able to increase their annual membership fee. We have tried to do this in a way that was efficient to run in order to keep costs to a minimum but also give members who may not be able to spend more the option to opt out.

A very special "Thank You" must go to Tilly McAuliffe and her fundraising team who have worked tirelessly and with some significant success to get Donors and Supporters back on board which is already reaping great financial rewards.

The FFRC committee has dedicated members who have a formidable skill set and they have also been very active in working groups focusing on membership income, donations, data protection and compliance to name just some of the areas they have been looking at. Sincere thanks must go to David Collington, our FFRC secretary, and the entire FFRC committee for their continuing hard work and dedication to keeping us out of the red.

Our notable political success over the last two years in both local elections and the four tremendous by-elections in Chesham and Amersham, North Shropshire and Tiverton and Honiton have contributed significantly to our ability to fundraise. This has continued in 2023 with the local elections in May being our fifth successive round of net gains, and fundraising increasing due to Somerton and Frome and our potential future success in Mid-Bedfordshire.

The cost of living crisis is putting financial pressure on our finances in all areas. This makes the full economic picture for 2024 very unclear. So in order to plan and continue to monitor our finances and budget carefully FFRC is developing a Medium Term Financial Plan looking well beyond the next General Election in order to continue to manage our Party resources in a prudent fashion.

Our 2023 budget should stand us in good stead as we finish this year and look to 2024 and beyond.

Compliance

Kerry Buist and the entire compliance team have done a great job in keeping our reporting up to date and running training and compliance 'clinics'. I urge all treasurers to take advantage of these if you have not done so already. However, we continue to suffer because some accounting units are reporting donations, loans, and loan repayments after the legal deadlines leading to Electoral Commission investigations. This involves the compliance team putting in significant effort to close these down, wastes hundreds of hours, and risks fines. I ask again that all local Party's and Treasurers in particular, to place a particular focus on timely reporting to reduce our financial exposure, and the burden on the HQ compliance team. Please note fines will be passed on to the relevant accounting unit responsible for the breach. It is in all our interests to get it right. Thank you in advance.

All donations are checked for legal permissibility by the Party's compliance officers and by the Registered Treasurer. Donations are also assessed for reputational risk by the Party Treasurer and approval for donations above £25,000 from a new donor is sought from the Chair of the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee. Should there be any negative comment then the decision to accept or not is passed to the following four people who must agree unanimously to proceed: the Party Treasurer, the Registered Treasurer (Chair of FFRC), the Chief Executive and the Chair of the Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee. If unanimity is not agreed, then the matter is remitted to the Party Leader for a final decision. Declarations of donations, statements of accounts, and Party campaign expenditure Party are on the Electoral Commission website.

Party Business

Conference is asked to adopt the audited accounts for 2022 (included in this reports pack). The full accounts of the Federal Party can be found on the electoral commission website.

Conference is asked to agree the motion on the Conference agenda papers in respect of minimum membership rates and the Federal Levy.

Financial review

Financially 2022 was a good year for the Federal Party with the exception of cancelling our Autumn Conference to honour the mourning period following the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

This single event led to the loss of not just our first chance to get together after the pandemic but also to a significant fundraising event for the party. Instead of adding to income, it cost the Party in terms of cancellation fees and rebates. The brilliant work of the Conference team along with the continued generosity of our Party members helped enormously to stem the losses. So huge thanks to everyone who helped in these challenging circumstances.

The last General Election whilst politically disappointing it did enable the Party to create a healthy reserve position which allowed the Party time to rebuild. This rebuilding process has been overshadowed by the Coronavirus pandemic and its knock-on financial effects on our fundraising, campaigning, Conferences etc. This delay in our ability to hold physical fundraising events and to meet potential donors in person has put a strain on our finances.

The strategy of rebuilding the party in a managed and sustainable way has begun to pay dividends politically and financially. The 2022 result has benefitted from additional appeal income, particularly as a result of the continued fantastic By Election win in Tiverton & Honiton following on from Chesham and Amersham and North Shropshire in the previous year.

Whilst Membership income slipped from 2021 this has now been reversed in the current year.

Sustainable income for the Federal Party in 2022 has risen by circa 15% excluding one off changes in relation to the compensation for moving office (other income) and investment gains and losses.

Expenditure has been tightly controlled with only a 1.3% increase in overall expenditure despite increasing campaign expenditure by 26% and IT expenditure by 16%.

The Federal Party ended the year 2022 with a deficit of £0.75m (2021- £0.93m) which reduced our brought forward reserves to £0.75m (2021 - £1.53m). While this strategy of a managed reduction in reserves is sustainable during this Parliament, in order for us to reduce and then eliminate our deficit in non-general election years in the next Parliament this will require a significant surplus in 2024.

The Liberal Democrats (The Federal Party) Income and Expenditure Account For the year ended 31 December 2022

Note	2022 £	2021 £ (Restated)
Income		
Donations	2,935,930	1,951,792
Membership and subscription fees	1,486,233	1,615,350
Conference income	42,450	170,686
Notional income	91,556	93,484
Grants	510,695	451,177
Interest & Investment gains & (losses)	(79,688)	102,818
Recharges to party bodies	952,837	936,020
Other income	5,215	412,012
	5,945,227	5,733,339
Expenditure		
Rent	156,063	311,460
Other Establishment costs	347,581	399,178
Wages	2,735,603	2,668,718
Social Security	287,353	271,685
Pensions	61,154	95,658
Other Operating leases	6,943	9,303
Staff related costs	252,386	335,644
Fundraising expenditure	139,668	72,966
Campaign expenditure	1,107,631	878,210
Notional expenditure	91,556	93,484
IT costs	499,309	606,709
Sundry expenses	65,472	90,429
Grants to party bodies	580,804	606,709
Services to members	40,399	55,970
Auditors' remuneration	24,996	24,308
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	35,004	47,655
Conference expenditure	228,289	170,202
	6,660,211	6,575,225
Bank Interest	53,656	63,513
(Deficit)/surplus before Tax	(768,640)	(905,399)
Tax on surplus/(deficit)	14,851	(20,803)
(Deficit)/surplus for the year	(753,789)	(926,202)

Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2022

	2022	2021 (Restated)
	£	£
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	295,049	323,205
Current Assets		
Debtors	418,104	344,206
Investments	523,622	603,376
Prepayments	181,722	393,212
Cash at bank	361,542	957,231
	1,484,990	2,298,025
Creditors falling due within one year		
Creditors	747,517	737,619
Net Current Assets	737,473	1,560,406
Total Assets less Current Assets	1,032,522	1,883,611
Provisions for liabilities	257,000	(354,300)
Net Assets	775,522	1,529,311
Reserves		
General Fund	730,522	1,484,311
Reserve Fund	45,000	45,000
Total Funds	775,522	1,529,311

Federal Communications and Elections Committee - Kath Pinnock (Chair)

The Federal Communications and Elections Committee (FCEC) oversees the implementation of the Party's strategy in relation to elections, campaigns, and communications. The FCEC also oversees, via the Joint Candidates Sub-Committee, the Party's readiness to field candidates in Westminster elections.

Since we reported to the party's Spring Federal Conference in March, the Federal Communications and Elections Committee (FCEC) has been working on schemes to achieve our main aim of electing more Liberal Democrats at every level and across all parts of the country.

The local elections in May saw the number of Liberal Democrats elected to principal councils increase. 1,628 Lib Dem Councillors were elected in the local elections in May. This included a gain of 407 councillors across more than 100 different councils. We gained majority control of 12 more Councils as well as successfully defending control of 17 Councils. Our estimated vote share was 20% which is the best result for the Party since 2010.

Unfortunately, we lost the election for the Mayor of Bedford following a change in the voting system.

Congratulations to all Liberal Democrats who were elected. Thank you to every single Liberal Democrat who contributed to those excellent results.

One of the aims of FCEC is to encourage more Local Parties to stand a full slate of candidates. With the strong support from ALDC, Local Party chairs were contacted directly and asked to make an even greater effort to find and field more candidates. The response was very good and resulted in an increase in numbers to 60% which is a significant increase. As a national Party, we need to set our sights even higher and urge all Local Parties to start planning now for candidates, and campaigns, for the local elections next May.

Parliamentary by-elections are important to the Party as it raises our national profile. We had another great win in Somerton and Frome. This success is

only achieved by the dedication of campaigns staff and hundreds of determined activists. They are all stars!

The regular work of FCEC includes receiving reports from campaigns and communications staff and ensuring we learn what works and what needs to change. The communications team is working in close collaboration with Lib Dem Parliamentary staff to develop campaigns. This has been hugely successful as media headlines on for example GPs, Dentists, and sewage demonstrates.

We review the achievements of our Target seats and the Moving Forward seats and see what support and encouragement can be provided where necessary. Looking ahead our task will be to work with the candidates committee to monitor candidate selection for the General Election.

The next year promises to be busy and full of opportunity.

Federal People and Development Committee - Claire Hudson (Chair)

The Federal People and Development Committee (FPDC), working with State Parties and other Party bodies as appropriate, has responsibility for coordinating, planning, and supervising the training strategy for the Federal Part, the diversity engagement strategy, membership recruitment, retention and activation strategy and working with Affiliated Organisations.

FPDC has 18 voting members: the Party President; the Vice-President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities; six members elected by the Federal Board; one representative from each of the Scottish, Welsh and English Parties; and the chairs or nominated representatives of the Young Liberals, the Lib Dem Campaign for Race Equality, the Lib Dem Disability Association, Lib Dem Women, LGBT+ Lib Dems, the Campaign for Gender Balance and the Racial Diversity Campaign. A representative of Lib Dems Abroad attends in a non-voting capacity.

Since my predecessor Mary Regnier-Wilson reported to Conference in Spring 2023, a new FPDC committee has been formed, but we have continued with the strategic work of the previous committee while planning our work for the forthcoming year. FPDC's remit is intersectional so we anticipate working with other federal committees and state parties in 23-24.

One area of work that is ongoing and I want to take the opportunity to stress it early in my report is the importance of the FIX OUR DATA work. As reported in Autumn 2022, our Tech team did a huge piece of work fixing our data in Connect. This means the Membership records in Connect are now fully correct. Comprehensive guidance on how local parties can match membership records to voter records thereby enhancing the value of this data is available. The guidance includes step by step instructions with illustrative photos. This work is a must - it ensures you will never knock on a door to canvass someone you think is a supporter and discover they've been

a member for a year... The link to the guidance can be found at: <https://tech.libdems.org.uk/training/lighthouse/process-guides> FPDC will be working with the Campaigns Team to roll out this guidance and to ensure all local parties have had their data fixed by the time of the next general election.

At our May meeting, FPDC reaffirmed its commitment to prioritising training of local party treasurers and our election agents to ensure our compliance with PPERA and Election law is tip top. If you are a local party treasurer or are planning to be an agent at the next general election, please make sure you book one of these courses - email training@libdems.org.uk for more detail. Our thanks to our staff, and in particular Kerry Buist, our compliance specialist, for her efforts in this area.

In May the Federal Board the party's future action on diversity was discussed. It was important to me, as Chair of FPDC, that we ensured that such an important subject was dealt with through constitutionally agreed structures and I argued, with the backing of FPDC, that setting up a new committee reporting to Federal Board outside the constitutionally agreed sub-committee of FPDC was unhelpful. Thankfully the Board agreed and a new set of priorities for our diversity and inclusion work has also been agreed, which will be led by our Vice President Amna Ahmed, who will now chair the FPDC Diversity sub-committee. FPDC wishes to see a clear strategy involving all states and party bodies that the party can collectively get behind, that is embraced, funded, and ultimately embedded. You should expect to see activity on this very soon. Thanks to Amna Ahmed for leading this piece of work and to Trudy Church and Nicole Turner for their work on this to date.

As a result of the new "Code of Conduct for Members and Registered Supporters," being ratified by Spring conference, FPDC has established a process for managing removals from the registered supporters lists where the Code of Conduct - which they have signed up to - is contravened. We have also created a working party to look at updating our Whistleblowing Policy.

This needs to interact positively with both the Complaints Process and the Code of Conduct.

FPDC's future work includes looking at safeguarding staff, volunteers and members; considering how we retain members who join during the excitement of a general election; how we provide a good induction to those who join in less active areas; and the embedding of the Fix our Data work and other key member and supporter related tech pieces of work.

FPDC has been asked by the Federal Board to lead the annual reviews of all the current Affiliated Organisations and that piece of work will be carried out during the autumn.

FPDC is also responsible for assessing new Affiliated Organisations that wish to become official party groups. This year, these new groups have applied and we recommend them to Conference:

Applications currently under consideration for Affiliated Organisation status

Party Groups wishing to become Affiliated Organisations must meet the criteria and follow the process previously agreed by Conference, available here: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/f29-f34>

There is one application in this report. Bodies that were not SAOs or AOs at the time of the creation of 'Affiliated Organisation' status must be reported to Conference before they can be finally approved by the Party.

1. Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine

The Liberal Democrat Friends of Ukraine was formed at the Spring Conference and has already recruited members from many local parties around the country. Our committee meets regularly and includes people who are actively involved in either sponsoring refugees from Ukraine who have

come here or in local organisations collecting and sending humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

We applied for Affiliated Organisation status both to help our group meet its objectives and to confirm that the Liberal Democrat Party is fully supportive of Ukraine as it faces Russia's illegal invasion with all its tragic consequences. We intend to argue for increased military, humanitarian and reconstruction aid for Ukraine and to seek to improve the situation for Ukrainian refugees here in the UK. We shall share best practice from around the country to help Liberal Democrat councillors and local parties to best support Ukrainian refugees. The group will also bring together people in the Party with particular expertise and interest in foreign policy in relation to the current conflict and hope to be in a position to contribute to future policy in this area.

Another aim of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Ukraine in which Affiliated Organisation status will be of benefit is our wish to develop relationships with leaders and members of our sister parties in Ukraine.

Convenor is Julia Fletcher. Chair is Councillor Tony Paterson if you would like to contact Lib Dem Friends of Ukraine please email ldfriendsofukraine@outlook.com.

Federal International Relations Committee - David Chalmers (Chair)

The Federal International Relations Committee (FIRC) is responsible for generally managing the Party's relationships with like-minded parties and individuals in other countries and international institutions. It also advises the Party on International issues and supports international collaborations and training.

