

CONSTITUTION OF THE INDEPENDENT OXFORD ALLIANCE

Preamble:

The **Independent Oxford Alliance** has been established as a political grouping, defined here for the purpose of registration under the Act (as defined below) as a party, by a diverse group of Oxford residents, disillusioned with the behaviour and actions of Councillors for the local branches of national political parties, to act in the interests of the residents and businesses of Oxford and surrounding area. The Independent Oxford Alliance will act independently of the local and national policies and agendas of the said national political parties.

The **Independent Oxford Alliance** sees several policies pursued by City and County Councils as detrimental to the normal legitimate lives of residents and inimical to businesses, especially in difficult times, and aims to elect its own Councillors to reverse or amend these policies.

The group holds a limited core set of values and policies to which all candidates adhere, but, outside these, candidates are free to pursue the issues most relevant to their particular wards in City, District Council or County Council elections.

1. NAME

The name of the body governed by this Constitution shall be the *Independent Oxford Alliance*

2. DEFINITIONS

In this Constitution:

- (a) "the Party" means the **Independent Oxford Alliance**.
- (b) "the Party's Constitution" means the constitution of the **Independent Oxford Alliance**.
- (c) "The Party's area" means the area within the administrative boundary of the County of Oxfordshire.
- (d) A "General Meeting", which may be Annual or Extraordinary, is a meeting called of all members of the Party.
- (e) "The Party year" is the period between two consecutive Annual General Meetings.
- (f) "majority" at any meeting means a majority of eligible voters present and voting.
- (g) The "Executive Committee" means the committee elected at a General Meeting of the **Independent Oxford Alliance** to manage the Party as specified in paragraph 5.1 and its clauses.
- (h) "Committee" means the Executive Committee of the **Independent Oxford Alliance**.
- (i) A "Primary Officer" is one of the three officers that the Party is required to appoint in order to be registered as a political party by the Electoral Commission, as defined in clause 5.1.1 below.
- (j) An "Office Bearer" or "Officer" is any person appointed by the Executive Committee to a named office to carry out a particular task on behalf of the Party.
- (k) "the Act" means the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, and any statutory amendment or re-enactment of that Act.

3. OBJECTS

The objects of the **Independent Oxford Alliance** are to comply with all the requirements of a Party under the Act, and also to promote and support the interests and policies of the Party in the Party area, and in particular through its members to:

- (a) Secure the election of members of the Party to public office in the Party area;
- (b) Recruit new members to the Party, and encourage existing members to renew their membership;
- (c) Formulate Party policy;
- (d) Campaign and work with local people to achieve the objectives set out in the preamble to the Party Constitution;
- (e) Help local people, within our political capacity, without regard to party or any other factor, to secure their rights and to protect them against oppression; and
- (f) Raise funds to undertake such activities as prove necessary to fulfil these objects.

4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Any person shall be eligible to join the Party who:

- (a) supports the values and principles of the Party;
- (b) lives, works or studies in the Party area or, at the Executive Committee's discretion, is otherwise connected with it;
- (c) is not a member of another political party, or if so (e.g. in relation to a preference in national elections) must declare such membership and undertake not to support or campaign for that other party except in elections in which the **Independent Oxford Alliance** is not involved.

4.2 Membership conditions

- (a) An applicant shall become a member on payment of the requisite subscription and registration on the register kept by the Party.
- (b) Initial membership shall run for one year from the quarter day (the last day of March, June, September or December) following the date of joining.
- (c) Members shall receive notices of meetings and elections for 3 months after the subscription renewal date and, if the subscription is still unpaid, shall then cease to be members. Membership shall be restored if the arrears of subscription are paid within the year to which the subscription relates.
- (d) Additionally, a special category exists of Founder Members, consisting solely of those on the email list of the founding group on 3 November 2023, with certain additional rights, but otherwise subject to the same conditions as ordinary members.

4.3 The Executive Committee shall appoint an officer to:

- (a) receive all notices of application for membership and refer them to the Executive Committee for acceptance;

- (b) maintain a membership register and provide Branch officers (if any), election candidates and their agents with lists of members as necessary under this Constitution;
- (c) make available to the Executive Committee or appointed agent of the Party all names which are or ought to be included in the Party's register;
- (d) ensure compliance with all applicable data protection legislation; and
- (e) ensure that the list is used solely for Party purposes and is not disclosed to any unauthorised person or third party.

4.4 The Executive Committee may refuse membership to, or terminate the membership of, any person, on the grounds set out below. Any person whose membership is refused or revoked shall have the right to appeal to a General Meeting of the Party, and shall be informed of this and any further rights of appeal.

