



Shropshire Party

Constitution

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Article 1. Fundamental Values and Principles

1.1. A Party for all Shropshire

We are a political party for all of Shropshire and for all of its people, whether they were born and raised here or have chosen to live here. We reject all forms of arbitrary discrimination and embrace the inherent diversity of all individuals and communities within our society.

1.2. An Independent Voice

We seek to be a strong and independent voice for the people of Shropshire, standing up for the interests of our local communities and free from the influence of the big parties and their power interests which often eclipse local concerns. We reject the divisive politics of left and right and will seek to build a broad consensus for government locally and beyond.

1.3. Respecting our Heritage

We are proud of our county and its immense historical, cultural, social, environmental and economic heritage. We will endeavour to preserve that heritage and ensure that we can hand it down to future generations intact or improved.

1.4. Building a Brighter Future

We believe in our county's potential. We will build a better, fairer and more prosperous future for Shropshire and its people. But to be successful, our pursuit of progress must respect ecological and social realities and the need for long term economic and environmental sustainability.

1.5. Grassroots Democracy

We believe that decision making should always be carried out at the closest practicable level to the people affected, with higher levels of government performing only those tasks which cannot be effectively performed at a more local level. We believe that a truly democratic society must be built upon the empowerment of individuals and local communities.

1.6. Empowering Our Communities

We will fight further centralisation of local government and campaign for a fairer distribution of power around our county so important decisions are taken by the people they affect and not by distant bureaucrats. We will campaign for devolution to transfer real powers back to our county from Westminster, and for a fairer democratic settlement for the whole of the UK. To achieve this, we will work together with like-minded parties and organisations.

1.7. Interdependence

Nowhere can stand alone in isolation. A successful society understands the mutual interdependence between individuals, communities, regions and nations and its importance for our development. Only by co-operating can we hope to address common and mutual problems, as well as build a stronger and better future for everyone.

1.8. Transparency and Accountability

Excessive centralisation of political and economic powers and a lack of democratic opposition and scrutiny in government at any level is a recipe for poor decision-making, inefficiency and corruption. We will seek to hold politicians at all levels of government to proper account, from parish and town councils to Shirehall and beyond. We will campaign for electoral reform in order to end unchallenged one-party control of councils.

Article 2. Party Name

- 2.1.** The full name of the party is 'Shropshire Party'.
- 2.2.** The party name in Welsh shall be 'Plaid Sir Amwythig'.

Article 3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1.** The Party shall uphold, promote and apply wherever possible the values and principles set out in Article 1 above, and to advance the principles of democratic, open, inclusive and transparent government at all levels.
- 3.2.** The Party shall represent and pursue the interests of local communities and groups around Shropshire first, as well as the wider political, cultural, environmental and economic interests of the county of Shropshire.
- 3.3.** The Party shall select candidates for election to public office who will stand for our principles and values as a party and seek to represent and serve the communities they are elected by.
- 3.4.** The Party shall co-operate, co-ordinate and collaborate with like-minded individuals, groups, political parties, non-governmental organisations, enterprises and other elements of civil society locally, regionally, nationally and globally.
- 3.5.** The Party and its members shall pursue these aims by democratic, peaceful and non-violent means only.

Article 4. Membership

- 4.1.** Membership of the Party shall be open to all individuals aged 16 and over who share the Party's Fundamental Values and Principles (set out in Article 1 above) and the Aims and Objectives (Article 3).
- 4.2.** No member should be subject to any kind of discrimination based on age, ethnic background, place of origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.
- 4.3.** Membership shall be obtained by applying to the Party and paying a membership fee.
- 4.4.** The Executive Committee shall agree an appropriate membership fee structure and amounts. The fee may be waived by the agreement of the Executive Committee in specific individual cases, either for a set period or indefinitely.
- 4.5.** The Party shall reserve the right to refuse membership to any individual.
- 4.6.** Individuals who have past or present association, affiliation or involvement with organisations whose activities, aims or values are contrary to those of the Party as expressed in Article 1, may be excluded from membership or have their membership withdrawn. For this purpose, the Executive Committee shall maintain a list of such organisations.
- 4.7.** All members of the Party, and in particular those who are party officers, holders of public office, election candidates or otherwise representing the Party, shall be

subject to the Party's rules regarding conduct and discipline set out in Article 12 herein.