The Chinese have a saying “May you – or we - live in interesting times” – which certainly applies to the world we live in today - with its dangers, risks and opportunities. As Lib Dems we really care about what is happening in the world and we believe that working together with other countries to solve some of the world's problems – such as tackling climate change, standing up to bullies like Russia and China and defending human rights - makes us stronger not weaker. It is why we fought so hard to stop the UK from being taken out of the European Union (EU), and why our Parliamentarians in the Commons and the Lords are recognised for their leading contributions to international debates.

Internationalism is one of the core values of our party and the reason why many of us became members in the first place - it sets us apart from other political parties. Indeed, since the UK left the EU, it is only the LibDems amongst the UK's political parties, who have continued to maintain and develop regular and close links with our European counterparts. FIRC through our membership of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and participation in Liberal International (LI) ensures that our voice is continued to be heard and respected on the world stage. Over the past 6 months, FIRC has continued to help craft policies on and deliver our responses to various international topics – remembering that members of FIRC were elected by party members to ensure that our liberal values are reflected in the policies deemed as a priority - ranging from the War in Ukraine to relations with China, to rebuilding our broken relationship with the European Union.

Following the constitutional changes passed at the Spring Conference, the number of elected representatives on FIRC has increased to eight, and in order to better reflect and respond to the current geopolitical situation, FIRC has set up four Subcommittees on China, Europe, Commonwealth and Global South and Communications and Fundraising. FIRC has not been complacent to the need to develop a coherent strategy towards China and has used our experience and knowledge, taking evidence from various sources to develop a policy that is widely respected and has been used as a guide by other countries formulating their own China policies. Whilst it has not been possible to bring our China policy to be debated at Conference and endorsed by party members, FIRC will nevertheless continue to give this matter the attention it deserves. The other Subcommittees are designed to better assist in developing relations and partnerships in Europe and Africa, respond to global and regional events and feed into our important global work in the areas of development aid and human rights. We also aim to find ways to better communicate our ongoing international work with the membership of the party. FIRC is not alone in experiencing a restraint to our finances, and like the rest of the party is heavily reliant on the work undertaken by volunteers, but we are continuing to seek alternate sources of funding to enable us to increase the working hours of the Party's International Officer.

At the beginning of May, I led the LibDem delegations to the meeting of the Liberal International Executive Committee (LIExCom), which took place in Ottawa, Canada and at the end of that month to the ALDE Congress in Stockholm, Sweden. Both events were successful from our party's perspective as all the motions we submitted, and the majority of our amendments were passed. I am particularly proud that at both events our motions condemning the Anti Homosexuality Bill in Uganda were passed unanimously – in Ottawa with the full support of sister parties across Africa. In Stockholm, we successfully brought forward a motion calling for a European Framework to combat hate speech, which received unanimous support from our European sister parties. Our motion seeking ways to improve international travel for

people with disabilities and one which we submitted with Fianna Fail of Ireland and the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, welcoming the Windsor Framework and seeking support on our journey to bring the UK closer to the EU, was also passed with unanimous support.

Whilst in Canada our delegation was also invited to attend the Congress of our sister party the Canadian Liberals, which was insightful to witness the achievements of a liberal party after more than 10 years in power and see how they have used their position in the Commonwealth to promote the rights of women and LGBTQI+ people around the world.

Our delegation to ALDE Congress included many members for whom this was their first time representing the party on the international stage and we endeavoured to involve them in the process from an early stage – developing motions and discussing amendments, to give them a better understanding of and greater appreciation of the whole experience. We aim for our delegations to reflect the diversity of our party and society, which enabled individuals to bring their real-life experiences to the discussions – as with Helen Belcher’s outstanding contribution to the debate on trans rights. It is hoped that more party members will put themselves forward to join future delegations and that we can look to find ways to offer financial support where needed.

The LibDems continue to play a leading role in supporting the Alliance of Her and the Rainbow Platform – which supports women and LGBTQI+ candidates, both go from strength to strength. Many of our sister parties look to us for guidance and advice on matters of human rights. I recently visited Estonia where the Government led by our sister party Reform and Prime Minister Kaja Kallas has just legislated same sex marriage and I marched with our Latvian sister parties in Riga Pride where they are also campaigning hard for LGBTQI+ rights. The LibDems were well represented at the recent UN Human Rights Summit in Geneva by Phil Bennion, LI Vice President, Adrian Hyrylainen-Trett and Irina von Wiese and our party has seats on LI’s thematic Committees on Human Rights, Climate Justice and Trade.

For some time now the ALDE Bureau has been grappling to find the best way to respond to the ruling of the European Authority that the combined votes of non-EU parties should not exceed 33% of the votes cast in Congress, Council and the Bureau. With great reluctance and a heavy heart, the LibDems supported the constitutional amendments, including the abolition of the ALDE Individual Members Scheme (AIM), as it could only continue with the exclusion of non-EU individual members, which would have set a dangerous precedent for further reduction of our involvement in ALDE and effectively turned ALDE into an EU party, with non-EU parties potentially only granted observer status. The immediate effect for the LibDems will be a reduction of our voting rights in Congress to 25. Without doubt, these changes will challenge our ability to exert our influence in the future, but they retain the important principle of ALDE as a European party including EU and non-EU parties alike.

The day before the ALDE Congress, the Lib Dems met in Stockholm with our sister parties from Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Northern Ireland, where the position of non-EU parties in ALDE was discussed at length, as well as presenting an opportunity to compare our different relationships with the EU. It is intended that these meetings become a regular fixture and are likely in the future to be joined by other non-EU parties. The LibDems are recognised as playing a leading role with non-EU parties and through ALDE we are connected directly with President Zelensky's Party 'Servant of the People' and Kira Rudik's Golos Party, which gives us a unique insight into the War in Ukraine and has enabled us to act as a bridge between the UK and Ukrainian Governments.

After the next General Election, with the Tories hopefully gone from power, the UK will be seeking ways to rebuild its broken relationship with the EU and will need support from within the EU on its journey. Our relations with our sister parties will take on even more significance when considering that 12 of them currently sit in government in EU countries – 6 of which are led by members of ALDE. Alongside the coordinating role Baroness Brinton plays as

one of the Vice Presidents on the ALDE Bureau, the Liberal Democrat European Group (LDEG) took a study trip to Berlin early in the year, and I recently attended their Party Conference, as part of our strategy to develop better relations with FDP, who sit in the German Coalition Government. Going forward it is intended that we reach out further to our sister parties through further visits and initiatives aimed to develop a UK/EU Dialogue. The Lib Dem EU Liaison Councillor scheme, which with the support of ALDC and the EU Committee of the Regions should be up and running later this year and will bring us closer together at a local government level. We have invited the international officers of our sister parties to attend and participate in our international debates at our Autumn Conference – say hello if you bump into any of them in Bournemouth.

FIRC is examining how to better use social media to communicate our ongoing international work with party members and find ways for us to engage with ethnic communities across the UK, for whom aspects of our foreign policy will have particular relevance. Online webinars with international themes are regularly held by party bodies such as Liberal International British Group (LIBG) and LDEG, both of whom are holding fringe debates at the Autumn Conference and welcome new members. FIRC has encouraged greater sharing of information about events with an international dimension. There are many varied opportunities for party members to become involved in international issues through the numerous party organisations and events held throughout the year by the likes of the Commonwealth and European forums of the National Liberal Club and the Paddy Ashdown Forum (PAF).

FIRC is grateful for the support it receives from the party membership in its international work. I hope that some of you reading this will consider applying to join future delegations to ALDE Congress and think of standing for a place on FIRC when the next round of internal elections come around.

Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee – Dave Radcliffe (Chair)

The Federal Audit and Scrutiny Committee (FASC) commissions and oversees internal audit work related to the work of the Federal Party, as part of which it oversees the Party's risk management operations and its Risk Register. It is also responsible for commissioning the Party's auditors.

Over the past 6 months the Committee has considered the audit findings report on the 2022 Federal Party accounts from UHY Hacker Young and recommended them for sign off by the Registered Treasurer, and subsequent submission to the Electoral Commission.

The committee is in the process of planning and carrying out during the summer an internal audit of major sources of income and expenditure. We will test the processes and procedures that are in place.

FASC continues to monitor the party risk register on a quarterly basis, noting the progress that is being made in managing risk, as well as reducing the levels of risk that the party carries. Since the last report, we have also reviewed the process for major donations to the party.

Federal Council Report - Anthony Hook (Chair)

The Federal Council is in its first year of operation having been set up by Conference to scrutinise the decisions of the Board following the reduction in size of the Board's membership.

The Council meets online and includes 21 members of whom are directly elected federally by all party members. Each state party appoints three members, councillors elect three members, and Young Liberals elect three members as do the Parliamentary Group (MPs and Peers).

The membership of the Council is broad and diverse with members from different parts of the party with different specialisms, interests and expertise. We are united in wanting the party to succeed and playing our part as a constructively critical friend to the executive.

The Council has received the decisions and papers of the Board within one or two working days of each Board meeting. The constitution empowers the Council to call-in decisions if 13 members of the Council so request. A vote by 27 members can overturn a decision.

So far, the Council has called in one decision which was the decision to make certain appointments to the Disciplinary Sub-Group (DSG). A member withdrew his request for the call-in and it ceased to be an official call-in and the decision could not be overturned. Nonetheless, the President and other personnel who had participated in the decision in question attended the Council and answered questions. A number of feedback points were given that may affect future processes for appointments for the Federal Board.

The Council does not only provide formal input through call-in. We also provide comments and questions on the Board papers and have done so on party messaging and strategy and the report of key performance indicators, among other matters.

At the time of writing, Council members are about to consider a draft of Standing Orders for the Council, the development of a work programme and the creation of working groups from within its membership to drill deeper into certain key matters.

The Council is thinking ahead to next year's likely General Election. We recognise that in the election period, the Board may need to meet frequently and take rapid time-sensitive decisions. We are reflecting on how the Council can operate as an effective scrutiny body without causing delay to decisions which by their nature must be taken as speed.

We are also pencilling in a date for a Council meeting soon after the election so the Council will be in a position to exercise its role of scrutiny and possible call-in should the Board make any key decisions in the aftermath of the election.

Parliamentary Reports

The Commons - Wendy Chamberlain MP (Chief Whip)

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read my latest report. This is the first in-person autumn conference for many members, including a few MPs, so I am thrilled to be heading to Bournemouth with you.

As I write, an army of volunteers and staff are giving their all in by-elections like Somerton and Frome. They're doing it to deliver our fourth win (and third MP named Sarah) this Parliament. I refuse to tempt fate, so I will just say good luck. Tempting it a little, I hope to see you all again for a fifth win in Mid Bedfordshire before Autumn!

As ever, I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Commons and Lords, staff in Westminster and in Constituencies, our representatives in the devolved administrations and our Local Government family for everything they do.

The political picture

The reality for many is that the Cost of Living Crisis is the first, second and third thing on their mind. If it isn't, sadly, it is probably because they are struggling to access the NHS treatment they need. This is a terribly hard time. The government is failing.

Because they are failing, the Tories are trying to shift attention to culture wars and cruelty. Cruelty like the Illegal Migration Bill, which Alistair rightly described as "immoral, ineffective and incredibly costly for the taxpayer". They

are showing their colours on civil rights too, with the Public Order Act giving the police extraordinary powers (which Labour plan to keep).

More than a decade in power, mired by a former leader's sleaze and swathes of the Party stepping down at the next election... It has been an interesting time for the SNP too.

We have been standing up to them while doing our best to set out a more humane, positive, and liberal vision for the country. To that end, I am looking forward to Conference debating our pre-manifesto - our pitch to Britain.

Some highlights of our work

Ed has challenged Rishi Sunak repeatedly on the growing crisis in access to NHS dentists – an issue that's coming up more and more on doorsteps across the country. He has also continued to champion carers, pressing the Prime Minister during Carer's Week to give them the support and recognition they deserve. And, of course, he called on Sunak yet again to stop water companies dumping filthy sewage into our rivers.

As Women and Equalities Spokesperson, **Christine** is working with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to improve the Victims Bill's protections for women and minority groups, and our MSPs on the Gender Recognition Reform Bill. She is campaigning with children's charities to improve bereavement support, and fighting to tackle mould in Edinburgh's social housing. As Scotland Spokesperson, she criticised the SNP's botched Deposit Return Scheme and Highly Protected Marine Areas and has also urged the Cabinet Office to block Boris Johnson's Honours list.

Tim, as environment spokesperson, has focussed on supporting the farming community and on the issue of sewage. He pressured the government, through a Westminster Hall debate, into committing to equalise the new farming subsidy transition payments between upland and lowland farmers. He also spearheaded the campaign against sewage, holding both the

government and water companies to account for failing at their responsibility to protect our waterways. He also introduced a presentation bill to punish puppy theft and importation.

Wera has been working tirelessly to hold the Government to account on net zero. She hosted a main chamber debate on the role of local government in reaching net zero and a Westminster Hall debate on Funding for Major Infrastructure Projects. She has campaigned passionately to support people with eating disorders and tabled a petition calling on the Government to provide emergency visas to female judges and prosecutors in Afghanistan.

As Treasury and Business spokesperson, **Sarah Olney** has been tackling the government on their mismanagement of the economy and failure to address the cost of living crisis. She has founded an APPG to encourage more blood and organ donations from minority ethnic and mixed heritage communities and is working with her Iranian constituents to raise their concerns in Parliament about conditions in Iran. She is working with other Parliamentarians to secure copyright protection for creative content used in AI.

Daisy, as Health and Social Care Spokesperson, has continued to hold the government's feet to the fire over access to GPs and dentists, tabling a Bill to require the government to report every three months on its actions to improve things. She continued to expose the scandal of crumbling hospitals and hold the government to account for its failures on the New Hospital Programme and its broken promise to fix social care.

Helen has stood up for localism and democracy in her Housing and Communities brief – leading the fight against Voter ID. Other highlights include a successful backbench debate on freehold estate management fees, an adjournment debate on the shoddy maintenance of military homes and presenting a petition for rural bus services. As housing spokesperson she's

covered the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, and Social Housing Regulations Bill, as well as engaging in debates on leasehold reform and new housing supply.

