

Constitution of Essex County Co-ordinating Committee (EC3)



Preamble

EC3 is established under the constitution of the East of England Liberal Democrats as a County Co-ordinating Committee. It exists to further the objects of the Liberal Democrats and the Region in Essex through working towards Liberal Democracy and a Liberal society in Essex.

It shall operate as a partnership between local parties, the county council group, district council groups and parliamentary candidates.

1. Name

The name of the body governed by this constitution shall be 'The Essex County Co-ordinating Committee', commonly known as '**EC3**'.

2. Definitions:

In this constitution:

- *EC3* shall mean the Essex County Co-ordinating Committee.
- *'Parliament'* shall mean the Westminster Parliament and any elected Regional Assembly that may be formed covering an area wholly or partly within the area covered by EC3.
- *'local party'* shall mean a local party of the Liberal Democrats in Essex, including any that may be partly but not wholly in Essex.
- *'Essex'* shall mean the area covered by Essex County Council plus Southend, Thurrock and any unitary authorities formed after 2018 from the area covered by Essex County Council in 2018.
- *'the party constitution'* shall mean all relevant aspects of the constitution, standing orders, articles and policy of the Federal party and relevant State and Regional parties.
- *'the party'* shall mean the Liberal Democrats.
- *'the regional party'* shall mean the East of England Liberal Democrats, or such regional party as the local parties shall subsequently fall within.
- *'majority'* at any meeting shall mean a majority of those present and voting.
- *'councils'* shall mean all principal councils in Essex.
- *'committee'* shall have the same meaning as EC3.
- *'County Council Group'* members of the party elected to hold office in the County Council.

3. Objects

3.1 The objects of EC3 include:

- a. To coordinate campaigning activities across the area and wider as and when necessary, so as to facilitate the election of more Liberal Democrat Councillors at all levels of local government and more Liberal Democrat MPs.
- b. To co-ordinate support and activities at Parliamentary elections,
- c. To assist with the formulation of policy on issues of county-wide interest,

- whether or not of significance to the County Council,
- d. To ensure that council groups and local parties communicate best practice, and receive appropriate support and assistance where possible,
 - e. To hold the County Council Group to account; receive reports, question and provide feedback.
 - f. To share information within EC3 and thus keep all members informed about relevant local developments.
 - g. To operate within the terms of the constitution and aims of the English Party, in relation to County Council elections:
 - i to approve the manifesto for such elections
 - ii to co-ordinate county-wide campaigning and publicity
 - iii to ensure that all by-elections are contested and advertised within the county and elsewhere
 - iv to co-ordinate, if appropriate, external help
 - h. In relation to district council elections and by-elections; to encourage local parties to put up candidates and contest them appropriately.
 - i. In relation to elections for the position of Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and any other county-wide elections based on constituencies larger than district councils or parliamentary constituencies, to request a Returning Officer from the Regional Party and to appoint a Selection Committee for the selection of a candidate, operating at all times within the Large Constituency Rules of the Party in England.

4. Membership

- 4.1 EC3 shall consist of:
- a. Two (2) representatives from each Local Party
 - b. Four (4) representatives from the Liberal Democrat group on Essex County Council and shall include the leader of the County Council Group
 - c. One (1) representative from the Liberal Democrat group on each other principal council
 - d. Liberal Democrat MPs, MEPs (or their representatives) and prospective parliamentary candidates in Essex.
- 4.2 Each local party and council group will notify the Secretary of EC3 of the names and contact details, and of any changes. In the absence of such, these shall be deemed to be the
- a. Chair and Secretary of the Local Party
 - b. Leader of the Liberal Democrat District Council group.
- 4.3 When a representative under 4.1 is elected as an officer of EC3, the nominating body shall be able to elect an additional representative. An officer of EC3 who is not an elected representative shall nonetheless be a voting member."
- 4.4 EC3 may co-opt up to six (6) additional members, for such terms as it thinks fit, though such terms may not extend beyond the next set of annual elections of officers, unless renewed by EC3 at that stage. The power of co-option shall be used, inter alia, to ensure that there is fair representation of underrepresented communities in the County, taking into account race, religion, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation and that this would create a composition of the committee that reflects the community within the County.