- 4.8.** Every member of the Party shall have the following rights:
- a.** To engage in and contribute to the development of party policy;
 - b.** To attend the Party Convention, to participate in debate and discussion at the Convention;
 - c.** To attend, participate and vote in the Party's Annual General Meeting;
 - d.** To seek nomination and election to any office in the Party;
 - e.** To seek selection as an official Party candidate for election to public office;
 - f.** To participate in their local Branch, including to attend meetings and vote in candidate selections where they are contested.

Article 5. The Executive Committee

- 5.1.** There shall be an Executive Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Executive) which shall be responsible for the day-to-day management, administration, organisation and political direction of the Party.
- 5.2.** The specific responsibilities of the Executive shall include:
- a.** The nomination of Party Officers in accordance with Article 8, below;
 - b.** Determining and coordinating the Party's political strategy;
 - c.** The development and preparation of election manifestos;
 - d.** Holding Party Officers and election candidates to account;
 - e.** Organising the Annual General Meeting;
 - f.** Implementing decisions taken by the Annual General Meeting;
 - g.** Upholding and implementing the provisions of this Constitution;
 - h.** Overseeing and supporting the Treasurer and other officers, where relevant, in ensuring the compliance of the Party with the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act or any other relevant legislation.
 - i.** To enforce discipline within the Party in accordance with Article 12, which may include to suspend or expel any member of the Party, temporarily or indefinitely.
 - j.** Any other task or responsibility set out herein, or anything else not explicitly designated but reasonably falling under its general remit.
- 5.3.** The Executive shall be composed of no greater than twelve members. These being the Party Leader, and up to eleven Executive members to be elected by Party Members at the Annual General Meeting, or shortly beforehand by electronic means.
- 5.4.** Members of the Executive shall serve a term of two years, commencing immediately after the Annual General Meeting at which they were elected.
- 5.5.** The Executive may co-opt new members in order to fill casual vacancies.

- 5.6.** The Executive shall meet no fewer than four times a year, and as often as may be necessary.
- 5.7.** Summary minutes of each meeting of the Executive shall be taken and subsequently made available to all Party members.
- 5.8.** Any flaw in the election or co-option of a member of the Executive, which had been unknown at the time, shall not invalidate any decisions taken at a meeting.
- 5.9.** Meetings of the Executive may take place in person or via electronic means.
- 5.10.** All motions and resolutions to be voted upon must be accepted by the Chair. Wherever possible, all decisions by the Executive should be agreed by consensus. If there is no consensus, or if a member requests a vote, decisions shall be made by a simple majority vote, except as may be specified differently herein.
- 5.11.** Each member of the Executive shall have just one vote, regardless of how many posts they may occupy except that in the event of a deadlock in voting the Chair shall have an additional casting vote.
- 5.12.** Every member of the Executive shall have a duty to attend meetings and to give notice in the event of being unable to attend. If a member fails to attend three or more consecutive meetings may be removed by a vote of the remaining members.
- 5.13.** The Executive shall have the faculty to establish permanent Subcommittees or temporary Working Groups to which may be delegated any function or responsibility of the Executive, or it may assign a special task or assignment. Subcommittees and Working Groups:
 - a.** must be composed of at least three people, no fewer than one of whom should be a member of the Executive;
 - b.** may include any Party Member, having been appointed by the Executive, or co-opted by the Subcommittee or Working Group itself (subject to approval by the Executive).
 - c.** may be overruled, countermanded, or dissolved at any time by the Executive;
- 5.14.** The quorum for meetings of the Executive shall be a majority of its current members.

Article 6. Branches

- 6.1.** The Executive Committee may establish local Branches throughout the historical and ceremonial county of Shropshire.
- 6.2.** Each Branch shall comprise all Party Members resident within its area.
- 6.3.** Branches shall organise Party activities within their area including political and election campaigning, selecting candidates for election in relevant electoral divisions, and other social and community activities.
- 6.4.** Each Branch shall elect a Branch Co-ordinator who shall be responsible for co-ordinating activities with members, chairing meetings, and liaising with other Branches and the Executive Committee. They may also select Deputy Co-ordinators to assist in these activities.