Layla has enjoyed taking up her new role as spokesperson for Science, Technology and Innovation, covering the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill. In her Foreign Affairs portfolio Layla has continued to criticise the government's botched Brexit deal, speaking in the Retained EU Law Bill. She has also campaigned against cuts to aid budgets and called for the 0.7% target to be restored. At home, Layla is campaigning for a ban on non-disclosure agreements in cases of harassment and bullying.

Munira amended the Levelling-Up Bill so that more public bodies can transform land they don't need into affordable housing. After relentlessly lobbying Ministers for 18 months to make an exception to their hostile immigration rules, she got five British children and their mother home safely from Afghanistan so they can now get an education. As education spokesperson, she spearheaded campaigns to repair school buildings, extend free school meals and invest in children's mental health.

Richard has been holding the Government to account for their promises to rural communities. He has been a vocal advocate for fixing NHS dentistry, supporting UK farmers, and ending the polluting actions of South West Water. He's also tabled a bill to tackle rural crime through a new multi-agency taskforce and supported my push to expand help for carers via the Carer's Leave Bill.

Jamie recently welcomed the first shovel on the Sutherland Spaceport site. The spaceport is the only one in the world designed to be carbon neutral in terms of construction and operation and promises plenty of new job opportunities for the Far North. In his role as Culture spokesperson, Jamie has led the charge on preserving heritage sites and historic houses by lobbying the government to make amendments to planning regulations.

Alistair secured debates and urgent questions in Parliament on the future of the UK fishing industry and campaigned for fairness for off-grid homes receiving the Alternative Fuel Payment. He also fought and secured tax relief from the Treasury on fuel for community heating schemes. As Home Affairs, Justice and Northern Ireland spokesperson, Alistair led our opposition to the Government's illiberal and immoral Illegal Migration Act and the unworkable Rwanda scheme and led our successful campaign for the government to abandon plans to repeal the Human Rights Act.

Sarah Green has continued to call for greater scrutiny of the Government's new International Trade deals. Sadly her Chalk Streams Protection Bill was not able to progress past its Second Reading, but she plans to resubmit this at a future date. She continues to call for more effective oversight of HS2 works after a large sinkhole appeared in her constituency. She met with the Treasury to discuss the provision of local Banking Hubs. She has co-founded a new All Party Parliamentary Group on Crohn's and Colitis.

Switching to speak to you with my cap on as the Spokesperson for DWP, we have continued to hold the Government to account over their heartless and inept management of the social security system. Wins include pushing the Government to extend the deadline for topping up NI credits from the switch to the New State Pension, uncovering failures in the system that leave errors in the records of Universal Credit Recipients, and pressing the Government on their totally inadequate cost of living support for disabled people. I am also happy to have welcomed Lord Palmer as our new Spokesperson in the Lords.

Staffing

Our PST team has, in recognition of the evolving nature of their role, been rechristened as the Parliamentary Advisors in the House of Commons (CPA for short).

Congratulations to Emma Stevenson who will be taking up a role with the PAU, departing the CPA. We will miss her but are thrilled her talents will stay

close. A new CPA will join soon, alongside stalwarts Rebecca Grubb and Toby Davis.

The Commons Whips Office remains headed by Matthew Smith, supported by Deputy Head Jack Coulson. Our thanks to intern Tierney Reardon for her sterling work supporting them this Spring.

The Lords - Ben Stoneham (Chief Whip)

It has been striking in the last few months just how much of the legislative heavy-lifting the House of Lords has been doing, compared to the House of Commons. Huge bills which are badly drafted and ill-considered arrive in the Lords having spent very little time in the elected House, meaning peers have been debating, proposing amendments and voting a lot in recent times. Long sittings and late nights have been more frequent as the parliamentary session comes to an end and the Lib Dem Group has risen to this challenge.

I am, as always, very grateful to our peers who ensure that we more than pull our weight during proceedings, whether on legislation or on the many important issues that are given time for general debate and questions. I am very proud of the way we work in the House of Lords and the ability we have to make our mark.

Leadership and party whips

Dick Newby and I continue to serve as the Leader and Chief Whip respectively, and we are well-served by Joan Walmsley and Navnit Dholakia as Co-Deputy Leaders. We also have an 8-strong team of whips, supporting me and the Whips' Office in our work, and I am very grateful for everything they do.

Highlights of our legislative work over last few months

Illegal Migration Bill

The Bill legislates for the deportation of individuals that have entered the United Kingdom by irregular routes and allows the refusal of any asylum claim they make along with any claim that deportation to their country of origin would breach their human rights.

In effect, this Bill criminalises the act of seeking asylum.

Leading the Liberal Democrat response to this Bill was Brian Paddick who was supported by expertise from Jeremy Purvis, Sarah Ludford, Sal Brinton, Mike German, Paul Scriven, and Sally Hamwee.

Working with colleagues from all benches in the House, Liberal Democrat Peers helped pass 20 amendments to the Bill, including measures that would limit the length of time children and pregnant women can be detained, and a ban on deporting LGBTQ+ individuals to countries in which they would face persecution, including Rwanda.

Unfortunately, most of these amendments were overturned in the Commons and were lost in the final stages of Parliamentary ping pong before the summer.

Retained EU Law Bill

This Bill overhauls a body of UK domestic law known as “retained EU law” (REUL). In its original form the Bill would have scrapped huge swathes of law that originated in the EU and given sweeping powers to ministers to make changes to such laws in the future.

As the Bill sought to revoke or undermine essential everyday rights and protections such as environmental and water quality standards, parental leave allowance, travel compensation, worker’s rights, food and drink labelling

and animal welfare considerations, Liberal Democrat Peers tabled amendments to the Bill to ensure these regulations are immune from being discarded.

Our team of Chris Fox, Cathy Bakewell, Jenny Randerson, Alan Beith, Kate Parminter, and Chris Humphreys worked collaboratively with others in the House to highlight the dangers of making such radical changes to vital everyday protections. In a significant climb-down the government reversed its position on the Bill, keeping the vast bulk of the 5000 pieces of REUL on the statute book.

Online Safety Bill

This Bill is seeking to improve user-safety online by introducing a variety of duties on platforms such as Facebook and Google in relation to illegal content, content that is harmful to children, and content that is legal but harmful to adults.

The Bill team which consisted of Tim Clement-Jones, Richard Allan, Floella Benjamin, Mike Storey, Clare Tyler, Lorely Burt, and Kate Parminter took a cross-party approach as they sought to balance strengthening provisions for online safety whilst protecting freedom of speech.

Liberal Democrat Peers advanced and led on issues such as Encryption, Cyber Flashing, and Media Literacy.

Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill

The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill is a bill that is intended to help tackle economic crime, better protect national security and enable Companies House to deliver a better service for UK individuals and businesses.

The Bill team consisted of Sharon Bowles, Martin Thomas, and William Wallace, and was ably led by Chris Fox.

Martin Thomas has long campaigned against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), which are lawsuits used against journalists, whistle-blowers and other campaigners that have long been the tool of oligarchs and criminals to silence criticism and scrutiny.

This Bill offered the perfect opportunity for Martin to table amendments to ban the use of SLAPPS. In response, the Government offered a concession which would give judges the power to dismiss SLAPPs altogether – we were very happy to accept this and hail it a Liberal Democrat victory.

Strikes Bill

This Bill imposes obligations on trade unions and individuals to comply with minimum service levels, enabling employers within specific services to issue work notices and roster the workforce required to secure those minimum service levels on a strike day.

We deemed this Bill unnecessary and utterly unworkable – it is hyper skeletal and provided Ministers with sweeping unchecked powers.

Whilst strikes have recently caused major disruption across several public sectors, the powers contained within this bill are not the solution. Chris Fox along with Richard Allan, Paul Strasburger, and Jenny Randerson worked hard to point out that regular service levels are barely enough to meet demand, and that ‘minimum service levels’ would require a significant improvement on the status quo.

Lifelong Learning Bill

This Bill would introduce a new ‘credit-based method’ to set tuition fee levels for higher education courses and modules. This is being introduced to facilitate the Lifelong Learning Entitlement which will provide individuals with a loan equivalent to 4-years of post-18 education to use over their lifetime.

We welcome the introduction of this Bill as it attempts to deal with skill gaps and shortages across a variety of sectors. However, we are calling on the Government to go further, and instead introduce our policy of a Skills Wallet.

Throughout its passage we will be ensuring that this loan is workable and will be offered fairly to all types of learners. We are also calling on the Government to offer maintenance grants such as disability allowance alongside this loan.

Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill

Kath Pinnock led the Lib Dem Lords' response to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the group's strong local government roots were on full display with a team including John Shipley, Dorothy Thornhill, Andrew Stunell, Cathy Bakewell, Paul Scriven, Don Foster, Shas Sheehan, Kate Parminter, Robin Teverson, Ros Scott, and Angie Harris.

The team is focusing on being a strong voice for local government, local democracy, devolution, the environment, social housing, second homes and local highstreets and much more as the Bill continues through the House.

The Lords team has also used the Bill to highlight key campaigns for our MPs, including Munira Wilson's campaign on the sale of public buildings for community benefit, and Richard Foord's campaign to open Dartmoor National Park back up to wild camping.

Carers Leave Bill

This was a Private Members Bill introduced by Wendy Chamberlain MP that sought to provide a statutory right for unpaid leave for employees with caring responsibilities.

Having made its way through the Common, it arrived to the Lords under the sponsorship of Chris Fox who navigated it through the Chamber and ensured its safe passage.

As a result of their hard work, this Liberal Democrat bill has introduced into law greater flexibility and protections for carers – advancing one of our key Liberal Democrat campaigning priorities.

Worker Protection Bill

This is a Private Members Bill introduced by Wera Hobhouse MP that seeks to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Having made its way through the Commons, it arrived to the Lords under the sponsorship of Lorely Burt who is currently overseeing its passage through the House.

It has not been easy to fend off backbench Tory Peers from attempting to scupper the Bill, but with some backroom negotiation, Lorely has expertly secured further stages of the Bill before we expect it to become law.

Peers and staff

We remain an active group of 75+ and we were very heartened to be joined in June by John Russell, who won the vacant Lords seat caused by the retirement of Lucius Falkland. John is a very active member of the Party and many of you will know of his wonderful photography work that he does at Party events, including conferences. He has already thrown himself into Lords life, with plenty of voting, membership of a committee and (at the time of writing) preparation for a Maiden Speech. We are very glad to have John on our Benches and welcome him warmly.

As ever I would like to extend my thanks to the staff in the Lords team in the Whips' Office who support us so well in our work. They work long hours in often challenging circumstances, and we are lucky to have them. I am also very grateful to the Parliamentary Adviser Unit, the Commons team, the Leader's Office and the Party's Media Team for all the support they give us in both our parliamentary work and our external work.

Reports from Federal Bodies

Liberal Democrats Ltd - Mike Cox (Chair)

In common with many political Parties, the Federal Party is registered as an 'Unincorporated Association' for company regulation purposes. Since 1988 we have also maintained a non-trading 'Limited Company' structure, 'Liberal Democrats Ltd.' (The Company), registered in England (Company number 02231620). Where needed, the Company allows us to enter into formal legal contracts (e.g. office leases) which require an 'Ltd.' structure. The records of the Company are available from Companies House.

The full responsibilities of the Company are set out in Article 9.7 of the Federal Constitution.

Over the past year, the Company has continued to fulfil its corporate and Party duties as well as its legal obligations with Companies House. The currently serving directors of the Company are myself as the Chair of the FFRC (myself), the Party President (Mark Pack), and Party Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities (Amna Ahmed) . Kerry Buist has recently taken over as Company Secretary from Jack Coulson.

Campaign for Gender Balance - Candy Piercy (Chair)

The Campaign for Gender Balance (CGB) exists to develop and support women interested in standing for public office within the Liberal Democrats.

As ever, the Campaign for Gender Balance has had an extremely busy six months since the Spring Conference.

Candy Piercy says "I am delighted to report that in the Federal Elections in January, I was re-elected as Chair, and Julia Cambridge was re-elected as Vice Chair. We are both delighted that Vikki Slade was also elected as the second CGB Vice Chair."

Despite the important round of May elections and the excitement of the by-election campaigns, we have been providing mentoring support for women waiting for approval and Parliamentary selections throughout the year.

All three CGB Officers were involved in running our flagship webinar - the Future Women MPs Weekend. Once again this proved very successful. We trained 14 women. More than one has now been selected as Parliamentary candidates.

CGB Vice Chair Julia Cambridge led our Candidate Approval team to success helping many women get approved as parliamentary candidates. We are very proud to be supporting women candidates with a number of protected characteristics.

CGB chair Candy Piercy has led the team providing support to women applying for selection in specific seats, including Parliamentary by-elections. We are very happy with the overall success rate and some excellent women have been selected.

We are delighted to have been able to support and advise women by-election candidates.

CGB Chair Candy Piercy has been working with Daisy Cooper to identify and support diverse candidates who want to apply for parliamentary seats.

We ran 4 training modules at the last Spring Conference. We were looking forward to a larger programme at Autumn Conference. Unfortunately, the conference hotel has very limited space, so we are only about to run six sessions this year. This is a sad decline in the availability of training rooms and the support received by CGB.

Ten years ago we were running more than 20 training sessions at Autumn Conference. We had dedicated staff support in LDHQ. And we received an annual grant from the Party.

We are keen that the Party considers the need to build a new team of rising potential Parliamentary stars amongst our women members. We ask that practical support for CGB should be reinstated, if that objective is to be achieved.

Racial Diversity Campaign - Christopher French (Chair)

The Lib Dem Racial Diversity Campaign (LDRDC) supports ethnic minority members to become approved candidates, be selected, and win elections.

The LDRDC was formally launched in early 2019 and the Executive comprises three members. The current Executive members are as follows:

Chair: Christopher French

Vice Chair: Samantha Young

Vice Chair: Melissa Gordon

The Lib Dem Racial Diversity Campaign (LDRDC) is dedicated to advancing the values of equality, social justice, and inclusivity by actively supporting diverse candidates into elected office. Our mission is to foster a political landscape that reflects the principles of the Liberal Democrat Party, ensuring fair representation and amplifying the voices of underrepresented communities.