5. Officers and Committees

- 5.1 The Officers of the committee shall be the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Their duties shall be:
- a. The Chair - to chair all committee meetings, lead the organisation and carry out tasks when asked by EC3.
 - b. Vice-Chair - to deputise for the Chair in his/her absence and carry out his/her functions. To assist the Chair in the smooth working of the Co-ordinating Committee.
 - c. The Secretary - to handle the committee's correspondence; to maintain minutes of meetings; to act as Returning Officer for elections (unless a candidate in which case the Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer shall act as Returning Officer, or if they are a candidate any other committee member acceptable to a majority of those present).
 - d. The Treasurer - to handle the committee's financial business, in liaison with the county council group; to present interim accounts at all meetings and audited accounts (accounts independently inspected) to the Annual Meeting of EC3. To manage the financial business of EC3 in accordance with the provisions of this constitution and the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
- 5.2 Upon election the names and contact details of all officers shall be notified to the Regional Party.
- 5.3 The four officers shall form a Standing Committee to deal with urgent business between meetings of EC3. Such meetings may be in person, by phone or by email but any decision will need 3 officers in favour. All such decisions to be reported to local party chairs and group leaders and to EC3 members as soon as appropriate and, at the latest, at the next meeting.
- 5.4 EC3 may appoint sub-committees for any specified purpose. No sub-committee or committee member may take action on behalf of EC3 beyond their terms of appointment. All sub-committees shall report on their activities to EC3 and may include persons who are not members of EC3.
- 5.5 EC3 may appoint an organiser or organisers on such terms as are consistent with the party constitution. Anyone undertaking paid work for EC3 or a council group within Essex may *not* simultaneously hold any Officer's post.

6. Elections of Officers

- 6.1 Officers are elected by members of EC3 at the AGM which is normally to be held in October or November each year and always within 15 months of the previous AGM.
- 6.2 Officers shall hold office from 1 January of the year following their election, or if the AGM takes place in the first half of the year, immediately. The maximum period of continuous office for the Chair is three years.
- The Chair may not be Leader of the County Council group or Chair of the Regional Party.
- 6.3 Nominations for election shall be invited in the notice summoning the relevant EC3 meeting by dated email or letter which shall bear a postmark at least 14 days prior to the meeting. Unless an election receives no nominations, nominations shall be closed at the start of the meeting.

- 6.4 Persons nominated as officers of EC3 must be members of the party, but need not at the time of their nomination be nominated representatives to EC3.
- 6.5 Nominations must be proposed and seconded by members of EC3 and, excepting nominations made at the meeting, shall be in writing signed by the proposer, seconder and candidate, all of whom will be different people and none of whom shall be a proposer or seconder for a different candidate for the same post. A candidate may not sign a rival candidate's nomination papers.
- 6.6 All contested elections under this constitution shall be by secret ballot by Single Transferable Vote (STV) in accordance with election rules within the party constitution.
- 6.7 The Secretary will act, subject to the provisions set out in 5.1(c), as the returning officer responsible for the receipt of nominations, the preparation and distribution of ballot papers, their counting and the declaration of the results.
- 6.8 EC3 may fill any casual vacancies occurring amongst officers.

7. Meetings

- 7.1 All committee members can vote; other party members will be welcome to attend and speak on invitation from the Chair but may not vote.
- 7.2 Meetings may be convened by the Officers, and shall, on receipt of a requisition signed by at least eight members of EC3, be convened by the Secretary within twenty-eight (28) days of the receipt of such requisition. At least seven (7) days' notice shall be given to all members. In an emergency, the Officers may convene a meeting giving such notice as they consider sufficient in the circumstances. E-mail is accepted as a valid means of communication.
- 7.3 Eight (8) members shall form a quorum at any meeting. A meeting may continue without a quorum if no member present objects, but any decisions are not binding on the organisation until and unless ratified by a subsequent quorate meeting.
- 7.4 Minutes shall be maintained of all proceedings of meetings. In the absence of an EC3 member charged with the duty, the meeting shall appoint a member to take the minutes. The minutes will be copied to the Regional Secretary.
- 7.5 EC3 can at any time request a report from the County Council Group, such report should be received within six weeks.
- 7.6 The Chair does not have a casting vote. A tied vote shall be deemed to be a negative vote.
- 7.7 The programme of meetings for the year, including the date of the next AGM, will be set at the AGM. Officers may not cancel agreed meetings without reasonable consultation, but may reschedule them, or call additional meetings as in 7.2 above.
- 7.8 At least two meetings, excluding the AGM, shall be held in any calendar year.

