



Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party Constitution

Last updated 30/5/2024

1 – Name and definitions

1.1 The name of the party shall be Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party, hereafter referred to as “B&CGP”, “the party” or “the local party”.

1.2 B&CGP is a constituent part of the Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW), and also forms part of the Eastern Regional Green Party (“the regional party”)

1.3 The boundaries of B&CGP are defined as: Brentwood Borough Council and Chelmsford City Council local government areas.

1.4 The term “Executive Committee” or “Executive” shall describe the group of elected local party officers that shall form to make decisions on behalf of the wider party and take responsibility for the day-to-day running of it.

1.5 The term “members” shall describe current members of B&CGP only, as defined in section 3. It does not include members deemed to be ‘in grace’ by the membership system.

1.6 The “AGM” is the Annual General Meeting of the party, where key decisions as defined by this document, such as executive committee elections, shall be made. The “EGM” or Emergency General Meeting is a similar meeting called specifically to make such decisions usually reserved for an AGM where time does not permit waiting for that annual meeting.

2 – Aims

2.1 To promote the aims of GPEW as stated in its constitution.

2.2 To win seats at all levels of government following agreed local and GPEW strategies and in consultation with GPEW staff.

3 – Membership

3.1 The membership of B&CGP shall consist of all the members of GPEW living within the boundaries of B&CGP.

3.2 Members may not be a member of any other political party within the boundaries of England and Wales and must abide by other membership rules as laid out in the GPEW constitution including the Code of Conduct.

4 – Disputes

4.1 The party will seek to resolve any disputes between members through discussion and conciliation. If the matter cannot be resolved within the local party, it should be escalated first to the regional disputes resolution committee. If they cannot resolve the issue the next step should be to consult the Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADRC) of the Green Party of England & Wales.

<https://members.greenparty.org.uk/constitution-drc>

4.2 The party has the right and responsibility to take disciplinary action (including suspension from specific party activities, de-selection as candidate, or expulsion from the local party) against any member who has acted against its aims, agreed policies or code of conduct, or brought it into disrepute. Disciplinary action must be taken on the basis of clearly defined evidence and must be proportionate to the actions of the member or members in question.

4.3 Where it is not possible to resolve the situation, a vote may be taken to exclude that member from the local party and from attending local party meetings. Such a vote shall be taken at a special meeting of the Executive Committee.

5 – Officers and Executive Committees

5.1 B&CGP should have a minimum of four and a maximum of twelve elected officers, who will form the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall make all decisions on behalf of the party that are not otherwise reserved by this constitution, and hold Executive Committee meetings on any timetable deemed appropriate by the Executive Committee.

5.2 The elected officers must include a Treasurer and Chair (or 'Coordinator'). These two roles are required under the The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) and must be held by two different individuals.

5.2(i) The Treasurer has the legal obligation under PERA to maintain proper accounts for the party, including financial tracking, signing-off on expenditure, and reporting back to the Executive Committee and membership. They are also responsible for ensuring the local party is compliant with GPEW financial reporting rules, including the quarterly return, and with all relevant legislation. They shall keep thorough records of all income and expenditure and are responsible for the creation and updating of the local party's budget. As part of their role, they shall work with the party's Election Agent(s) to ensure accurate reporting of election expenses. Where there is no Fundraising Coordinator, the Treasurer is responsible for income generation plans.

5.2(ii) The Chair is the party's second officer under PPERA and is responsible for the smooth running of the party, including the Executive Committee itself. They shall be the first point of contact for both GPEW and for members (where no membership officer exists) and shall be responsible for providing an account of the party's activities to both.

5.2(iii) Any other executive roles may be agreed by the Executive Committee ahead of the AGM or an EGM where confirming a co-opted officer.

5.3 B&CGP may also have any number of non-executive roles, who do not have a vote on the Executive Committee but who may be assigned tasks delegated by the executive, and may attend Executive meetings. However, the responsibility of the actions of B&CGP remains with the Executive or Executive Officers who have assigned such tasks.

5.4 The following roles must exist, and may be either executive or non-executive positions according to the needs of the local party under 5.2(iii) and 5.3: a secretary, bank signatories, a local party contact whose telephone number can be given to members of the public, nominating officer(s), a holder of Register Authority, a Data Officer, and at election time, an election agent or agent(s).

5.5 In accordance with the GPEW constitution, the people appointed to executive and non-executive officer roles need not be members of the party of which they are officials. In some cases, members of adjacent local parties, the regional party or other GPEW members may do some of the jobs for B&CGP.

5.6 The Executive have collective responsibility for the coordination of the day-to-day running of B&CGP. It is their responsibility to ensure that details of decisions taken, and activities participated in are transparent and clearly communicated to the membership.