Through our comprehensive accelerator programs, we will provide unwavering support and resources to aspiring candidates from diverse backgrounds, empowering them to navigate the internal political process with confidence. By offering mentorship, training, and networking opportunities, we strive to equip these candidates with the necessary tools to excel in their campaigns and secure elected positions.

Update

After being the Vice-Chair from May 2022, Christopher French was appointed as Chair of LDRDC in January 2023, along with Samantha Young who became Vice-Chair. We are also pleased to announce that Melissa Gordon was appointed as the second Vice-Chair in July 2023, meaning LDRDC now has its

first full executive board since May 2022.

Summary of action to date

LDRDC have been supported by Sydney Samuels, the CEO and Founder of tech driven recruitment platform, built with the mission of improving social mobility by connecting underrepresented candidates to tailored career opportunities.

We were also keen to seek guidance and advice from people previously connected to the campaign and are pleased to be working with former Chair, Sarah Yong. This has provided a well rounded view for the new Board and helped them to learn from past experiences.

An initial kick off session was held on 15 May 2023 at LDHQ, Vincent Square. Initial scoping discussions were had and desired outcomes were considered.

The next session was a full day strategy session at LDHQ on 12th June. Present were Chair, Vice-Chair Samantha Young, Melissa Gordon (at this stage in an advisory capacity), Sarah Yong and Sydney Samuels. At this session, we further discussed our remit, our approach and our offer, designing the first iteration of our Accelerator Programme, broken down into three corresponding parts:

- The Access Accelerator
- The Selection Accelerator
- The Election Accelerator

The Access Accelerator - Launched: August 2023

Summary: The Access Accelerator is an informative programme specifically designed to assist individuals in understanding and becoming approved candidates within the political approval process. This inclusive programme welcomes participants from all backgrounds, regardless of their political affiliations. Through a series of expert-led webinars, participants will gain a

comprehensive understanding of the approval process, learning essential information and acquiring valuable tips and strategies to navigate each stage effectively. The aim is to equip candidates with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully become approved candidates.

Supplementary resources, including checklists, toolkits, and handbooks, are provided to support participants on their journey. The programme concludes with a panel discussion where participants can seek guidance and clarification on the next steps towards their political aspirations. The Access Accelerator offers a unique opportunity for individuals to enhance their understanding and increase their chances of becoming approved candidates in the political arena.

Access Accelerator Agenda

(Delivered Virtually via webinar)

Session 1 - "The Political Playbook: Know the Ropes"

Session 2 - "Candidate Crafting: Hacks and Tracks"

Session 3 - "Selection Success: Candidacy Unveiled"

Session 4 - "PPC & MP: Inside the Powerhouse"

Session 5 - "Assessment Day: Prep like a Politician"

Session 6 - "Panel Discussion: Charting Your Political Journey"

The Selection Accelerator - Launching: November 2023

Summary: The Selection Accelerator is a transformative programme specifically designed to increase the chances of candidates transitioning from being elected candidates to selected candidates. By combining comprehensive training, in-depth understanding of the political landscape, and expert mentorship, this programme empowers candidates to enhance

their capabilities, strategic thinking, and overall candidacy. Through rigorous training sessions, candidates gain practical skills and knowledge that significantly improve their chances of success in the selection process. They develop a deep understanding of the political landscape, enabling them to make informed decisions and tailor their strategies accordingly. Moreover, mentorship from experienced professionals who have successfully undergone the selection process provides invaluable guidance and insights, increasing the candidates' competitiveness and positioning. The Selection Accelerator serves as a catalyst in elevating candidates' profiles and ensuring they are well-prepared to impress selectors and secure their place as selected candidates.

The Election Accelerator - Launching: Spring 2024

Summary: The Election Accelerator is an engaging and adaptable programme specifically designed to support candidates from racially diverse backgrounds on their journey from the selection stage to running a successful election campaign. This comprehensive accelerator combines targeted training, strategic insights into the electoral landscape, and expert mentorship to empower candidates with the skills and knowledge needed to achieve victory. With a strong focus on individual circumstances, the programme offers personalised support and guidance, connecting candidates with influential business leaders to provide diverse perspectives and valuable resources. Mentors, who have firsthand experience in running successful campaigns, provide invaluable knowledge and guidance tailored to the unique challenges faced by candidates from racially diverse backgrounds. The curriculum covers crucial areas such as winning public support, fundraising, team management, strategy development, and personal growth, ensuring candidates have a well-rounded skill set. Additionally, candidates form a supportive community, fostering collaboration, shared learning, and a sense of belonging. "The Election Accelerator" is a transformative journey that empowers candidates from racially diverse backgrounds to unlock their full potential and shape the future of politics through successful election campaigns.

Next steps

We will continue to seek and support the progression of diverse candidates as is our remit. We will work more closely with newly mandated Diversity Officers and Regional Development Officers to also support them in helping to achieve this stated Party aim.

We will look for ways to increase the funding we receive but ways in which to use any funding received in more resourceful and innovative ways.

We will continue to be the vehicle to attract more candidates from diverse backgrounds from our communities to the Liberal Democrats.

The Complaints Process - Neil Christian (Lead Adjudicator)

The party's independent process is created under Article 23 of the Federal Constitution and the three state parties - England, Scotland and Wales - have all also decided to participate in it

This report is prepared for Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference 2023. It is prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in the Complaints Procedure and Guidance and answers the following questions.

- information on the numbers of Complaints;
- the number of Party members suspended;
- the number of cases appealed to the Review Panel and the Appeals Panel;
- the number of cases ongoing and the number concluded;
- the number of concluded Complaints which were dismissed, referred back for additional information and referred to a Panel;
- the average number of days taken to conclude each complaints process; and
- the sanctions imposed, if any, in each concluded case

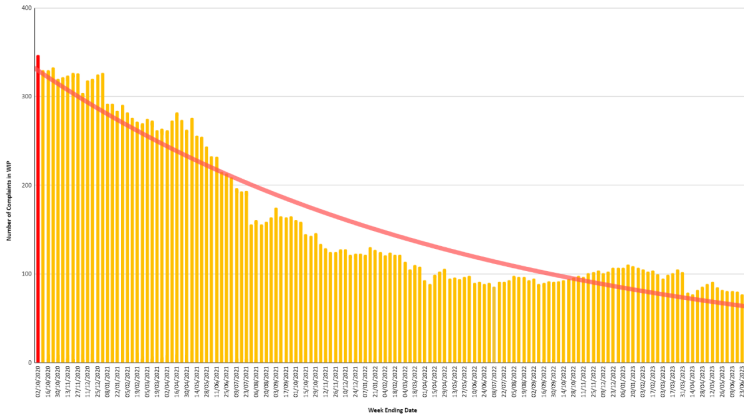
The Complaints Process continues to be busy but the hard work of volunteers and Party Staff has led to positive report that the number of complaints and time taken to deal with complaints is reducing. Figures set out below are somewhat negatively affected by paused complaints that are unable to proceed but the overall picture is positive in terms of the way the process is managing complaints.

“NP” stands for new process rules.

“OP” stands for old process

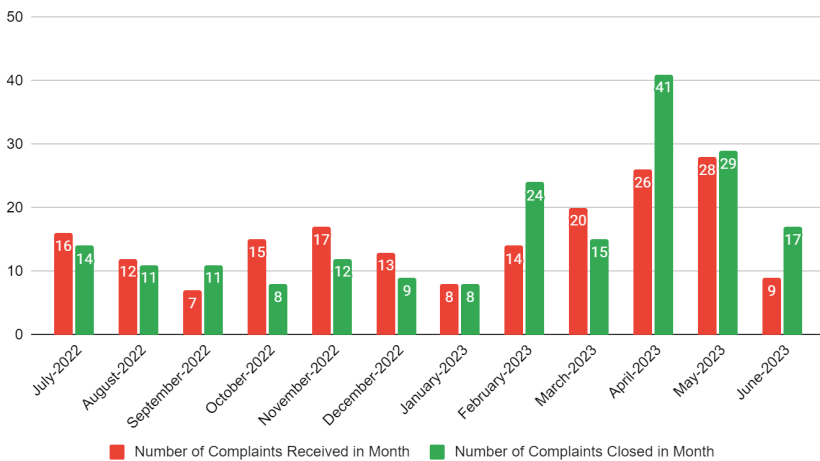
This graph shows current case load and measures it against historic averages. The Current number of live cases is 74.

Complaint Caseload - 01 October 2020 to 30 June 2023



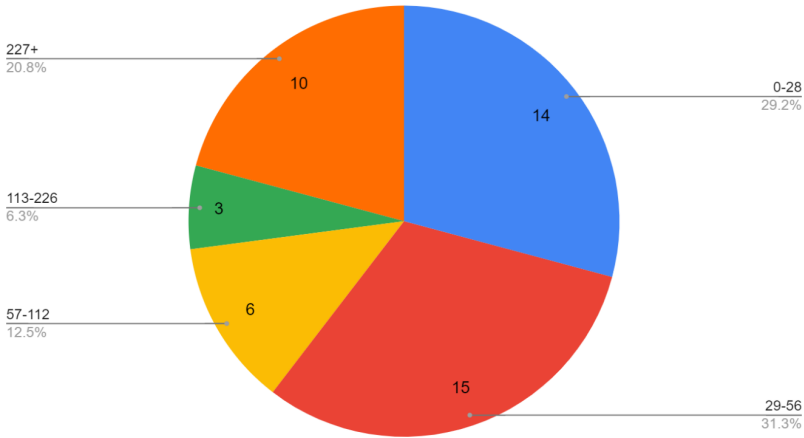
In the following graph we see the number of cases opened and closed month by month. There is a spike in complaints opened in April which coincides with Local Elections.

Open vs Closed Complaints by Month since 01/07/2022 (OP & NP)

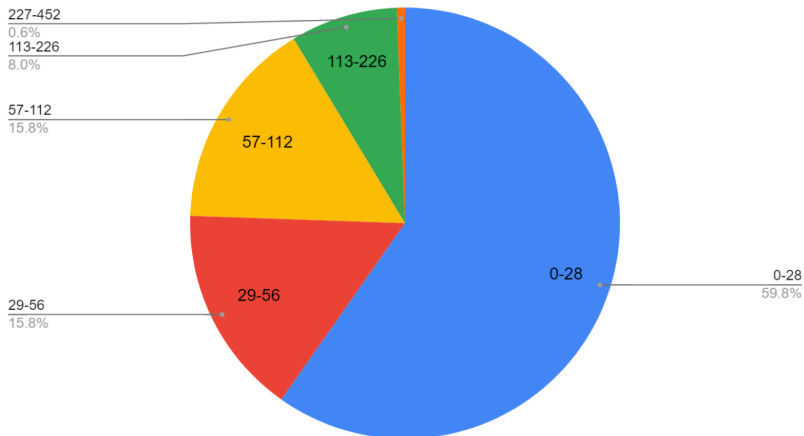


50% of the new procedure total caseload (48 cases) sit within the 0-56 day age profile, while 50% sit at 57 days+. Cases 57 days+ are due to external agency involvement e.g. Police or referral to other Party bodies and matters outside of the Standards Office control.

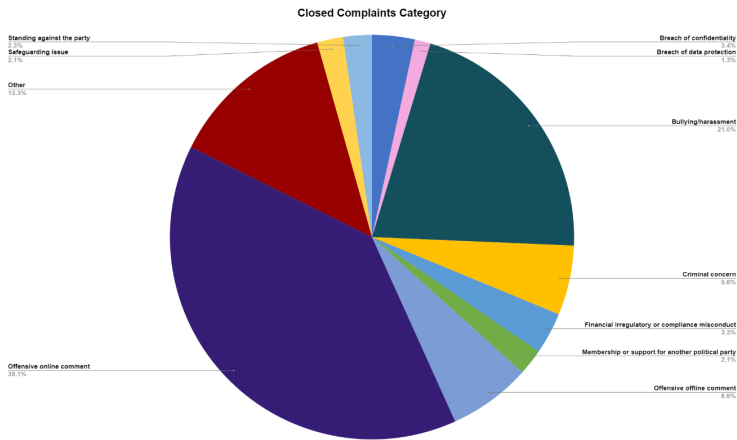
NP Age Profile - Open Cases (48 Cases)



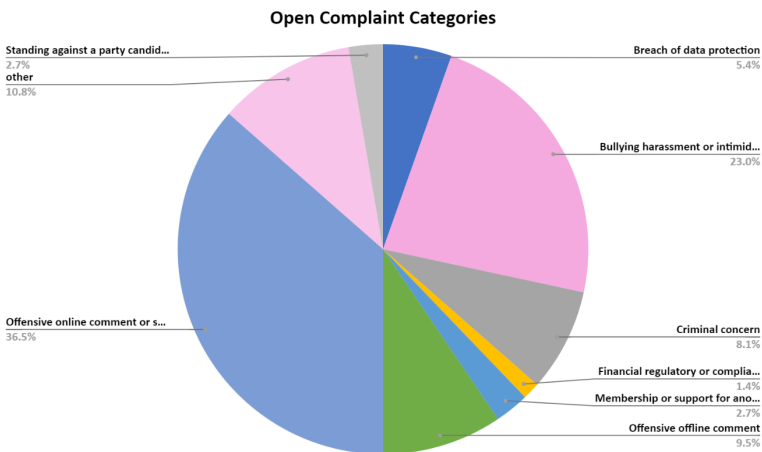
NP Age Profile - Closed Cases (323 cases)



On the current method of categorisation it continues to be the case that the majority of closed cases relate to “Offensive Online Comments”, followed by “Bullying/Harassment”.

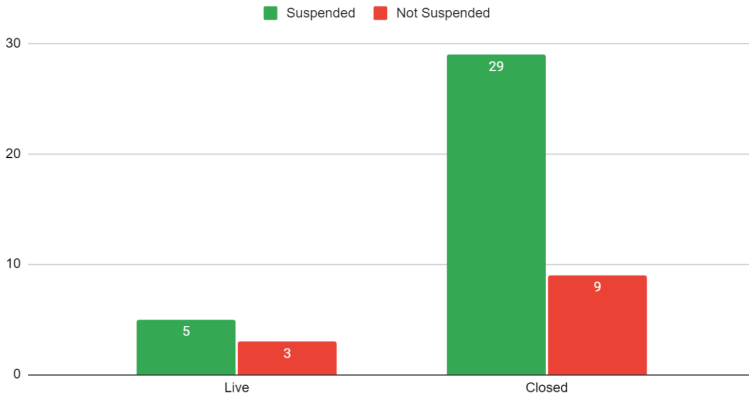


In relation to open complaints the same applies. Overall the majority of complaints the process deals with relate to comments online and allegations of bullying.



