

Farnham Residents

Group Constitution

(Revised September 2022)

A - Name & Geographical Remit

A1 - The name shall be the *Farnham Residents* (hereinafter called the Group). The Group first came together as a national organisation in 2015. The geographical remit of the Group shall be England.

B - The Purpose & Aims

B1 - To promote and apply fundamental scientific and business principles in order to achieve good decision-making with a firm commitment to the Bell Principles for Independents; incorporating the Nolan Principles of public life.

(Appendix 1)

B2 - To encourage, endorse and support Candidates who are dedicated to represent the interests and views of local residents and businesses with integrity and free of any party whip in accordance with the *Farnham Residents'* principles.

B3 - To provide a recognisable and respected democratic alternative to the established political parties and to provide a distinct entity through which principled and independent minded candidates can benefit from the publicity, resources and organisation of like-minded candidates and residents

B4 - To conserve our heritage and environment in accordance with the principles of good design cultural advancement and the protection afforded by environmental law in balance with the socio-economic needs of residents and future generations.

B5 - To improve health, education, infrastructure and prosperity by minimising wasteful government interference.

B6 - To work together to bring about change to the system of governance through introducing true Localism by devolving decision-making to the most local level appropriate to the matter in-hand thereby giving the greatest possible independence to local communities.

B7 - To create a system whereby local residents' and businesses' views are listened to and represented faithfully, harnessing their knowledge and skills to mutual benefit.

B8 - To enable free and rational debate based upon evidence and solid principles as a method of achieving the best possible standard of decision-making.

C - Membership

C1 - Anyone who supports the Group's Purpose and Aims (outlined above) may apply for membership of the Group. Membership applications will be considered by the Executive Committee whose decision shall be final. Members have the right to be treated fairly and to be kept informed of all the Group's activities.

C2 - Members will agree to their personal details being held confidentially by the Group. These details will only be available to the elected Officers and will not be shared with 3rd parties without the member's permission unless required by law.

C3 - Membership will be automatically revoked if a member stands in an election against a Group Candidate or actively supports such a rival person. Members may be sanctioned or Membership may also be terminated for cause by a 2/3^{rds} vote of the Executive Committee, but members so adjudged shall have the right of appeal to the full membership

C4 - The annual subscription shall be payable prior to the AGM each year. This amount will be decided by the Executive Committee subject to approval by the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

D - Management and Organisation

D1 - The Officers of the Group shall be:-

The Chairman

**The Leader

**The Nominating Officer

**The Treasurer

The Secretary

Such other Officers as the Executive Committee deems necessary for the smooth running of the Group..

D2 - All the Officers shall be elected annually at the AGM but it shall not be necessary to fill all the posts except for those marked ** which are Mandatory Offices for a *Registered Political Party*. Nobody may hold more than one "Mandatory Office" but the Chairman & Leader may be the same person and the offices of Secretary & Treasurer may also be combined. When no Chairman is elected the Leader will act as Chairman

D3 - The Executive Committee shall also be elected at the AGM and shall consist of between 5 and 10 members, always including the 3 Mandatory Officers,

E - The Executive Committee

E1 - The day-to-day running of the Group shall be conducted by the Executive Committee by holding quarterly meetings and such other meetings as deemed necessary by the Committee.

E2 - The Executive Committee in directing the work of the Group will be responsible for implementing the Aims of the Group, in particular (but not limited to) the following:-

Be Responsible for the organisation and finances of the Group;
Receive regular reports on the Group's finances from the Treasurer;
Consider and Approve (after any necessary amendments) the Annual Statement of Accounts before submission to the AGM.
Determine the Group's priorities and initiate campaigns and political action;
Propose any changes to membership subscriptions to the AGM;
Undertake any fundraising activities deemed desirable for the Group;
Approve membership applications;
Recommend to the members suitable candidates to stand for Election;
Authorise expenditure in supporting Candidates and other publicity;
Approve Campaign Literature (this may be devolved to a sub-group);

F - The AGM (and any EGMs)

F1 - The Group shall hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) not later than the 31st March to which all paid-up members of the Group will be invited. This will be free of charge to members. The AGM will normally be held immediately following the availability of the Annual Accounts for approval and may be held virtually if circumstances dictate.

F2 - Members shall be given at least 7 days' notice of any meeting and a quorum for any meeting shall be 50% of those entitled to attend.

F3 - The Chairman shall chair the AGM, any EGMs and the Executive Committee meetings; in his/her absence and the absence of the Leader the meeting shall elect a member to chair the meeting and assume the powers of the Chairman for that meeting.

F4 - Votes at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of a show of hands with the Chairman of any meeting having a casting vote in the event of a tie.