5.7 Executive officers shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting. Aside from the posts of Chair and Treasurer which must be held by two different individuals under PPERA, members may be elected to multiple executive officer roles. Job-sharing of officer roles is permitted.

5.8 Executive officers may be co-opted by the Executive Committee where vacancies arise. They shall be non-voting until elected by the membership at an AGM or EGM.

5.9 Non-executive officers shall be appointed by the Executive Committee subject to a 2/3 majority of the Committee being in favour.

5.10 Executive and non-executive officers may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of a local party members' meeting.

6 - Meetings

6.1 There will be members meetings open to all members, scheduled on a frequency agreed by the Executive. These meetings shall allow, if required, scrutiny of decisions made by the executive committee including the possibility of a vote to call an EGM. The meeting will also cover any other relevant business.

6.2 Members may attend in person or if reasonably practical, remotely by electronic communication.

6.3 Motions and other business will be dealt with in accordance with any standing orders that may be in place.

6.4 Only current members of the party will be entitled to vote. Those unable to attend may make their views known to the meeting, either in writing or through representation by another member, but only those in attendance in person or virtually will be entitled to vote. The chair(s) who is/are chairing at the time of the vote should not vote unless the vote is tied in which case, they have the casting vote.

6.5 The members meeting will be deemed to be in quorum if there are more than 10% of current members in attendance or 10 members, whichever is the lower, including at least 50% of the executive committee.

6.6 Attendance and business conducted at meetings shall be recorded in minutes produced by the secretary to be approved by the next meeting.

6.7 The chair/co-chairs shall be responsible for conducting meetings in accordance with this constitution, including preparing the agenda, conducting the meeting in accordance with any standing orders that apply, and for ensuring that the minutes are presented to the next meeting for approval.

6.8 The draft agenda and minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated in advance of each meeting to all members, excluding any who indicate they wish not to be notified. Ideally there will be at least one week's notice. Anyone can suggest additional items for the agenda up until 48hrs before the meeting start.

6.9 Exclusion of members from discussion or voting on an item, or for the rest of the meeting, is at the chairs' discretion where required.

7. Annual General Meetings

7.1 The party's financial year will be the calendar year, or whatever financial year period is in use by GPEW. Following the close of each year, an Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be held for the purposes of:

- (a) Presentation of a report of work which has been carried out during the previous year
- (b) Presentation of a financial statement for the previous year
- (c) Election of the Executive Committee
- (d) Reviewing strategy and setting goals for the present year and beyond.
- (e) Any other business on the agenda, determined in the same way as for a members meeting.

7.2 Notice of the AGM shall be given at least one month prior to the meeting in writing.

7.3 The Agenda will be circulated in advance at least one week prior to the meeting and any motions for consideration shall be submitted in writing to the Chair at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

7.4 The agenda shall contain, as a minimum, the annual reports of outgoing Executive Officers, time for questions on these, and the election of new Executive Officers. It may also include constitutional amendments, motions and any other item deemed necessary.

7.5 The Chair(s) for the AGM shall be the outgoing Chair, or appointed by the AGM as the first item of meeting business.

7.6 All members of the party who are present have one vote each, and resolutions other than constitutional changes must have the support of a simple majority.

7.7 The Chair(s) has/have the right to rule on the admissibility of any emergency motions put forward later than the deadline to submit motions.

7.8 The quorum of an AGM shall be 10, or 10% of members of the party (whichever is the smaller).

7.9 Following the election of officers at an AGM, it is the duty of the Chair to inform GPEW of all officer changes within 28 days.

7.10 An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) on a particular agenda may be called on the request of the members meeting or the Executive Committee. EGMs shall be run in the same way as an AGM.

7.11 Where an AGM has not been held for 18 months, all officer roles will be deemed to have expired and any member of the party may call an AGM by request to the regional party.

8 – Finances

8.1 The Treasurer has the legal obligation under the PPERA to maintain proper accounts for the local party. They must record all donations and loans received and submit to The Green Party of England & Wales quarterly reports of donations, loans, copies of annual accounts and any other information required under current legislation, within the time period specified by GPEW, in order to avoid fines by the Electoral Commission to GPEW for late filing. In particular, the Treasurer must identify and report donations and loans above the current limit under PPERA.

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/political-party-donations-and-loans-great-britain>

8.2 The Treasurer shall carry out any permissibility checks required by the Electoral Commission before accepting donations or loans. Donations or loans that fail permissibility checks must be returned in accordance with the timetable specified by the Electoral Commission.

8.3 The Treasurer will arrange payment of any bills incurred by the party and will notify the Executive Committee if the party's bank account is in danger of becoming overdrawn.