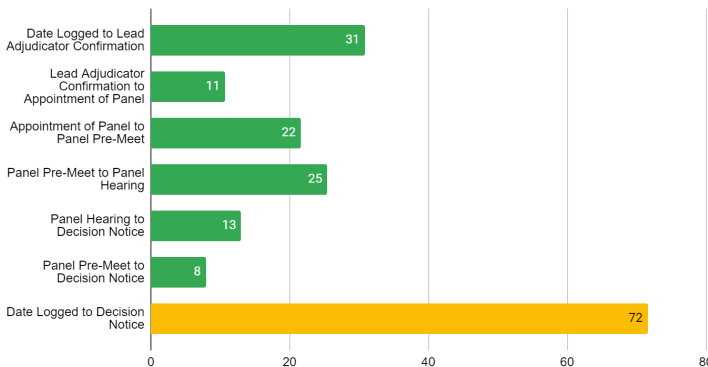
Of the number of cases referred to the Senior Adjudicators Team for interim suspension the following data was collected. At the date of this report there are 5 members suspended.

Senior Adjudicators Team Suspension Considerations (Number of Members)

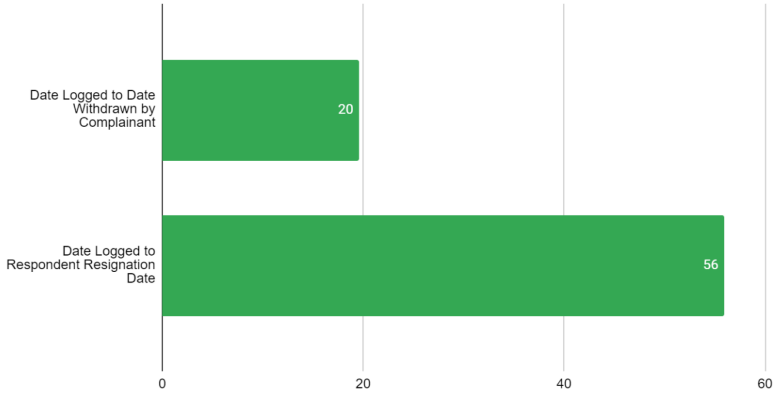


This graph and the following graph sets out the average timescales for each stage of the process and the average length of a complaint.

Average Number of Days Between Stages for Complaints that Progress to Panel (NP Only)

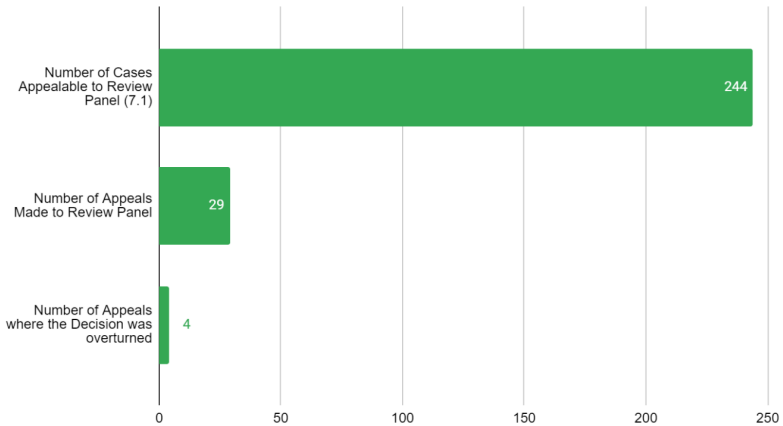


Average Number of Days from Date Logged to Complainant and Respondent Controlled Closures (NP Only)

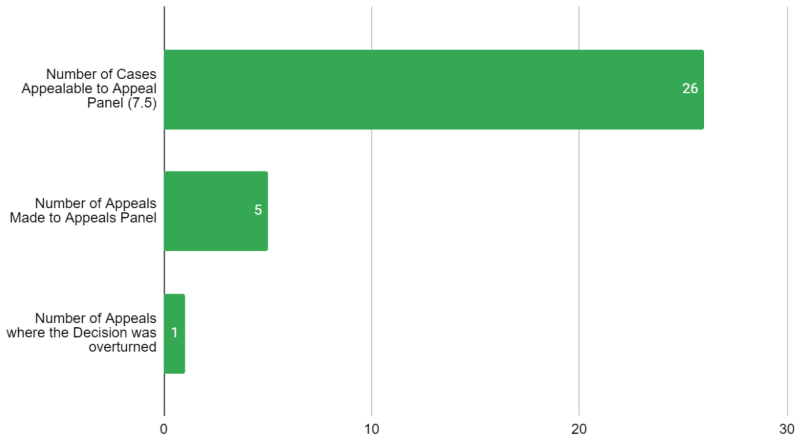


The following graphs deal with appealed decisions:

Review Panel Appeals (Appeals against 'Dismissal' ruling)

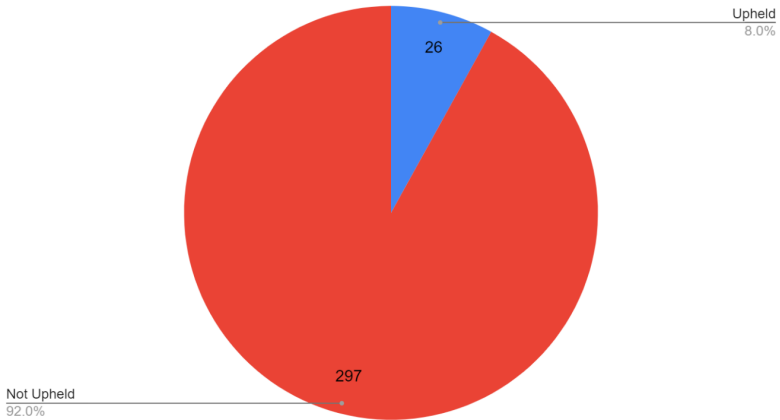


Appeals Panel Appeals (Appeals against 'Upheld' ruling)

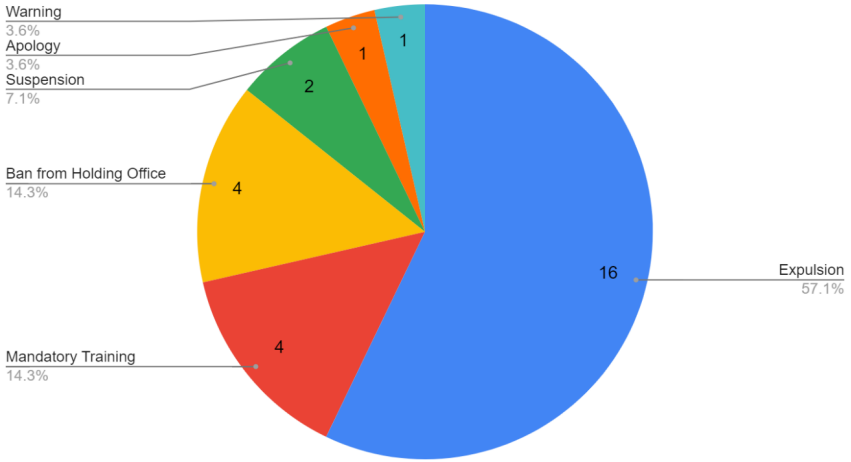


This graph shows the outcome of complaints and sanctions imposed.

Outcomes of All Closed NP Complaints (323 Cases)

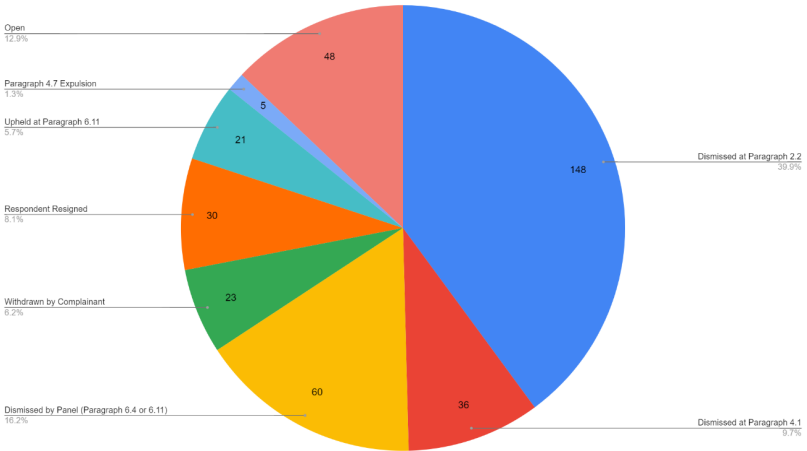


Sanctions Imposed (26 Cases)



The final graph shows the overall outcomes of complaints

Breakdown of Case Status (371 Cases)



Updates from State Parties

England - Alison Rouse (Chair)

The Liberal Democrats in England is a federation of 11 Regional Parties, together with the English Young Liberals, who are the youth and student wing of the Liberal Democrats. As the Chair of the Party, I am pleased to present this report to shed light on the organisation's work, structure, and aspirations for the future.

Much of the work we do is behind the scenes – we often do work that, to quote a veteran member: “Comprises of plumbing, maintenance and sewage. You don't see it often, but you know when it's not done, because it backs up and it smells!”

WELCOMING A NEW MEMBER OF THE TEAM

During our review of the year, we identified where we needed to improve our capacity to deliver our functions. Welcome to Julie MacLennan the new office manager for our team. Julie's will be supporting our work in the English Party. This will give more flexibility within our team and in candidates' team to improve capacity particularly ahead of a looming general election.

A massive thank you to David Allworthy for the incredible amount of work he has done and continues to do. We wish him well as he has moved more into a compliance role.

SPEAKING OF CANDIDATES...

Prospective Parliamentary Candidates

By-election candidates are in place for most seats where it is thought that a by-election is possible. As you can imagine we have an ever-evolving watch-list of places where there looks looks to be a possibility of a by-election.

All target seats now have PPCs in place, as do the majority of second-place seats. The expectation is that all these will have selected their PPCs before this Autumn Conference, which will give us a good publicity boost. It's great to see parties in all of tiers moving to select.

Following the excellent local elections results (and now our new MP in Somerton and Frome!) more local parties are starting selections. Please do everything you can to encourage local parties in your region to start selections if they have not already done so.

REMEMBER: Every candidate must have a trained, accredited agent.

Rather than our rules, this is a requirement the Electoral Commission has placed on the Party. Every agent, even those with previous experience, must take the new training course, which has been//is being rolled out from Compliance over the summer and autumn. Please ensure that, within your region, every local party has nominated someone to take the training and be the election agent.

Assessments

The programme of assessment days is continuing. There is always a rush of last-minute when applicants "remember" they meant to apply – avoid this by getting in early.

Returning Officers

We continue to train new Assistant Returning Officers as volunteers come forward.

PROMOTE DIVERSITY MORE EFFECTIVELY

Briefings with Affiliated Organisations in the Party that represent protected characteristics

We continue to talk with these groups to share a comprehensive understanding of how the candidates process works and clarify information. This allows them to identify where their members may require support and there is some excellent work going ahead to improve the chances of those with protected characteristics applying and passing assessment.

We are joining in work to identify places where we can improve the chance of people having a successful and enjoyable selection journey while ensuring all potential candidates are more aware of the reasonable adjustments that are already available.

It is important to involve stakeholders from the beginning. There is more outreach planned to other stakeholders as the year progresses. We are aiming to achieve a “nothing about us without us” approach and will be working with the different committees and AO's in the coming year to make this work – developing plans for what **is** needed rather than what **we** think is needed. Help is only help if it **is** helpful.

PROJECT WORK

Continuing to fund staffing – the “Investing in Regions” project.

We continue to run our funding program to give regions extra staffing hours – as part of delivering our strategy to help the regions to support their local parties even more effectively.

To receive funding, Regions are asked to provide information that they are working on a set of criteria which includes improving diversity and membership development.

The last round of reviews (and the local elections!) demonstrated that this is really having an impact on what regions are able to achieve and we will continue with this up to and beyond the next GE.

Continue to contribute G8

G8 is a funding scheme to help elect more Liberal Democrats in local government. It is funded by the Federal, English, Scottish and Welsh parties, managed by the G8 Committee and administered by ALDC.

The Liberal Democrats in England will continue to contribute to this into 2024, as another method of supporting you to afford your plans at a local level.

Membership

Membership figures appear to have stabilised. In we have now had several months where the membership went up, increasing in every region. We put this increase down to local campaigning, knocking on doors and, of course, the by-election effect with increased media coverage.

We encourage all regions and local parties to follow up the election successes - now is a good time to approach your "defs and probs" about joining. Especially with a General Election now just a year away and with the wonderful result Somerton & Frome with the amazing Sarah Dyke!

Thank you for everything you've done and continue to do

We all rise together or not at all.

Scotland - Jennifer Lang (Convener)

Scottish Parliament

Led by Alex Cole-Hamilton we have continued to make our voice heard on key issues in Parliament, we have had particular success with our dentistry campaign. Our press team have worked hard to create bespoke press kits which can be rolled out to local parties, Councillors and candidates.

Elections

It has been a positive year since I last reported to Conference with an excellent win in the Corstorphine and Murrayfield byelection in May 2023, electing Cllr Fiona Bennet and the Scottish Liberal Democrats now hold three of the four seats in the ward. In other by elections our vote has been increasing.

Future Leaders Programme

We ran our inaugural programme for 13 members from across Scotland. The aim was to provide up and coming community leaders within the Scottish Party with the most up to date campaigning and leadership training ordinarily reserved for those candidates who have already secured a top target seat for Westminster. Crucially, beyond the core campaigning skills, the programme was designed to encourage personal development for potential candidates and to give back, for the party to invest in those individuals who have committed unmeasurable volunteer time to the party. The programme consisted of i) one residential weekend, ii) three zoom/ online sessions, iii) one half day in person sessions with campaigning activity, iv) one full day in person session v) one action day activity. In addition, we provided bespoke media feedback for participants at Conference following their interventions in the various debates. And on the final day of the course, each participant made a pitch to a 'Dragon'; for up to £500 based on their political pathway, their brand and their campaign plan.