Grounds for refusal or termination of membership:

- (a) Standing or campaigning against a candidate of the Party in an election;
- (b) Publicly opposing the core policies and/or values of the Party in the press or other media platform;
- (c) Using racist, sexist or any other discriminatory language in a Party meeting or in a public arena, or bullying or harassing anyone for any reason.
- (d) Engaging in any conduct which brings, or is likely to bring, the Party into disrepute.

4.5 A member of the Party who ceases to be eligible under section **4.1(b)** may retain membership of the Party with the consent of the Committee.

5. OFFICE BEARERS AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

5.1 The general business of the Party shall be managed by an Executive Committee, all of whom must be paid-up members of the Party, and thus support its aims and values. This Committee shall consist of nine members elected at a general meeting, normally the Annual General Meeting (AGM), from which shall be selected by the committee from amongst the elected members:

5.1.1 Three primary officers:

- (a) the **Convener or Chair** [styled 'Leader' for the purpose of the requirements of the registration procedure]
- (b) the **Secretary** [styled 'Nominations Officer' for the purpose of the requirements of the registration procedure]
- (c) the **Treasurer**

and may additionally be appointed by the Executive Committee from within its membership:

- (d) the **Vice-Chair**
who may or may not be the same individual as one or other of the three primary

officers, but if not must be drawn from the remaining 6 elected members as defined in 5.1.2.

These Office Bearers shall have responsibility for carrying out or delegating tasks contained in the Schedule to this Constitution. The Schedule may be amended either by a simple majority of members of the Party voting at a quorate General Meeting on a resolution duly proposed, or by the Executive Committee (but only if acting with delegated authority previously granted by a General Meeting). In any case of doubt the responsibilities shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

The Treasurer shall be the registered treasurer of the Party. The Convener shall carry out the functions of the registered treasurer of the Party in the absence of the Treasurer.

- 5.1.2** In addition to the Primary Officers there remain 6 elected members, some or all of whom may also be candidates for election for the Party, or elected Councillors for the Party.
- 5.1.3** Elected members of the Executive Committee shall serve for three years, retiring by rotation in threes at each AGM, excepting that at the inception of the Party, three shall retire after one year, and another three after two years, in order to initiate the rotation cycle. Retiring members shall be eligible for re-election. In the interests of continuity, each of the three Principal Officers shall retire in rotation in different years.
- 5.1.4** If the Executive Committee so decides, not more than 2 member(s) of the Party may be co-opted to the Committee for a term expiring not later than the next annual general meeting.

- 5.2** If not themselves members of the Executive Committee, Founder Members, Officers appointed under clause 5.3.2., candidates for election to principal local authorities and Councillors representing principal local authority electoral areas within the Party area who are members of the Party shall be entitled to attend and speak at meetings of the Committee, but not to vote. A principal local authority Councillor is a Councillor for wards on the City and/or County Councils, but not Parish Councils.

- 5.3.** Additional office bearers:
 - 5.3.1** The Executive Committee may appoint such additional Office Bearers as they shall consider necessary from among the members of the Committee. An Honorary President, who need not be a member of the Executive Committee, may be appointed.
 - 5.3.2** In addition the Executive Committee may appoint from among the Party membership within or outside the Executive such other named Officers as the Executive Committee shall consider necessary. Such appointments may include, for example, a Campaigns Officer, a Press Officer, a Focus Group Officer or such other responsibilities as may be decided by the Executive Committee. These appointed Office Bearers shall have responsibility for the particular tasks or responsibilities for which they were appointed.
- 5.4** The Secretary shall notify all Executive Committee members of the names and addresses of all Office Bearers and other committee members within seven days of their election or appointment.

- 5.5 The Executive Committee may fill any vacancy occurring among the Primary Officers from the remaining elected members, or by co-option a vacancy among the ordinary members of the Committee. Any such replacement Officer or Committee member shall continue in post only until the next AGM, but shall then be eligible for election to the Committee.
- 5.6 The Executive Committee may assign special responsibilities, except those required by the Act to be undertaken by the Convener or the Treasurer, to any of its members including duties which would otherwise pertain to one of the Primary Officers.
- 5.7 The Executive Committee shall generally meet monthly, or more frequently if required, but in any case, not less than four times a year and at least once every quarter. The Secretary shall give at least seven days' notice of meetings to all members of the Committee. Five members, or one half plus one, of its members (whichever is the larger) shall form a quorum. Minutes shall be maintained of all meetings of the Committee.
- 5.8 The Executive Committee may appoint sub-committees for any specified purpose, which may include Party members who are not members of the Committee, but shall include at least one member of the Committee. No sub-committee or committee member may take action on behalf of the Committee beyond their terms of appointment. Each sub-committee shall appoint a Representative, who must be a voting member of the Executive Committee, who shall be responsible for reporting their activities to the Executive Committee, in writing or in person at a minuted meeting.
- 5.9 In urgent circumstances the Primary Officers may act on behalf of the Executive Committee. They shall report on such actions immediately by email to all members of the Committee and they shall be minuted at the next meeting of the Committee.

