

Governance consultation 2021

How the Party is run, by, and on behalf of, every member is fundamental to how successful we are at delivering our liberal vision of Britain.

The 2019 General Election Review (the Thornhill Review) set out how we must change in order to succeed at future elections. Since its publication, in many areas we have made strides, but there is still much to do.

A key recommendation was that we “Review ongoing governance” at all levels, including the Federal Board. On the Board it found that:

There is no clear ‘leadership team’ where the three pillars of the party – political, operational, federal – can make cohesive decisions, simply, quickly, and effectively. The Federal Board – 40+ members – is not, cannot, and should not be that team.

These problems meant that decisions were taken in more fragmented and less accountable ways. A reformed Board, therefore, might therefore both improve decision making and also make it more accountable.

The review also identified a need to improve the coordination between different parts of the party so that, for example, different committees are more clearly working towards one overall strategy.

Turnout in the last Board election was around 10%, which suggests that greater clarity around the role of Board members would be helpful to get better engagement by and accountability to members.

A key distinction between members of the current Board is their remit. Some Board members have a specific portfolio, for instance the President is elected by party members to a job that includes chairing the Board, or the Young Liberal representative is elected by Young Liberal members to specifically add their perspective. Some Board members do not have a specific portfolio, but instead are elected to be ‘Board members’ in general. Currently, our Board is a hybrid: it has a mix of these types of members and the combination adds up to a large Board.

Therefore, this questionnaire is based around four different possible approaches:

- Retain the status quo – the current large hybrid Board model;
- Retain a hybrid model (portfolio holders plus non-portfolio members) but reduce the numbers of each to make for a smaller Board;
- Have a smaller Board, comprised of portfolio holders – with possibly an additional accountability structure to hold them to account in between conferences (this additional structure might be based on a Cabinet and full council model or on a Cabinet and scrutiny committee model); or
- Have a smaller Board, comprised of non-portfolio members.

This consultation is designed to help understand which options are most attractive to members and therefore to help boil down the wide range of possible solutions. Based on your feedback, the Board intends to bring at least one option for reform to the 2022 Spring Federal Conference.

[You can take part in the consultation by responding to this survey.](#) Before you do, you may want to [read this summary of our current arrangements](#), or come along to one of the consultative events:

Events list

Please note that this is a live events list and will be updated with new events as they are scheduled.

Title	Description	Time	Register here!
An introduction to our current structures	45 minute presentation and Q&A for members wanting to know more about our current structures. Led by our Company secretary, Jack Coulson.	18:00-19:00, Thursday 4th of November	Registration
Q&A with Baroness Dorothy Thornhill and Party President Mark Pack (1)	Join the author of the 2019 General Election review and President Mark Pack for a discussion of where the Party is and where we need to be doing.	20:00-21:00, Tuesday 9th of November	Registration
Board Surgery	Join members of the Federal Board for its next surgery session. This will have a particular focus on governance reform but any and all questions welcome. If you would like to raise anything in advance, please contact jack.coulson@libdems.org.uk .	18:00-19:00, Thursday the 11th of November	Registration
An introduction to our current structures (2)	45 minute presentation and Q&A for members wanting to know more about our current structures. Led by our Company secretary, Jack Coulson.	18:00-19:00, Wednesday 17th of November	Registration
Q&A with Baroness Dorothy Thornhill and Party President Mark Pack (2)	Join the author of the 2019 General Election review and President Mark Pack for a discussion of where the Party is and where we need to be doing.	18:00-19:00, Monday 22nd of November	Registration

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[Ed Davey responds to Philip Davies](#)

Conservative MP Philip Davies has started taking a surprising interest in the Liberal Democrats' commitment to an equal parliament, and our internal selection procedures.

Perhaps he has decided to turn his back on his sexist views, or perhaps he has a different motive.

Read Philip Davies' letter to Ed Davey, and Ed's reply:

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[Another step towards scrapping the Vagrancy Act](#)

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[Join us for an EU Policy Consultation](#)

In collaboration with the Liberal Democrat European Group, the Federal Policy Committee are organising regional events giving members a chance to shape our policy on Europe. We want to hear your thoughts on what our priority areas should be, what solutions you might have to problems raised and how we can continue to promote a close relationship with Europe.

Members and Supporters all get the opportunity to help make party policy

Below is a list of topics we will be discussing. Come to our Liberal Democrat European Group consultations to have your say!

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[The new political season](#)

The autumn party conferences traditionally mark the start of the new political season. They are a time to reflect on the past year and set out plans to succeed in the coming year.

Both politics and coronavirus have made it a tough time since the last round of conferences. But we can look forward to this new political season with confidence that if we continue to raise our game, we can prosper. We've seen signs of that already, including with Sarah Green's fantastic win in Chesham and Amersham and also with the latest net favourability leadership polling from Savanta ComRes:

- Keir Starmer: net -8
- Boris Johnson: net -7
- Ed Davey: net +1

To achieve success in the run of elections to come, we will need to think big. We need to **convince wavering Tories, Labour and nationalist voters** that backing us isn't solely a protest. It's also a vote for something positive. The antidote to the strains of the present is a liberal future. So we must **paint a picture of the society we want to build**, rather than merely the society we want to prevent.

We've made a good start on that with the debates, motions and speeches at our autumn Federal Conference. There will be more to come in the next few months too from the federal party, as we develop the **emphasis on a fair deal that was at the heart of [Ed Davey's speech](#)**. (Plans for next year's conference **[have been announced by conference committee chair](#)**, Nick Da Costa.)

Congratulations to...

Our conference closed with the party awards. We now run these twice a year in recognition of how important it is for us to thank and be inspired by our colleagues. You can **read all about this time's winners** – including a lovely family connection for one award – [here](#).

We've also started **[sending out 'top canvasser' pin badges](#)** to thank those who contribute, either on the doorsteps or on the phone, to one of the most important election-winning tasks. Each quarter we're also inviting those who

have canvassed the most to a special call with Ed Davey, our Director of Campaigns Dave McCobb and others so that what people are hearing on the ground gets fed directly in. This is to make sure we never repeat the 2019 campaign mistake of people on the ground knowing a message isn't working, and it taking too long to change it from the centre.

I'm keen that we continue to look for other ways to recognise people who contribute so much to the party. We've **made changes to the party awards to recognise a wider range of contributions** but I'm sure we can do more. [Ideas very welcome](#).

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