Feedback from the participants has been universally positive. The investment in them as leaders has been welcomed and valued by everyone who has been involved.

Conference

We held a successful in person conference in Dundee in the Spring with Kira Rudyk as a keynote speaker.

We are currently planning our Autumn Conference and have decided to take a markedly different approach. It will be one day, with a mix of traditional motions and fast paced policy discussion round tables. We will be joined by Nazanin Zahawi Ratcliff as a keynote speaker.

Unusually, we have taken the step of asking members to 'pay what they can afford' when they register (with a suggested amount) and will also work with local parties to bring along new members for free who have not previously attended.

Membership

We have employed a part time membership officer to support and develop our membership offer and we will be developing that approach and strategy over the coming months.

Wales - Tim Sly (President)

The final report of the Boundary Commission for Wales was published recently, cutting the number of Parliamentary seats in Wales from 40 to 32. This has resulted in some huge constituencies cobbled together to make the electoral numbers work. As an example, the new seat of Montgomery and Glyndwr runs from the outskirts of Wrexham in the north to Machynlleth in the west, the equivalent of a single constituency going from London to Southampton or Leeds to Liverpool. This creates interesting challenges in

campaigning across large areas and developing messaging that can resonate effectively across diverse communities facing different issues.

Although the final report was largely as expected, there were some surprises, such as in Swansea where the new boundaries of Swansea West now take in wards held by 9 of the 11 Lib Dem councillors on Swansea City Council, giving the potential to develop this into a target seat over the next few years.

One consequence of the new boundaries is the need to reorganise many local parties in Wales as constituency boundaries change and some disappear entirely. In February, work commenced to identify the best options for local party structures in North Wales and meetings were held with representatives of all local parties in the region. Since then a working party has been formed to take this work forward to a final report outlining preferred options in time for local parties to consider these and make necessary changes at their AGMs later in the year.

In Powys, where Lib Dems control the County Council in a progressive partnership with Labour following last year's local elections, our elected members continue to put Liberal values into action. Despite a challenging financial settlement this year from the Welsh Government, Powys County Council has managed to establish Wales leading anti child poverty strategy and embedded this across the council, and have stepped in to continue provision of free school meals funding (eFSM) over this summer holiday period, despite funding being withdrawn by the Welsh Government at short notice. They have also established climate and nature emergency plans with cabinet assistants to support their delivery and are continuing a programme to deliver new schools.

In August, the Welsh party launched a new training initiative 'Target 150' aimed at getting more members in Welsh local parties active, and training them in the tools and skills they will need to campaign effectively, including use of Connect, Targeted Email, writing and producing Focus and

campaigning door to door. The aim is to get many more people equipped to campaign effectively ahead of the Senedd elections in 2026 and the local elections the following year (and hopefully getting more of them elected as Councillors!).

In parallel with this, work is underway to define a long term staffing strategy for the Welsh party, with the aim of developing a five-year plan alongside a five-year rolling budget to reflect the evolving needs of the party through several election cycles including the next general election, the Senedd elections in 2026, local elections in 2027 and then running up to the subsequent general election. This is largely based upon the priorities and work streams defined in the strategy agreed at the Welsh Autumn Conference in 2022.

Report from the Federal Appeals Panel - David Graham (Chair)

The Federal Appeals Panel (FAP) is established under Article 22 of the Federal Constitution and adjudicates over a variety of disputes which are within the jurisdiction given by Article 22.3.

The FAP acts as a safeguard to ensure that bodies act within the limits assigned to them by the Federal Constitution, and the rights of members under the Federal Constitution are respected. It therefore plays an important role in maintaining good governance within the Party.

The FAP is made up of 18 members – 9 of whom are elected by the Federal Board and confirmed by Conference, with 3 being elected by each State Party. Members of the FAP are all volunteers. The Chair of the FAP is elected by the Panel from amongst the members elected to it by the Federal Board. The FAP is there to protect the rights of Party Members and is directly accountable to Conference.

The Chair of the FAP is required by Article 22.6 to publish an annual report to Autumn Conference, containing the Panel's procedures, all its decisions on the interpretation of the Constitution and a summary of its other rulings since its last annual report.

Personnel

At the date of my previous Report to Autumn Conference, the FAP had been reduced to 6 members, which meant many cases could not progress owing to conflicts and time constraints of remaining members.

At Spring Conference 2023, additional Federal Party nominees were approved, and we have also been joined by some Scottish members and a new English Party appointee. There remain 6 vacancies including all of the 3

posts that must be filled by the Welsh State Party and 2 of the English Party posts.

The Federal Party Constitution (Article 22.4, paragraphs A and B) requires that any dispute between State Parties and the Federal Party, or between State Parties, must be heard by a panel including a member appointed from each of the States concerned; and that in any other case, at least 1 hearing panel member must be an appointee of the State Party of which the applicant is a member. Welsh cases can currently not be heard until the Welsh vacancies are filled. This state of affairs has persisted for a year, and ought not to be acceptable for Welsh Party members.

If the Welsh Party is unable to find volunteers residing within Wales, there is nothing in the Federal Party Constitution preventing them from appointing other candidates to fill the vacant positions at least temporarily, and I would urge them to do so in the interests of their own organisation and its members.

If the State Parties cannot reliably fill the vacant positions on the FAP, Article 22 will need to be amended by introducing a motion at Spring Conference 2024, to give us greater flexibility to allocate personnel to hear cases.

Performance statistics

At the date of the last report to Autumn Conference, there were 20 cases pending. Since the last report, 1 case was withdrawn by the applicant and 19 cases were finally disposed of. Of those, in 4 cases the appeal was allowed or application granted, and in 15 the appeal or application was dismissed.

Our target timescale for the determination of disputes is 3 months from the date of filing to final disposal. Excluding the matters paused and withdrawn, the mean duration of the matters disposed of over the last year has been approximately 7.5 months. In the previous year, the corresponding figure was 6 months, so there was a deterioration. This reflects the build-up of a backlog

of appeals lodged in the previous 2021-22 reporting year which could not be determined timeously owing to the lack of personnel referred to above.

After the new Federal appointees were approved by Spring Conference, they were trained up and have assisted in getting on top of the backlog during the last few months. I am confident that I should be able to report an improvement in the timeliness of FAP determinations by the time of the next Conference.

There are currently 9 matters pending. Of these, 3 have been conjoined and the matter heard, with the final decision due to be handed down imminently (just under 6 months since they were lodged). One matter lodged in 2021 has remained paused as the applicant resigned from the Party and brought legal proceedings against the Party which are still ongoing. One pending matter was lodged in October 2022 and the remainder in spring or summer 2023.

The figures in this section are correct at the time of writing, as of 20 July 2023, although matters will have moved on by the time of Autumn Conference.

Published procedures

The procedures adopted by Conference in 2021 are reproduced as Appendix 1 to this Report.

Comments on cases received

Despite the publication of clear guidance on the FAP website, a significant number of appeals were brought to us that, upon examination, fell to be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction.

The FAP continued to receive applications complaining about the decisions of State Party bodies such as the Appeals Panel for England and the Scottish Appeal Tribunal. We do not have jurisdiction to hear appeals from such bodies, although they may refer issues to us to determine. We also received

complaints about the running of local parties, which again are not a matter for us where they do not engage provisions of the Federal Party Constitution.

A number of the disciplinary matters brought before the FAP appear to have been animated by philosophical or political disagreements, or personality clashes. My colleagues and I deprecate the misuse of Party disciplinary and appeals processes to litigate political or personal disagreements, or punish members for merely expressing personal opinions that others find offensive or objectionable.

The latest complaints procedures published under Article 23 of the Federal Constitution allow for reconsideration of the full merits of disciplinary cases in the framework of a new appeal system, whose decisions are to be final. I therefore anticipate that, after having disposed of any appeals brought under the old procedures, the FAP will receive fewer if any disciplinary appeals (limited to instances where the new procedures have not been followed), and our caseload should diminish.

Constitutional rulings of the FAP

No rulings were made which turned on a new point of interpretation of the Federal Constitution.

Other rulings

The FAP's decisions are published in full on the Party's website unless we are persuaded that there are good reasons not to do so in a particular case. The FAP will consider whether to anonymise the ruling or make redactions. Members are directed to the website for the full text of any determinations of interest. The following is a summary of the decisions made.

In *Coelho* (case 24), a decision of a complaints panel was upheld following a hearing, and the appeal was dismissed. The FAP was not satisfied that there was a serious error of process or reasoning, or that the sanction imposed was manifestly excessive.

In *Kumar* (case 31) it was determined not to publish the decision. The complaint related to processes within the English Party and permission to appeal was refused because the FAP lacked jurisdiction.

In *Hayes v Federal Board* (case 32A), the applicant challenged her exclusion from a remote meeting of the Federal Board on the basis that her rights as a member had been infringed. The FAP received a considerable quantity of evidence and dismissed the application following a hearing. It found that the appellant had repeatedly made comments about a member of Party staff which it was reasonable and natural to interpret as implying that they were being dishonest. The appellant had failed to retract, apologise for or clarify the remarks after being given an opportunity to do so. The FAP found that the procedure adopted was fair and that it was both reasonable and within the scope of *Robert's Rules of Order* incorporated into the Standing Orders for the Board to consider her behaviour to be out of order and eject her from the meeting. It therefore dismissed the application.

In *Jones* (case 35), a disciplinary appeal was allowed. The appellant had expressed views relating to sex education and homosexuality in response to questioning by a local selection panel which had been designed to elicit his views. A disciplinary complaint had then been made against him on account of what he had said. The complaints panel found he had engaged in unlawful discrimination and 'harassment...not directed at anyone in particular' [sic]. It had imposed as a sanction that the appellant not hold any office or be on any approved list of candidates until he had completed a course of 'mandatory training on LGBTQ+ rights and awareness', which the Party did not in fact conduct. The FAP found that the mere expression of honest views in response to direct questions could not amount to unlawful discrimination or harassment and that the sanction was manifestly unreasonable insofar as it could not be complied with.

In *Grant* (case 36), the FAP allowed a disciplinary appeal. The case had been dealt with by an Expedited Complaints Panel, in circumstances where the case

had been manifestly unsuitable for the expedited procedure because there was a factual dispute, and where no formal determination whether to apply the expedited procedure had been made and documented by the Senior Adjudicators' Team. The matter was remitted for reconsideration under the standard procedure.

In *Jones* (case 38) an appeal was made against dismissal of a complaint about social media posts that had been alleged to be 'transphobic'. There were not found to be properly arguable grounds that the complaints panel had erred or acted unfairly.

In *Hayes* (case 39), a disciplinary complaint was made relating to the removal of the appellant from a social media group by a third party, which had been dismissed. Permission to proceed to a panel hearing was refused because the application did not disclose a realistically arguable basis to interfere with the decision.

In *AB* (case 44, name anonymised), a decision to dismiss a disciplinary complaint was set aside and the matter was remitted for redetermination by a fresh complaints panel. The complaint had included 3 particularised allegations of assault, including an alleged instance of sexual assault. The focus, possibly exclusive, was on whether the respondent to the complaint had abused his Party role to 'groom' or hit on women, but the complaints panel had failed to properly deal with the assault allegations in its reasoning. The reasoning was inadequate to explain how the evidence was evaluated and why the complaint was not upheld. The emphasis placed on the absence of corroboration gave cause for concern in the context of alleged behaviour that, because of its nature, had no third-party witnesses.

In *Williams* (case 45), an appeal was made against the findings of a complaints panel that the appellant had engaged in homophobic and bullying conduct. Permission to appeal to a panel hearing was refused and the case dismissed because the appeal was considered to be attempting to re-argue the merits

and there was no realistically arguable case that the complaints panel had made a serious error rendering the findings unsafe, and there was no proper basis to interfere with the sanction imposed.

In *Seabourne, Hollinghurst and Hayes* (cases 46-48), allegations of misconduct made by the appellants had been dismissed by an Original Adjudicator. The applications were dismissed on the basis that the appellants had failed to avail themselves of their alternative remedy, which had been a right of appeal to another adjudicator.

In *Anon* (case 49), a member of the Party had been convicted of a serious offence and had their membership revoked. Having served their sentence, they subsequently applied to rejoin the Party without having declared their previous conviction and were admitted. Upon a complaint being raised by a third party, the Senior Adjudicators' Team ('SAT') requested and obtained records from the Crown Court. They then met and determined to revoke the appellant's membership under paragraph 4.7 of Part 2 of the September 2021 complaints procedures, which did not provide for any route of appeal, on the basis that their conduct had brought the Party into disrepute. The appellant appealed to the FAP. The FAP allowed the appeal. It found that the conviction was 'spent' pursuant to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 ('ROA') at the time of the decision, but the SAT's decision had failed to grapple with the tests set out in the ROA for having regard, by way of an exception, to evidence of previous convictions, and the policy basis for expelling former offenders who had become 'rehabilitated'. The procedure adopted and the relevant provision of the Complaints Procedure was inconsistent with the Federal Constitution, Article 3.8 of which required any person whose membership is revoked to have a right of appeal. The SAT had acted in breach of natural justice by failing to give the appellant a fair opportunity to address the ROA tests or the Crown Court documents before making its decision. The decision had not addressed the question of whether there was any ongoing safeguarding risk posed by the appellant and if so, whether revocation of membership was a proportionate remedy. The particular case was remitted for reconsideration

under the standard process (which does include a right of appeal) with recommendations that the Party amend its procedures to provide for appeals in all cases of revocation of membership; and consider its general approach to convictions, serving prisoners, the ROA and rehabilitated offenders, as well as what disclosures it requires of applicants for membership or renewal of membership.

In *Hayes* (case 51) the FAP was found not to have jurisdiction as the complaint related to the handling of a case pending before the Appeals Panel for England.