6. PARTY ELECTIONS and terms of office:

- 6.1 The non-co-opted Executive Committee members shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting (the AGM), by rotation as provided for in 5.1.3, and, except as provided in section 6.4, in a secret ballot of members of the Party present, provided that all members of the Party shall be advised in the notice of intimation of the meeting that they may request a proxy to vote on their behalf.
- 6.1.1 The Office Bearers shall be chosen or confirmed by and from the newly elected Executive Committee at its first meeting following the AGM.
- 6.1.2 The term of office of all members of the Executive Committee, including the Primary Officers, elected at an AGM, that is those who are new or who have retired by rotation and been re-elected, shall run from the first Committee meeting after that AGM for 3 years and until the first Committee meeting after the last AGM in their prescribed period of office. Any Committee member who has replaced a predecessor under clause 5.5 between AGMs shall retire and be re-elected or replaced at the first AGM following appointment, and shall remain in post until the first Committee meeting after that AGM.
- 6.2 Nominations for election shall be invited by email or post to all members of the Party not less than ten days before the closing date for nominations which shall be not less than twenty-one days before the AGM.

- 6.3 Nominations shall be made in writing on paper and signed by the proposer, seconder and candidate.
- 6.4 Where internal elections are contested, ballot papers shall be posted or otherwise delivered to the members of the Party requesting a postal ballot not less than fourteen days before the AGM (or on receipt of the member's application for a postal ballot if later) and must be returned to the Returning Officer before or at the AGM.
- 6.5 All contested elections under this Constitution shall be by secret ballot by the Single Transferable Vote method.
- 6.7 The Secretary shall be responsible for the receipt of nominations. The Executive Committee shall appoint the Secretary or some disinterested person to act as Returning Officer. The Returning Officer shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of any ballot papers, their receipt and counting on return, and the declaration of the results.
- 6.8 An unsuccessful candidate who alleges that there has been or may have been an irregularity in the election may, within one month after the declaration of the result, appeal to the Executive Committee with details of the complaint.
- 6.9 If, by the due date, there are fewer nominations for elected members than there are places to be filled, further nominations may, at the discretion of the AGM, be called for from the floor, and made, for the vacant positions at the meeting. If there are more such candidates than there are remaining places on the Committee, an election between these candidates shall take place at the meeting in such manner as the meeting shall decide.
- 6.10 Appointed Officers as specified in clauses 5.1.1 (the Vice-Chair) and 5.3.2 may be appointed either for fixed terms within the Party year or until the next AGM. All shall retire at the said AGM, but shall be eligible for re-appointment by the Executive Committee, unless a motion is proposed and passed at the said AGM withdrawing the eligibility of one or all such appointees.
- 6.11 The Honorary President, if such is appointed by the Executive Committee under clause 5.3.1, is subject to a vote at the next AGM to confirm this person in office. If rejected by this vote the individual becomes ineligible for re-appointment, unless a motion to overturn this ineligibility is proposed and passed at a future General Meeting.

7. GENERAL MEETINGS

- 7.1 There shall be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) on a day appointed by the Executive Committee to fall in the first half of October each year, and such other General Meetings as are required by this Constitution. The Executive Committee may postpone the AGM if it would conflict with a Local or Parliamentary Election in any Ward or Constituency within the Party area, or for some other urgent reason. If an AGM is not held within a month of the anniversary of the previous AGM the existing Committee and Officers shall continue in place until an AGM is held, but in no case shall the delay exceed three months.
- 7.2 The business of the AGM shall be to:
 - (a) receive a report on the activities of the Party and the Executive Committee since the previous AGM;

- (b) elect an Executive Committee to manage the affairs of the Party;
- (c) consider and, if thought fit, approve the accounts, audited if required, of the Party for the previous financial year in a form required by the Act, and receive a report from the Treasurer;
- (d) appoint Auditor(s) for the current financial year if financial circumstances require it under the Act;
- (f) transact any other business specified by the Constitution, or directed by the Executive Committee;
- (g) consider any motion which has been properly submitted by any member of the Party to the Secretary in time for circulation with the notice of the AGM; and

7.3 The AGM may by a two-thirds majority agree to consider urgent or important business which has arisen since notice of the AGM was given.