- 6.5.** Branches shall co-ordinate activities at different levels with other Branches. This may include selecting candidates for election districts where more than one Branch is active within the relevant area.
- 6.6.** The Executive Committee shall have the authority to approve the creation of branches, as well as to restructure, reorganise or close branches where it sees fit to do so, subject to consultation with the affected branches.

Article 7. Annual General Meeting

- 7.1.** An Annual General Meeting shall be held at least once in each calendar year.
- 7.2.** The Annual General Meeting is the supreme decision-making body of the party. All matters shall be decided by a simple majority vote, unless otherwise required.
- 7.3.** All full members of the Party are entitled to attend and take part in the Annual General Meeting and shall have one vote each.
- 7.4.** Notification of an upcoming Annual General Meeting must be sent to all members no less than 28 days beforehand.
- 7.5.** The Annual General Meeting shall receive reports from the Executive Committee on the Party's political activities and finances.
- 7.6.** The Annual General Meeting may adopt Standing Orders governing the Party's activities, but these must be in keeping with the provisions and rules set out herein.
- 7.7.** The Annual General Meeting shall elect a new Executive if the two-year term of the current Executive has expired or is due to expire within 6 months. If an election has been carried out via electronic means in advance of the meeting, then the result of the election shall be confirmed, and the new Executive commence its term.
- 7.8.** The Executive may decide to convene an Extraordinary General Meeting in order to address circumstances or issues of urgency which require the convocation of the Party Members. Such a meeting shall have the same faculties, powers and capacity as an ordinary Annual General Meeting.
- 7.9.** The Annual General Meeting may scrutinise the activities of the Executive Committee or any member of it. For such a purpose, an Internal Audit Committee may be convened to impartially investigate any matter, and report its findings to the next AGM or convene an Extraordinary General Meeting for this purpose which can take appropriate action.

Article 8. Party Officers

- 8.1. Party Leader:** The Party Leader shall be elected by the Members in accordance with the rules set out here and in Article 9.
- a. The function of the Leader shall be as principle spokesperson and public representative of the Party, and as such shall be responsible for presenting and promoting Party Policy, electoral candidates and other Party campaigns.
 - b. The Leader shall also be responsible for coordinating the political direction of the Party, subject to the rules set out in Article 11.
 - c. An election for Leader shall ordinarily occur biennially, but may also occur:
 - i. if an election is requested by the incumbent Leader;
 - ii. in the event of the resignation, incapacity or death of the incumbent Leader;
 - iii. if a Motion of No Confidence in the Leader is passed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Annual General Meeting or by a two-thirds majority by Executive. Such a motion shall only be admitted on the grounds of excessive inactivity by the Leader or having brought the Party into disrepute.
 - d. In the event of sudden vacancy, the Executive shall elect an interim leader.
- 8.2. Deputy Leader:** The Executive may elect from among its member a Deputy Leader, who shall assist and support the Party Leader.
- 8.3. Party Chair:** The Executive shall elect from among its members a Chair. The Chair shall preside meetings of the Executive and hold a casting vote in the event that it be necessary, furthermore they shall function as the Party's chief executive and shall be responsible for organising and coordinating the Executive's activities.
- 8.4. Treasurer:** The Executive shall elect from among its members a Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be responsible for managing the Party's finances, recording all donations, membership fees and any loans, and also any expenditure on campaigns or other Party activities. The Treasurer shall be responsible for ensuring the Party complies with its legal obligations under the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) and any other legislation relevant to party and campaign finance.
- 8.5. Nominations Officer:** The Executive shall elect from among its members a Nominations Officer. The Nominations Officer shall be responsible for issuing a Certificate of Authorisation to official party candidates for election to public office, provided the candidate has been selected in accordance with the provisions set out in Article 9 herein.
- 8.6.** Further officers may be elected by the Executive as its sees fit.
- 8.7.** A single Member of the Executive may occupy multiple officer roles, but this shall not grant that member more than one vote in proceedings.