In *Webster* (case 54), the appellant challenged the results of the election for Party President held in late 2022, in which she had come third, by way of an appeal against decisions of the returning officer for the poll. The complaints chiefly related to allegations that she had been defamed on a Facebook group by the campaign of a rival candidate; that it was unfair not to provide her with members' e-mail addresses and to delay her campaign team's access to other data (names, addresses and telephone numbers) until a data protection officer had been appointed, submitted a signed form and passed a test on data protection obligations; and allegations that the online voting system that had been used was flawed and insecure. The FAP dismissed the appeal. It was not satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the allegedly defamatory postings were made at the instigation or with the knowledge or authorisation of the rival campaign team. It found that the candidates were treated alike with regards to data protection and non-provision of e-mail addresses, that regulation 37 of the Election Regulations referring to releasing 'names, addresses and telephone numbers' did not require provision of e-mail addresses, and that the requirements were not unfair. It found that whilst there were some glitches and 'downtime' with the voting system, it was not proven that these disadvantaged any particular candidate, or that the overall system was intrinsically unsound.

In *Anon* (cases 56 and 57) complaints were made by way of an appeal against dismissal of complaints about social media comments to the returning officer in federal elections. Permission was refused to proceed to a panel hearing and the appeals dismissed. The complaints were made about the conduct of a campaign by a candidate in the election who was not in the event elected, which was considered extremely unlikely to have led to a different outcome on the particular facts.

In *White* (case 58) it was contended by an interested party (the original complainant in case 35) that the FAP had overlooked the late filing of the appeal form in case 35. The Case Manager dismissed the application because the Federal Constitution makes clear that decisions of the FAP are final, the applicant was not a party to the original FAP proceedings and there would have been a basis to extend time in case 35.

Conclusion and thanks

It is vital that the Panel be restored to full strength so that all matters may be determined speedily, and we are quorate to determine all matters brought by or against one of the State Parties. I particularly call upon the Welsh Party to ensure that its 3 positions on the FAP are filled.

I would like to end by thanking all my colleagues for their work, as well as all the Party staff who have supported the work of the Panel throughout the last year including Graeme Nuttall, Beth Morris and Sian Waddington.

Federal Appeals Panel Report Appendix I - Procedures

A: MISSION STATEMENT

The Federal Appeals Panel (“FAP”) exists under Article 22 of the Federal Party Constitution to resolve internal disputes falling within Article 22.3.

The FAP acts as guardian of Members’ rights under the Federal Party Constitution and is accountable to the Federal Conference which is the sovereign representative body of the Party.

The FAP shall make its determinations with integrity. Its members shall be impartial and independent from the parties to any dispute, executive bodies, officers or staff of the Party.

In discharging its duties the FAP shall act in accordance with the principles of natural justice; and shall be accessible, transparent and expeditious.

Where appropriate, the FAP shall encourage mediation; where necessary, it will make firm decisions by proper process.

In dealing with any complaint the FAP shall have regard where relevant to the general law of the land including standards of due process protected by Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

B: OFFICERS OF THE FEDERAL APPEALS PANEL

There shall be a Chair of the Federal Appeals Panel elected in accordance with Article 22.1.

There shall be 2 Vice-Chairs, approved by the FAP. The Vice-Chairs may exercise the functions of the Chair under the Rules of Procedure where the Chair has requested this, or in the event that the Chair is unable to fulfil their functions.

There shall be a Registrar of the FAP approved by the FAP, and there may be one or more Deputy Registrars. The Registrars shall normally be an employee of the Federal Party. The Chair of the FAP shall consult with the Chief Executive of the Party in relation to any such appointment and either the Chair or one of the Vice Chairs of the FAP will sit on any selection process for a new Registrar.

C: RULES OF PROCEDURE

1. General Principles

Overriding Objective

1.1 The overriding objective of the FAP in the application of its procedures and in the interpretation of its procedural rules shall be the resolution of disputes justly, fairly and proportionately. It shall, in particular, have regard to the desirability of the following factors:

- A. ensuring that the parties are on an equal footing;
- B. resolving disputes expeditiously;
- C. promoting amicable settlement of disputes;
- D. saving costs, effort and FAP resources;
- E. ensuring that its procedures are accessible, simple and easy to understand or participate in;
- F. enforcing compliance with its rules, directions and rulings.

1.2. The parties to FAP proceedings are required to co-operate, both with each other and with the FAP, to assist the FAP to further its overriding objective.

1.3 At all stages the parties' duty of co-operation shall extend to making a reasonable search or check for, preserving and supplying relevant evidence to the other parties and to the FAP where this tends to undermine their own case or assist the case of another party, bearing in mind the grounds that the FAP will consider.

1.4 The FAP shall actively manage cases so as to further the overriding objective. It may in particular, upon the application of the parties or on its own initiative:

- A. identify the issues that it requires to resolve and the parties it will hear;
- B. exclude issues or evidence from consideration;
- C. determine the order in which issues will be resolved;
- D. stay proceedings, adjourn or bring forward hearings;
- E. combine or split up sets of proceedings;
- F. encourage or assist the parties to settle the dispute informally;
- G. give procedural directions and set timetables;
- H. proceed without the participation of a party if that party has failed to attend or co-operate;
- I. make use of technology; and
- J. adapt, vary or waive compliance with any of its own time limits or procedures if and to the extent necessary in the interests of fairness or justice in a particular case.

1.5 The FAP cannot vary any procedure or non-extensible time-limit which is fixed by the Federal Constitution. Nor can it extend any time limit for appealing to it which is contained in a rule compatible with and duly made under the Federal Constitution, which confers jurisdiction upon it in a particular case.

Entry into force and transitional provision

1.6 The FAP shall follow these Rules, which shall replace the previous set of published procedures, from the date of their adoption by Conference.

1.7 Where matters are pending at the date of adoption, decisions made under the previous published procedures shall remain effective, as if they had been authorised by these rules. However, these rules of procedure shall apply to govern the handling of pending matters from the date of adoption.

Interpretation.

1.8 References to article numbers are to article numbers in the Federal Party Constitution (and to those articles as subsequently amended or renumbered). Unless the context requires otherwise, the singular includes the plural and vice versa, and words of one gender include all persons.

1.9 Text in square brackets does not form part of these Rules of Procedure and is included for guidance or information only. It may be updated or removed administratively by the FAP in the interests of clarity. If articles of the Federal Party Constitution are renumbered, the cross-references in these Rules may in the interests of clarity be updated administratively by text in square brackets to refer to the new numbering, without being re-confirmed by Conference.

2. Lodging an Application

2.1 Any party seeking a ruling from the FAP ('the Applicant') must lodge their request ('Application') with the Registrar, on any relevant application form published on the Party website in accordance with any guidance published by the FAP.

2.2 If the request for a ruling impugns a particular act, omission/default, ruling or decision by a person or body, the application form must be lodged within 6 weeks of the act, omission, ruling or decision that is challenged. The Case Manager may extend this time limit in exceptional circumstances. [The Case Manager is the member of the FAP who initially reviews and manages the case, appointed under rule 3.3 below.]

2.3 If an Application is brought in accordance with a provision of the Constitution setting a shorter time limit, or a provision of constitutional subordinate rules or regulations setting a shorter time limit, the application or appeal must be made within that timescale. [The Article 23 Complaints Procedures approved in 2019, the Presidential Elections Regulations and the

Leadership Election Regulations set 14 day time limits for appeals to the Federal Appeals Panel. It may be open to parties to argue whether time limits are constitutional.]

2.4 The Application must indicate clearly and concisely:

- A. who the Applicant is, their State Party and their contact e-mail address;
- B. which ground of Article 22.3 of the Federal Party Constitution is alleged to give the FAP jurisdiction;
- C. what the dispute relates to;
- D. in the case of a reference from a State Appeals Panel, the issue that has arisen and the necessary context;
- E. any act, omission/default, ruling or decision which is being challenged or appealed; its date; and the person(s) or body who made or were responsible for it and the Applicant is alleging were at fault or in error; [E.g. the complaints panel that made a ruling the Applicant wishes to appeal. Note: this person is likely to be the First Respondent to the application or appeal.]
- F. any other person(s) or party body whom the Applicant considers particularly affected by or interested in the outcome of the Application and their contact details, where known; [E.g. the complainant, prosecuting party and respondent will be affected by an appeal against a decision of a complaints panel. These persons may be Respondents to the application or appeal]
- G. if the request for a ruling is made after the relevant deadline, any application to extend time which must give an explanation and good reason for such extension;
- H. any procedural directions that the Applicant would like the FAP to make, with an explanation why;
- I. what ruling(s) the Applicant would like the FAP to make;
- J. the grounds for the Application (i.e. why the FAP should make the ruling(s) sought); and

- K. any other details specified in any relevant form or guidance published on the Party website from time to time.

The Applicant must include a copy of any decision that is challenged and any relevant notes or official minutes of this, as well as any other supporting materials or evidence specified in the FAP's relevant form or guidance.

3. Administration of Applications received

3.1 The Registrar shall acknowledge the date of receipt of the Application. They may check that any Application is in a form which is both coherent and acceptable to the Applicant, and may request further information in order to identify whether the FAP has jurisdiction and who the appropriate Respondents may be. If the Application appears to be out of time and this has not been addressed, the Registrar may so inform the Applicant who may be permitted a further 14 days if they wish to make representations as to why time should be extended. In the case of an appeal from a decision, the Registrar shall ensure that the FAP has a complete set of the material before the person or body who made that decision.

3.2 Where a party or prospective party to an Application is not a member of the Party (for instance in the case of an appeal from a complaint by a member of the public), they may before being permitted to participate in the proceedings be required to consent in writing to the jurisdiction of the FAP; to keep information received in connection with the proceedings confidential, use it for the sole purpose of participation in the proceedings, and delete or destroy it when no longer necessary for that purpose; to the handling of their data by the Party; and to be bound by these rules.

Case Manager

3.3 The case shall be allocated by the Chair to a person designated as Case Manager, who may be their self or any other member of the FAP. The Chair may designate Case Managers and permit cases to be allocated

administratively to them by a rota or standing arrangements, subject always to the control and discretion of the Chair to allocate any particular case to or away from a particular person in the interests of the efficient management of the FAP or the effective and fair handling of that particular case.

3.4 The Case Manager may:

- A. seek further information from the Applicant;
- B. determine the appropriate Respondent(s), request the Registrar to notify them of the application and request information or invite submissions from them; (c) grant or refuse permission to proceed with the Application in accordance with rule 4; and
- C. determine the procedures to be used, and the issues to be adjudicated, by any Case Panel appointed to determine the case.

3.5 The Case Manager may give informal advice, and may recommend (and, if so, assist) with mediation; however, if the Case Manager conducts an unsuccessful mediation, they may take no further part in the determination of the complaint, and the Chair shall appoint a different Case Manager.

4. Permission Stage

4.1 Once an Application has been lodged, the Case Manager shall consider whether it is within jurisdiction and should be granted permission to proceed.

4.2 The FAP only has the jurisdiction conferred on it by the Federal Party Constitution. It is in most areas of its jurisdiction a tribunal of last resort. It will be careful not to hear disputes which are outside its jurisdiction, including where another remedy exists that has not been exhausted, such as an appeal to a State Party body.

4.3 The FAP will not grant permission to proceed with any Application that is untimely, vexatious, frivolous or insubstantial, not properly arguable on the evidence with a realistic prospect of success, academic, or is made when alternative remedies elsewhere have not been exhausted.

4.4 The FAP will not grant permission to proceed with an Application if it is highly likely the points taken would not have affected the outcome for the Applicant, unless there is some compelling reason why the application should be heard.

4.5 The Case Manager shall determine:

- A. A. whether an Application shall have permission to proceed to a Case Panel hearing, and in doing so shall consider
 - i. whether or not the case falls within the jurisdiction of the FAP;
 - ii. whether the Application is untimely, vexatious, frivolous, insubstantial or academic;
 - iii. whether the Applicant has exhausted their remedies elsewhere;
 - iv. whether the Application discloses a properly arguable case; and
 - v. whether it is highly likely that the outcome for the Applicant would have been the same and if so whether there is a compelling reason to proceed to determine the case; and
- B. B. the timetable and preliminary procedures for that case.

4.6 In respect of any misconduct appeal from the Complaints Procedures set out in Article 23 of the Constitution, the Case Manager will only grant permission to proceed to a determination by a Case Panel where the appellant can demonstrate that it is arguable that:

- A. there was a serious failure of process or reasoning that was likely to render the determination of the complaint unsafe or unsatisfactory in all the circumstances; or,
- B. relevant evidence, which could not reasonably have been adduced at the time of the determination of the complaint, has since come to light which is likely to render the determination of the complaint unsafe or unsatisfactory in all the circumstances; or.

- C. the sanction determined was manifestly excessive or manifestly lenient in all the circumstances.

[‘Manifestly’ means clearly outside the range of reasonable sanctions. This rule relates to appeals brought under the 2019 Complaints Procedures, which formerly provided for appeal to the Federal Appeals Panel. Note that new Complaints Procedures with effect from 20 September 2021 established a separate Appeals Panel for complaints, whose decisions are final under paragraph 7.5 of those new procedures: see <https://www.libdems.org.uk/complaints-procedure>]

4.7 The Permission Stage is intended solely to sieve out and swiftly determine cases that do not merit a full Case Panel hearing. Respondents will be notified that an application has been lodged, but shall not be required or expected to make any representations at the permission stage. The FAP may however have regard to any representations that are made from Respondents addressing the Permission Stage tests and, where those raise issues that the Applicant has not had an opportunity to comment on, will invite comments from the Applicant where necessary in the interests of fairness.

4.8 A determination by the Case Manager at the Permission Stage is final and binding; it is not subject to a further appeal. It must be accompanied by reasons, which may be brief.

4.9 The target timeframe for determining an Application shall, unless the Case Manager extends this, be 3 months from the date of its being lodged, and a timetable shall be set accordingly.

4.10 If a party does not co-operate with the timetable or other directions given, or does not participate in the proceedings, the FAP may proceed in their absence or in the absence of evidence or representations that were to have been filed by a missed deadline.

5. Independence of Case Manager and Case Panel

5.1 The members of the FAP to hear a particular case ('Case Panel') shall be selected by the Chair, in accordance with Article 22.4 of the Federal Party Constitution.

5.2 Unless application of the Federal Party Constitution compels it, the Chair shall not select a member as Case Manager nor appoint a member to hear an application if they have any personal connection to the parties or personal involvement in the subject of a particular dispute.