8.4 The Treasurer will present a financial report at each meeting of the Executive Committee. This should include at a minimum: bank balance at the date of the previous meeting, money received since the last meeting, money spent since the last meeting, bank balance at the date of the current meeting.

8.5 The Treasurer, together with the other members of the Executive Committee, will produce a budget showing expected income and expenditure for the year ahead to help in the planning of the party's

activities. The budget will be reviewed at each meeting of the Executive Committee and updated if necessary.

8.6 Wherever possible, funds will be held by a banking organisation with a policy of ethical investment acceptable to the membership.

8.7 Any affiliation fees to another organisation or donations to another group must have the approval of a members meeting.

8.8 Members may incur expenditure on behalf of the party provided prior approval is obtained from the Executive Committee.

9 – Candidate selection

9.1 Candidates for local elections shall be selected in accordance with a process set out by the Executive Committee, and following any guidance from GPEW.

9.2 For emergency selections, such as for an unexpected by-election, candidates may be approved by the Executive Committee.

9.3 Candidates for general elections shall be selected in accordance with the GPEW constitution and most recent GPEW guidance.

9.4 Candidates for any other elections, including Police and Crime Commissioner, regional and metropolitan Mayors and any regional elections that may be created, shall be selected using a process agreed in consultation with the other local parties the selection affects and relevant Field Team staff.

10 – Councillors

10.1 The provisions in this section come into force when the local party has its first councillor and cease to be in force if the local party loses all council seats, with the exception of 10.7 on incoming defections which continues to apply even when the party holds no council seats.

10.2 Where there is a group of at least two councillors, the group shall elect a leader by a vote of the council group. A hustings should be organised by the group, inviting members of the local party. Where there is a lone councillor, they shall automatically assume the role and responsibilities of a leader.

10.3 The councillor group shall write terms of reference for governing themselves, including how decisions will be made. A copy of this shall be provided to the local party chair each time it is updated. This shall include a procedure for making comments to the press.

10.4 Councillors shall not be bound by a party whip, but shall notify their group leader and local party chair in advance (with notice as agreed by the councillor group terms of reference) if their views or votes may differ from agreed party policy, including local policies. Councillors are accountable to the B&CGP members meetings and may be asked to provide reasons for votes against party policy.

10.5 Councillors should provide a report back to each members meeting, covering their activities, key priorities, and any other information relevant to the wider party. Members should have the opportunity to ask questions of a representative of the councillors at each meeting.

10.6 Where councillors wish to enter an alliance, confidence-and-supply agreement, or similar, they shall notify the local party of this before it becomes public and agree a communications plan with the local party chair.

10.7 The council group shall follow the Association of Green Councillors Defection Protocol when considering defections from other parties, and inform the local party chair in confidence at the earliest possible stage.

10.8 Where a councillor is considering defecting away from the Green Party, the local party chair should be informed and a plan of action created.

10.9 Councillors may set up a ward team, comprising of both councillors and non-councillors, in order to organise campaigning work in their ward and support councillor activity.

11 – Safeguarding

11.1 The party shall be bound by the GPEW Safeguarding policy which the executive officers must familiarise themselves with. Executive Officers must report any safeguarding concerns in line with this policy.

12 – Data Protection

12.1 The party shall be bound by the GPEW Data Protection rules and shall be compliant with national legislation such as GDPR.

12.2 The party shall have a Data Protection Officer responsible for ensuring compliancy with data protection, including controlling internal access to electoral register and membership data as well as any other form of data the party holds.

13 – Changing the constitution

13.1 The constitution can be changed at any quorate, properly called AGM or EGM by a two-thirds vote of members present.

13.2 Proposed Constitution changes must be clearly written with the exact text of the change presented to members, and must be proposed and seconded before they can be put.

13.3 The Executive Committee must check that proposed constitution changes do not conflict with the constitution of GPEW, before an AGM or EGM. Proposals that would introduce a constitutional conflict with GPEW are not valid and must not be presented at an AGM or EGM.

13.4 It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to be proactive in monitoring the Constitution and proposing changes where circumstances mean the Constitution requires a change, such as updates from GPEW on good practice.

14 – Winding up

14.1 Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party may cease to exist or combine with other Green Parties, only by a 2/3 majority vote of a general meeting.

14.2 If Brentwood and Chelmsford Green Party ceases to exist, remaining funds in any accounts held by the party will be transferred to Eastern regional party or to GPEW, at the discretion of the general meeting.

14.3 At the point the party becomes defunct, GPEW rules apply to members within the geographical boundary and they are considered to be unbranched unless combined with another local party.