7.4 The Secretary shall post or otherwise deliver to all members at least 31 days written notice of the date, time and place of the AGM. Such notice shall specify all business to be conducted at the meeting (except as provided in 7.3).

7.5 A Special General Meeting (SGM) shall be convened by the Secretary:

- (a) by order of the Executive Committee;
- (b) on receipt of a requisition signed by at least twenty members (or one fifth of the membership if less).

7.5.1. An SGM requisitioned by members shall be held within 28 days from the receipt of the requisition.

7.5.2. At least 14 days notice of the date, time and place of all SGM shall be given to all members. An SGM shall only consider the business stated in the notice convening it. In an emergency the Convener, or in his or her absence the officer deputising, may call an SGM giving such notice as is practicable in the circumstances.

7.6 The minimum quorum at any General Meeting shall be 25 members, or 50 members if the total membership is 500 or over. A quorum is not required to receive reports.

7.7 Minutes shall be maintained of all proceedings of General Meetings.

8. LOCAL BRANCHES

8.1 The Executive Committee of the Party may authorise the setting up of Branches covering all members of the Party in defined areas within the Party area. Branches can be formal or informal (ad hoc). The objects of a Branch shall be to further the objects of the Party in the area covered by the Branch. The Branch shall be subject to the ultimate authority of the Party.

8.2 A Branch shall not be entitled to require a subscription from its members, but the Executive Committee of the Party may agree to remit part of its subscription income to a Branch. A Branch shall not incur any unauthorised debts for which the Party shall be responsible.

8.3 Each formal Branch shall be governed by a constitution based on the Party constitution which shall provide for:

- (a) a Branch Committee which shall include officers and ordinary members, and may include ex-officio and co-opted members;
- (b) rules for election of officers and ordinary members of the Branch Committee and of representative(s) to the Executive Committee of the Party;
- (c) rules for the calling and conduct of an Annual General Meeting and other General Meetings of the Branch members;
- (d) the names and addresses of the Branch Officers, Branch Committee members and Branch representatives to the Committee of the Party, and minutes of Branch general and Branch Committee meetings, to be supplied to the Secretary of the Party; and
- (e) accounts to be kept in a form required by the Act, and supplied to the Treasurer of the Party;

The rules referred to in subsections (a)-(c) shall be adapted as necessary from the equivalent section of this Constitution. The Branch Constitution, or any changes to it, shall not take effect until the Committee of the Party accepts its conformity with this Constitution.

8.4 The Branch may appoint a representative to the Executive Committee of the Party to attend Committee meetings, but not to vote, unless that person is already an elected member of the Committee.

8.5 A Branch may dissolve itself by a two-thirds majority at a general meeting, or be dissolved by the Executive Committee of the Party on the grounds that;

- (a) it is no longer functioning or able to hold such a meeting; or
- (b) that there have been serious irregularities in the conduct of the affairs of the Branch; or
- (c) that the affairs of the Branch are being conducted in a manner contrary to the interests of the Party as a whole.

The Party shall not dissolve a Branch until the Branch has been given an opportunity to hold its own General Meeting.

8.6 The funds of a Branch shall, upon dissolution, be applied in paying its debts, and any surplus shall be added to the funds of the Party.

9. CANDIDATES FOR AND ELECTIONS TO PUBLIC OFFICE

9.1 The Executive Committee shall seek to ensure that as many seats as possible within the Party area on principal local authorities are contested by members of the Party, unless the Committee is satisfied that it is in the best interests of the Party not to do so.