5.3 If it emerges that a Case Manager or member of the Case Panel has a personal connection to or involvement with a party or to the subject of the dispute, they must declare this as soon as they become aware of the connection or involvement, and if they do not choose to recuse themselves forthwith, then:

- A. they must give the parties a fair opportunity to ask questions about the connection or involvement,
- B. they must ask all parties if they have any objections, and
- C. they must recuse themselves unless all the parties waive any objection. If a member has recused themselves, then the Chair shall either select a substitute or, if at least 3 members remain, then the remaining members may continue to determine the case.

6. Records and Communications

6.1 Communications between parties and the FAP must be conducted through the Registrar, who shall keep a record of the communications.

6.2 The FAP shall not entertain any representations about the substance of a case before it that are not conducted in writing through the Registrar or at a hearing.

6.3 All parties to a dispute shall normally be entitled as of right to copies of representations made by other parties and rulings made by the FAP, if they request these from the Registrar, unless the FAP otherwise directs in the interests of justice.

6.4 The FAP may publish on the Party website a list of the cases pending before it, the names of the parties, and a short summary of the issues raised in the pending application or appeal.

6.5 The FAP may redact or restrict the circulation of sensitive or personal information where this is compatible with fairness and the interests of transparency are outweighed by other considerations.

6.6 The parties to any case before the FAP must keep all information and documents received in connection with the proceedings strictly confidential and use them for the sole purpose of the proceedings.

6.7 Communications must be conducted directly between the parties and the FAP, and cannot be conducted with third party agents (save where necessary for instance to have the assistance of a carer, translator or sign language interpreter) or solicitors.

6.8 FAP determinations shall be published, at least in summary form, on the Party website and in a report to Conference. The form of publication shall be determined by the FAP. Sensitive or personal information may be redacted where the interest in confidentiality outweighs the presumption in favour of transparency. The parties may make representations as to the form of publication after a ruling has been delivered.

7. General Procedures

7.1 Upon permission being granted, the Applicant shall where necessary be directed by a deadline to provide a detailed Statement of Grounds and any further supporting evidence to the FAP (through the Registrar) and to the Respondents. They shall be entitled to state that they wish to let their

Application stand as their Statement of Grounds. The Applicant shall also provide any further additional material falling to be disclosed under rule 1.3 above.

7.2 The Respondents shall be directed by a deadline to provide their own Response to the FAP (through the Registrar) and to the other parties, setting out which aspects of the Application are conceded or contested, and the detailed grounds for resisting each of the grounds of the Application. They must provide any documentary evidence on which they rely with their Response. The Response must be on any form published for the purpose on the Party website and accord with any guidance published on the website. The Respondents shall also provide any further additional material falling to be disclosed under rule 1.3 above.

7.3 The Applicant shall have an opportunity to file any representations or evidence in response to new points raised by the Respondents.

7.4 The Case Manager may determine that a case may be dealt with by the FAP in writing, where all the parties agree or where there are no significant factual disputes. If an Application is not contested, or there is no real prospect of its being successfully defended, the Case Manager may finally determine the matter themselves without convening a Case Panel.

7.5 Where a dispute turns on the interpretation of the Federal Party Constitution or some other document, the Case Manager may subject to any provision of the Federal Party Constitution give a preliminary determination themselves, which shall become final and binding unless it is appealed to a full Case Panel within 14 days. In that event, the Case Panel hearing the appeal shall not include the Case Manager.

7.6 The FAP shall ensure that the procedures adopted to hear a case are fair, and in particular:

- A. it shall ensure that the time allowed to make representations or submit material is fair and reasonable;
- B. it shall ensure that parties are treated fairly as between each other; (c) it shall ensure that all parties have an opportunity to respond to relevant points made by opposing parties; and
- C. if it is minded to find against a party by reference to a factual matter not already squarely in issue in the case, or by reference to an argument not previously canvassed, it shall provide the party with a fair opportunity to address it on that point.

8. Succession

8.1 Where a new FAP is elected by Conference, but there are outstanding determinations before the old elected FAP, members of the old FAP will in the first instance retain jurisdiction to deal with those matters until they are finally determined, unless due to resignation, other commitments or illness it is impossible for that to occur.

8.2 In the event that the Chair resigns, dies or is through illness unable to perform their functions, the remaining members of the FAP shall as soon as practicable elect a new Chair from amongst those members elected by the Federal Board in accordance with Article 22.1, pending which the functions of the Chair may be exercised by the Vice-Chairs. In the event of the illness, death, resignation or unavailability of a member of the FAP other than the Chair who is the Case Manager of or sits on a Case Panel for a pending case, the Chair may select a substitute and may, where necessary, require a case to be re-heard. Vacancies may be filled in accordance with Articles 22.1 and 22.2 of the Constitution.

9. Procedural applications and objections

9.1 The parties may at any time apply to the FAP for procedural directions, or to vary any directions already made.

9.2 Applications for a procedural direction, or to vary one already made, should be submitted as soon as possible to avoid prejudice to other parties or the FAP's schedule. If there has been delay, the application should explain why this took place, and be accompanied by any supporting evidence.

9.3 Members of the Liberal Democrats, AOs, SAOs, party officers or party bodies not currently a party to a case may apply to be added as a party, or to submit representations by way of intervention. They must state what their interest is, and what they propose to say. The Case Manager may permit their participation having regard to how far they are affected, whether submissions would be helpful, and the impact of such intervention on the timetable and on the current parties. A direction permitting participation may subject this to limits, conditions or deadlines.

9.4 The parties may apply to object to the fairness of the FAP's procedures at any time. Final determinations by the Case Manager and/or Case Panel on the substance of the case are binding and are not subject to further appeal or rehearing, so any party prejudiced by an alleged unfairness must raise this as soon as possible and state what they propose as the remedy.

9.5 Applications under this part of the procedure rules must state what ruling they would like the FAP to make, and why, be supported by evidence where appropriate (e.g. when requesting an extension of time), and (unless they are made at a hearing) be made in writing and on any form published for the purpose on the Party website.

9.6 Applications for procedural directions must normally be made with notice to the other parties so that they have 3 clear working days to respond before a decision is made. For instance, an application shall be submitted to the FAP and copied to the other parties on a Tuesday if it is to be considered the following Monday. The FAP may make exceptions but only for good reason.

9.7 The Registrar will routinely make copies of procedural applications available for a response by other parties. Exceptionally, there may be

occasions where this would defeat the purpose of the application (e.g. an application for permission to withhold sensitive personal information from another party), in which case the application must clearly state this and inform the Registrar accordingly. The Case Manager will determine whether an application shall be decided without hearing from another party, and will only permit this where it does not compromise the fairness of the proceedings.

10. Hearings

10.1 Where necessary to resolve any significant dispute of fact, or if the FAP's determination would be assisted by oral submissions, the Case Manager shall direct that a hearing be held.

10.2 Hearings may take place in person, virtually through the use of information technology, or by some hybrid of these, in a fair and accessible manner. If parties have difficulties in participating in physical or virtual hearings for any reason (such as where they have a disability that requires reasonable adjustments, or problems with their home broadband), they should inform the Registrar and submit a procedural application explaining how they consider they could be assisted to participate.

10.3 The members and chair of the Case Panel that will hear the case shall be selected by the Chair of the FAP.

10.4 The chair of the Case Panel shall be responsible for the procedure at the hearing, in accordance with these rules. At the oral hearing, procedural applications or objections must be made to the Case Panel.

10.5 The procedure at an oral hearing shall normally follow that set out in the Appendix to these rules. A copy shall be provided to the parties before the start of the hearing, together with any proposed deviations from the normal procedure.

11. Determinations

11.1 After a Case Panel has been constituted, following or in the absence of an oral hearing the chair of a Case Panel or other person authorised by the chair shall produce a draft determination for approval by the other members of the Case Panel. Such draft determination shall also be sent to the Chair of the FAP and Registrar by way of consultation on matters of law and procedure (but not fact), and the Case Panel shall have regard to any comments they make.

11.2 All determinations shall be reasoned. They shall summarise what the Case Manager or Case Panel members consider to be the principal facts and arguments, and explain why the Case Manager or Case Panel are making their ruling. The determination, or a summary thereof, shall be made available to all parties within 21 days of any oral hearing.

11.3 The parties shall have an opportunity to make submissions as to the form in which the determination shall be published. They may also make representations as to any obvious errata, such as errors of names, facts or dates not in dispute, or typographical errors. Save for corrections of errata, the determination shall be final.

12. Grounds on which the FAP will interfere with decisions

12.1 The FAP not a policy-making body. It is not a democratically elected rule making body. It is not an elected executive body of the Party. It is a creature of the Federal Party Constitution. The FAP's function is supervisory: to interpret and enforce the Constitution, and protect members' rights under the Constitution. The FAP may imply terms into the Constitution or subordinate rules, regulations or procedures where this is necessary or must have been intended. Only Conference may rewrite the Constitution.

12.2 The FAP shall not normally interfere with acts, omissions, decisions, rules, practices or procedures save where these are not permitted by or in

conflict with the Constitution. This may arise in the following circumstances (which are not intended to be an exhaustive list):

- A. conflict with the Constitution or subordinate rules, regulations or procedures;
- B. procedural or substantive unfairness or impropriety;
- C. apparent bias or closed mind;
- D. unjustified or arbitrary breach of a legitimate expectation;
- E. proceeding upon a misunderstanding of the law; the Constitution, rules, regulations or procedures; of a person or body's role within the Party; or of uncontroverted facts;
- F. acting for an improper purpose;
- G. having regard to irrelevant matters or failing to have regard to relevant matters;
- H. unreasonableness or irrationality in all the circumstances;
- I. failure to give any or any adequate reasons where those are required.

12.3 The FAP will not interfere with a decision on the grounds that excessive or insufficient weight was placed on a particular factor in the decision-making, where an evaluative judgment was required and the factor was a legitimate one to consider, unless weight is dictated by the Constitution or subordinate rules and regulations, or the judgment was unreasonable. Nor will it normally interfere with factual findings by other adjudicative bodies unless those findings could not reasonably have been arrived at on the evidence before those bodies.

12.4 Where the FAP is entrusted with an appeal jurisdiction (such as in a misconduct case from a Complaints Panel), which is not a full rehearing of the merits of the case, it will interfere with the decision under appeal where: A. there was a serious failure of process or reasoning that was likely to render the determination of the complaint unsafe or unsatisfactory in all the circumstances; or B. relevant evidence which could not reasonably have been adduced at the time of the determination of the complaint, has since come to

light which is likely to render the determination of the complaint unsafe or unsatisfactory in all the circumstances; or C. the sanction determined was manifestly excessive or manifestly lenient in all the circumstances. [Note that the FAP has an appeal jurisdiction in legacy cases appealed under the 2019 Complaints Procedures, but does not have an appeal jurisdiction in respect of decisions under the 2021 Complaints Procedures]

13. Remedies

13.1 The FAP may in its final decisions make declarations (including declarations that a rule, regulation, procedure, practice, act, omission or decision is invalid or unauthorised by or under the Federal Constitution and must be set aside), and give directions to do or refrain from doing something.

13.2 The FAP shall not make monetary awards, whether of costs, damages or compensation.

13.3 The remedy available on a successful appeal from the Article 23 Complaints Procedures is limited to a direction remitting the case back for a fresh Complaints Panel to rehear under the Article 23 procedures, together with any further direction that is considered appropriate or necessary in that respect. [This rule relates to appeals launched under the 2019 Complaints Procedures.]

14. Status of Decisions

14.1 A final determination of the FAP is final and binding upon all members of the Party concerned, pursuant to Article 22.7 of the Federal Party Constitution. This means in particular that the FAP cannot re-open a particular decision once a final ruling has been issued.

14.2 Among the fundamental values underpinning the Liberal Democrats' Federal Party Constitution are respect for the rule of law and good governance, respect for our democratically accountable Party institutions, and individual justice. If a party to a case knowingly or recklessly fails to obey

or abide by a specific ruling in a particular case, that conduct is inconsistent with the fundamental values of the Party for the purpose of Article 3 of the Federal Party Constitution. It may constitute grounds for complaint, sanction or revocation of membership.

14.3 Federal Party Conference may overrule any determination of the FAP on a point of interpretation by amending the Constitution or subordinate rule, regulation or procedure concerned, and members of the Party are free to campaign for this provided that they abide by the determination.

14.4 The FAP shall not be bound by points of interpretation determined in its previous rulings, and a party in a subsequent case may argue that a previous case was wrongly decided; however the FAP will follow its own previous rulings of which it is aware, unless it is satisfied that they were wrong.

14.5 Any party to proceedings before the FAP may rely on previous rulings of the FAP, but they must provide the FAP and all other parties with copies of all relevant rulings relied upon in good time, as well as all those determinations at least arguably adverse to their own case.

APPENDIX TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE FEDERAL APPEALS PANEL Normal Process during an Oral Hearing

1. Any party may be assisted or represented by a friend, who may be a lawyer and may speak for the party at any time. If they both choose to speak, they should avoid repeating points already made by the other person.
2. Normally, the Applicant will speak first, to put their case. This should address any issues that have been identified as important in advance by the Case Manager or Case Panel.
3. The Applicant may call witnesses as to disputed fact only, although these may also give their evidence in written form. An appeal from a Complaints Panel is not a fresh re-hearing and the FAP would not normally hear evidence unless this could not reasonably have been adduced at the time of the Complaints Panel hearing.
4. Each Respondent or representative may cross-examine a witness, the friend or the Applicant, as permitted or directed by the Chair of the Case Panel.
5. The case for the Applicant should not last longer than 45 minutes, unless the Chair believes that the case has not been properly put in this time.
6. The Respondents shall speak next and have equivalent rights as to witnesses, a representative to aid her or him and time limit.
7. The Applicant may also cross-examine as permitted or directed by the Chair of the Case Panel.
8. Members of the Case Panel may ask for clarification or cross-examine at any time. They may warn parties or their representatives not to repeat points and curtail any arguments that are irrelevant or simply repetitious. They may also, following a warning, refuse to hear anyone who persistently acts in a disruptive or unruly way.
9. Each side may sum up, taking no more than five minutes. The Applicant shall speak last.
10. The Case Panel will then consider their conclusion.