Article 9. Internal Elections

- 9.1. The Party Leader and the members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the Party's membership in a fair and transparent process, in accordance with these provisions herein, any relevant Standing Order and electoral law.
- 9.2. For the purpose of overseeing elections, the Executive Committee shall nominate a Returning Officer (hereinafter RO). The appointed person shall be responsible for setting the schedule for an election, receiving nominations, confirming the final list of nominated candidates, and confirming the result. In the exercise of their duties as RO, they must maintain impartiality, and act to ensure the fairness of the vote, and that it is carried out in accordance with the rules set out herein, or otherwise agreed by the Party.
- 9.3. All candidates seeking election must be nominated and seconded by other members, and they must agree to accept the nomination either in writing, or in the presence of the Returning Officer, for their nomination to be accepted.
- 9.4. Internal elections may be held either
 - a. during an Annual General Meeting and in subject to rules to be set out by Standing Order;
 - b. electronically using an appropriate and affordable internet-based elections platform.
- 9.5. For the **election of the Party Leader** under section 9.4(b):
 - a. The election shall be carried out electronically using the Alternative Vote system.
 - b. An election must be triggered in accordance with section 8.1(c) above.
 - c. Once an election has been triggered, the RO should determine the timetable for the election in accordance with the rules set out in this Article, and issue a Notice of Election to all Party Members.
 - d. The timetable shall include 12 clear days during which nominations, seconded and accepted by the nominee, may presented in writing (sent by post or scanned and e-mailed) to the RO, following which the RO shall notify all Members of the persons nominated.
 - e. If only one person is successfully nominated, then the RO shall declare an uncontested election, and the nominated candidate duly elected.
 - f. If more than one person is successfully nominated, there shall follow at least 5 clear days during which a campaign statement of no more than 350 words from each candidate may be prepared and sent to each voting Member.
 - g. Voting shall take place over a 48-hour period beginning no less than 18 clear days and no more than 21 clear days subsequent to the issuing of the Notice of Election.
 - h. Once the voting is complete, the votes shall be counted and the RO shall publish the details of the result and declare the winner duly elected.

- 9.6.** For the **election of members of the Executive Committee** under section 9.4(b):
- a.** Members of the Executive Committee shall be elected via the internet, using the Single Transferable Vote (Scottish rules) voting system, and within a reasonable amount of time before the Annual General Meeting.
 - b.** The Executive Committee shall instruct the RO to conduct an election for Members of the Executive Committee at an appropriate time with due regard to these requirements.
 - c.** The RO should determine the timetable for the election and issue a Notice of Election to all Party Members.
 - d.** The timetable shall include 12 clear days during which nominations, seconded and accepted by the nominee, may be presented in writing to the RO, following which the RO shall notify all Party Members of the persons nominated.
 - e.** If the number of persons nominated is equal to or less than the number of vacancies to fill, then the RO shall declare an uncontested election, and the nominated candidates duly elected.
 - f.** If the number of persons nominated is greater than the number of vacancies to fill, there shall follow at least 5 clear days during which a campaign statement of no more than 350 words from each candidate may be prepared and sent to each Party Member.
 - g.** Voting shall take place over a 48-hour period beginning no less than 18 clear days and no more than 21 clear days subsequent to the issuing of the Notice of Election.
 - h.** Once the voting is complete, the votes shall be counted, and the RO shall publish the details of the result and declare the winners duly elected.
 - i.** The newly elected Executive Committee shall then commence its two-year term at the Annual General Meeting.

Article 10. Selection of Candidates for Public Office

- 10.1.** Candidates for election to public office shall be selected in an open, transparent and democratic manner, in keeping with the Party's Fundamental Values and Principles, and with the participation of the Party Members resident in the area concerned wherever possible.
- 10.2.** Preference shall be given to the selection of candidates for election to public office who are established members of the local community they seek to represent.
- 10.3.** All candidates must be vetted and approved by the Executive Committee either in advance of their selection, with their name added to a List of Prospective Candidates which shall be maintained by the Executive Committee, or subsequent to their selection.
- 10.4.** The vetting of prospective candidates shall not be exhaustive or excessively intrusive, but should seek to ensure candidates are:
 - a.** of good character;

- b.** have not been convicted of a crime carrying a custodial sentence;
- c.** are not currently active in another political Party;
- d.** are a full Party Member at the time of selection or have become one subsequent to selection (in the event of selection by an Open Primary) and agree with in whole the Party's Statement of Fundamental Principles (Article 1) and is willing to stand for election on the party's official policies or agreed manifesto; and
- e.** are not subject to disciplinary procedures, suspension, or other sanction by the Party under Article 12 below.