8. County Council and any publicly-elected countywide positions

- 8.1 In consultation with the relevant local parties, EC3 shall seek to ensure that all seats on the County Council are contested by members of the party, unless the local party is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the party not to do so.

- 8.2 EC3 shall carry out the co-ordination necessary for the approval and selection of candidates for the county council as set out in the party constitution.
- 8.3 The selection of candidates for county-wide positions such as Police, Crime and Fire Commissioner shall be conducted by a shortlisting panel appointed by EC3 and be conducted in conjunction with the Returning Officer appointed by the Regional Party and in keeping with the Party's Large Constituency Rules.

9. County Conference

- 9.1 EC3 may call a county conference. Such a conference may:
- a. debate motions on matters as they affect Essex
 - b. debate and approve the contents of any manifesto for elections to the County Council
 - c. perform any other such functions as EC3 may determine.
- 9.2 The Conference shall be open to all members of the Liberal Democrats in Essex.
- 9.3 Thirty (30) party members in Essex (being members of at least three (3) local parties) may requisition a Conference to take place within three months of the requisition.
- 9.4 Motions may be proposed by
- a. EC3
 - b. a council group
 - c. a local party
 - d. any ten party members resident within Essex
- 9.5 EC3 may delegate to the officers or form a subcommittee for the purpose of reviewing, suggesting clarifying changes to and if necessary deleting motions submitted and setting a deadline for receipt of non-urgent motions. Any such actions shall be reported in full to the Conference.

10. Finance

- 10.1 EC3's accounting period shall be annual, ending on 31 December each year.
- 10.2 The Treasurer shall keep, and maintain for six years, and pass to his/her successor, records which shall be available for inspection in accordance with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA).
- 10.4 The Treasurer shall annually produce accounts, which shall be approved by the officers.
- 10.5 The Treasurer shall submit the accounts to the AGM.
- 10.6 A copy shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Regional Party.
- 10.7 EC3 shall maintain a bank account for which the mandate for withdrawal shall require the signature of at least two (2) members, who shall not come solely from members of one family. EC3 may maintain accounts for the deposit of money not required for the time being, requiring the same signatures.
- 10.8 EC3 may raise money from local parties and/or council groups, the amount to be determined by EC3 in consultation with local parties and/or council groups.
- 10.9 EC3 is empowered to undertake additional fund-raising as it thinks fit.

10.10 EC3 will, guided by the Treasurer, develop and review annually a set of financial standing orders which, on agreement by EC3, shall form an Annex to this constitution.

11. Constitution and Interpretation

11.1 Amendments to this constitution may be made by a two thirds majority at a meeting of EC3.

11.2 Details of any proposed amendments shall be sent to all members with the notice of the meeting. The deadline for any such proposed amendments shall be thus seven (7) days prior to the latest date of notice of a meeting.

11.3 No amendment shall be valid until it has been agreed by the Regional Party Executive or such other body of the Regional Party as has been authorised to approve amendments.

11.4 One copy of the constitution shall be deposited with the Secretary to the Regional Party, and one shall be kept with the minute book of EC3. Any member shall be provided with a copy of the constitution on request.

11.5 In the event of any question of interpretation arising or any question on which this constitution is silent, EC3 shall have power to act according to its interpretation of the constitution. An interpretation of this constitution shall be passed by a simple majority of EC3.

11.6 No word or construction in this constitution shall be taken to imply any discrimination whatsoever in any context other than political belief, practice and competence.

11.7 In the event of the dissolution of EC3, the assets of EC3 shall vest in the Regional Party on trust for the future reconstitution of EC3, unless explicitly provided otherwise by a meeting in the event of a dissolution pursuant upon boundary changes and subject to the agreement of the Regional Party.

11.8 Any dissolution of EC3 shall be subject to the rules laid out in the Regional Party constitution.

Adopted on 15 November 2018, amended on 10 November 2020