F5 - The AGM is the supreme decision-making body of the Group. Its main functions will be to:-

Elect the Officers of the Group;

Receive a report on the work of the Executive Committee;

Approve (after any necessary amendments) the Annual Statement of Accounts before submission to the relevant Authorities;

Approve changes to the Constitution

Agree or amend the Annual Subscriptions and any other fees recommended by the Executive Committee;

F6 - An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) can be called by the Leader, Chairman or Treasurer or by written request from 2/3^{rds} of the members of the Executive Committee or 50% of the paid-up members of the Group in order to discuss significant issues and/or changes to the Constitution. At an EGM no business other than that for which the meeting was called may be discussed.

G - The Finances of the Group

G1 - The Group's Financial Year shall run from 1st January until 31st December.

G2 - The Finances of the Group are the responsibility of the Executive Committee and will be administered by the Treasurer who must keep a proper set of books and has overall responsibility for day-to-day monetary transactions.

G3 - The Group's funds shall be held in a nominated Group Bank Account with two out of three signatories required for expenditure. The normal signatories shall be **the** 3 mandatory Officers or such others as may be designated by the Executive Committee.

G4 - As soon as practical after the end of the Group's Financial Year the accounts will be produced, subjected to examination (or audit if necessary), and after consideration by the Executive Committee, presented to the AGM for approval before being submitted to the Electoral Commission in accordance with PPERA. An independent Examiner (or auditor if required) will be appointed by the Executive Committee.

G5 - This Constitution specifically prohibits the Group from borrowing money, secured or unsecured, by way of overdraft or loan, other than short-term loans by members or supporters of less than £200 which must be repaid within 6 months.

H – Policies

H1 – As a Group of Independents without formal policies or a Whip, members are free to express their own personal views on political matters and other topics and vote on such matters as they see fit. However, where the Group has developed particular Policies or philosophies, whether at a Group meeting or by formal Motion at a Council which the Group controls (either fully or in an Alliance) then, although members may exercise their right to vote against such motions when they are debated., they shall not actively, publicly campaign against them once they are adopted.

J - Candidates

J1 - All Group Candidates at any Election must be paid-up members.

J2 - The Executive Committee is responsible for the system of Candidate approval and will keep a list of approved Candidates for Elections.

J3 - Any member of the Group may apply to become a Candidate but no member may describe themselves as a Candidate until properly approved. All Group Candidates have the obligation to promote the Purposes, Aims and Principles of the Group.

J4 - Because of their public status, Group Candidates have a special duty not to say or do anything that could bring the Group into disrepute, a duty which, if they are elected, continues throughout their time in office.

K - Dissolution of the Group

K1 - The Group may only be dissolved if a Motion to that effect is passed by a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority at a properly convened AGM or EGM and subsequently a $\frac{4}{5}$ majority of the membership in an email ballot which shall be conducted within 2 weeks of a vote for dissolution. Any proposal to dissolve the Group should contain proposals for the distribution of the assets of the Group, failing which they shall be donated to the Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice at Farnham.

L - Amendments and Interpretation

L1 - This Constitution can only be amended by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of members voting at a properly convened AGM or EGM. Where this Constitution is silent or in need of interpretation the Chairman shall give a ruling which may be referred to the Executive Committee for ratification or amendment. This Constitution shall be governed by English Law.

Appendix 1 - Bell Principles

The Bell Principles are the first code of conduct for elected representatives - they demand that politicians behave to the highest of standards.

The Independent Network - a non-profit organisation that promotes and supports independent candidates and non-party politicians - asks that all endorsed candidates and supporters agree to these principles.

They were first formulated by the [former independent MP Martin Bell](#) and were presented to the Independent Network at a strategy meeting in September 2009. They were unanimously adopted by supporters of the Independent Network and were later edited by members of the Independent Network Executive.

They are seen as a living document and will be continuously edited to reflect the changing world we live in.

THE BELL PRINCIPLES

We will

- abide wholeheartedly by the spirit and letter of the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by Lord Nolan in 1995: *selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership*
- be guided by considered evidence, our real world experience and expertise, our constituencies and our consciences
- be free from the control of any political party, pressure group or whip
- be non-discriminatory, ethical and committed to pluralism
- make decisions transparently and openly at every stage and level of the political process, enabling people to see how decisions are made and the evidence on which they are based
- listen, consulting our communities constantly and innovatively
- treat political opponents with courtesy and respect, challenging them when we believe they are wrong, and agreeing with them when we believe they are right
- resist abuses of power and patronage and promote democracy at every level
- work with other elected independents as a Group with a chosen spokesperson
- claim expenses, salaries and compensation openly so the public can judge the value for money of our activities.