- 9.2** In an electoral area in which there is a formal Branch the selection of local government candidates shall take place at a General Meeting of members who are resident in the electoral area concerned, and which may select any person from a list of approved candidates maintained by the Executive Committee of the Party, or may select any other member conditional upon subsequent approval by the Executive Committee. Eligible members unable to attend the meeting shall be able to vote by post or proxy. The timetable and procedure for selection shall be agreed in advance by the Branch and the Executive Committee of the Party.
- 9.3** In an electoral area where no Branch exists, and no local member has volunteered to stand, a local government candidate may be recommended by the Executive Committee to a meeting of members resident in the electoral area; any volunteer willing to stand must nevertheless be approved by the Committee. If there are less than 5 members in the electoral area, the selection shall be made by members in a group of electoral areas (which may be the whole Party area) as the Executive Committee shall decide.
- 9.4** In any case in which time does not permit the calling of a meeting, the Branch Committee or (where no Branch exists) the Executive Committee of the Party may select the candidate.
- 9.5** Where possible a candidate for a local government seat shall live within the ward being contested or in an adjacent ward, such that they will be fully familiar with the issues within that ward. Where no such candidate can be found the Executive Committee can choose a candidate from elsewhere or decide not to contest that ward.
- 9.6** Candidates for a local government seat shall be expected to contribute 50% of their electoral expenses from their own resources, and to be able to demonstrate (to the Executive Committee or a delegated sub-committee) their ability to do so. This is to discourage frivolous and less than fully committed persons from offering themselves as election candidates for the Party. In exceptional circumstances this requirement may be waived by the Executive Committee on full disclosure and discussion of the circumstances. For the avoidance of doubt, an electoral expense is expenditure by or on behalf of a candidate during the official period of, and for the purpose of, electoral campaigning.
- 9.7** When a parliamentary election occurs which the Executive Committee wishes to contest, a General Meeting (or, in a case of urgency, the Committee) shall vest such power to act on its behalf in an Agent as necessary for the conduct of the Election and make such other resolution with regard to the activities of the Party as may be necessary.
- 9.8** Any member of the Party who contests any public election in opposition to a properly nominated candidate of the Party shall be suspended immediately from membership of the Party. The Secretary of the Party shall notify the Executive Committee of the circumstances to enable the Committee to consider the question of the member's expulsion from the Party.

10. FINANCE

- 10.1** The Party's financial year shall end on 30 June, i.e. a full two months before the expected date of the next AGM.

- 10.2 The Treasurer shall cause accounts in a form required by the Act to be prepared, and laid before the AGM for approval, following the close of the financial year.
- 10.3 The Treasurer shall, in each quarter, prepare a donation report for the Electoral Commission in a form required by the Act.
- 10.4 The Party shall maintain one or more bank accounts for which the mandate for withdrawal shall require the signature of at least two Primary Officers, or a Primary Officer and the Vice-Chair.

11. CONSTITUTION AND INTERPRETATION

- 11.1 Amendments to this Constitution may be made by a two-thirds majority at a quorate General Meeting, save that the structure of an Executive Committee with three Primary Officers as provided in Section 5.1 must be retained. No amendment shall be made which conflicts with the requirements of a party under the Act.
- 11.2 Details of any proposed amendment shall be sent to all members with the notice of the General Meeting.
- 11.3 Copies of the Constitution shall be deposited with the Convenor/Chair of the Party, and one shall be kept with the minute book of the Party. Any member of the Party shall be provided with a copy of the Constitution on request. Notice of any amendment that has been passed shall be similarly deposited.
- 11.4 In the event of any question of interpretation arising, or any question on which this Constitution is silent, the Committee shall have power to act according to its interpretation of the Constitution, or at its discretion, but this provision shall not authorise any act or omission which conflicts with the requirements under the Act.
- 11.5 No word or construction in this Constitution shall be taken to imply any discrimination whatsoever with regard to age, disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status or any other grounds.
- 11.6 In the event of the dissolution of the Party its assets shall vest in an escrow account on trust for the future reconstitution of the Party, unless explicitly provided otherwise by a General Meeting in the event of dissolution pursuant upon boundary changes or the merger of the Party with one or more other Parties.

Schedule to the Party Constitution

The Primary Officers shall have responsibility for carrying out or delegating the tasks contained in this Schedule to the Constitution. The Schedule may be amended either by a simple majority of members voting at a quorate General meeting on a resolution duly proposed, or by the Committee (but only if acting with delegated authority previously granted by a General Meeting). In any case of doubt the responsibilities shall be determined by the Committee.

- (a)** chairing general meetings and meetings of the Committee;
- (b)** the co-ordination of the activity of the Party;
- (c)** dealing with the correspondence of the Party;
- (d)** sending regular newsletters to the members of the Party;
- (e)** keeping records of general meetings and Committee meetings;
- (f)** the recruitment of new members;
- (g)** the maintenance of the membership list;
- (h)** the receipt, management and disbursement of funds;
- (i)** fundraising;
- (j)** complying with all the requirements of an accounting unit under the Act (i.e. the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, and any statutory amendment or re-enactment of that Act);
- (k)** co-ordinating the campaigning activity of the Party between election periods;
- (l)** co-ordinating election campaigns;
- (m)** reasonably ensuring that the print, broadcast and social media are informed of the campaigning activity of the Party;
- (n)** promoting the discussion of policy;
- (o)** organising social events for the members.