10.5. Candidates may be selected by:

- a.** Open Primary – where the process of selecting the candidate(s) shall be open to members of the public registered to vote in the ward or constituency for which a candidate is being selected;
- b.** Party Primary – where the process of selecting the candidate(s) shall be open only to party members resident in the given ward or constituency for which a candidate is being selected;
- c.** Executive Selection – where the process shall be decided by the party's Executive Committee, which should only happen when a primary is not practicable due to organisational or time constraints.

10.6. The party shall draft and adopt procedures for each of the selection process formats described in 10.5 above.

10.7. Before candidates are issued with a Certificate of Authorisation by the Nominations Officer, they or their deputy shall ensure that the party's rules, requirements and standards for selection and vetting have been adhered to in both the process and the candidate. In the event that they have not, or of any other circumstance raising questions about a selected candidate, the matter shall be referred to the Executive Committee which shall determine how to proceed, such as by removing the candidate, by selecting a new candidate or if time and other circumstances permit, for a new selection process to be held.

Article 11. Party Policy

11.1. The development, drafting, revision and amendment of Party policy shall be conducted in an open and inclusive way which engages with Party Members as far as is practicable.

11.2. The Party shall strive to ensure its agreed policies are considered, practical, pragmatic and evidence-based, and always in-keeping with the values expressed herein (Article 1).

11.3. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for drafting and proposing policies and political positions to the Members at the Annual General Meeting. For this purpose, the Executive Committee may establish a Policy Subcommittee in order to incorporate a wider base of knowledge and experience in the process.

11.4. The Annual General Meeting may consider, amend, and approve or reject proposed policies and political positions. If approved, they become official policy of the Party.

- 11.5.** The Executive Committee may adopt official positions on exigent matters which may arise between AGMs. Such positions shall be reviewed at the subsequent AGM.
- 11.6.** Positions adopted by a candidate that are not covered by the party manifesto or other official policy positions agreed by the Party shall be at the candidates' own discretion and conscience. Such positions must not contradict official Party policies, nor must they be misrepresented as official policies or positions of the Party.

Article 12. Conduct and Discipline

- 12.1.** The Executive Committee shall draft, adopt and maintain a Code of Conduct to which all Members, but especially Party Officers, Members of the Executive Committee, local co-ordinators, spokespersons, and Members elected or seeking election to public office shall be expected to adhere.
- 12.2.** Local Branches and the Executive Committee shall be expected to uphold the Code of Conduct, as well as the rules and provisions, and the values and principles set out herein. This requires that they are prepared to receive complaints against Members, investigate those complaints, and seek to resolve any disputes.
- 12.3.** The Executive Committee shall be the final authority on issues of conduct, and may establish a Disciplinary Subcommittee to handle such issues.
- 12.4.** Complaints may be brought to the Party on the following grounds:
- a.** That a Member has contravened this Constitution or any Standing Order established in accordance with it;
 - b.** That a Member has made a serious breach of the Party's Code of Conduct;
 - c.** That a Member has brought the Party into disrepute.
- 12.5.** The Executive Committee shall have the power to expel or suspend any Party Member or refuse membership to any person for a specified period if having thoroughly and impartially investigated and considered a complaint made pursuant to section 12.4 the member concerned has been found to have committed a breach of conduct.
- 12.6.** A Member may be suspended temporarily for no more than four weeks whilst the Executive Committee investigates a complaint against them. A suspended Member shall not be permitted to vote in any internal party election or decision-making process, shall not be allowed to stand as a candidate either in internal elections or for public office, and shall not be allowed to act in any internal Party office or function which they normally hold.
- 12.7.** A complaint against a Member may be made by any other Party Member, by any Party body, or by any person external to the Party.
- 12.8.** Any Member who is aware or made aware of any serious breach of the Code of Conduct shall have a responsibility to ensure that the matter is reported by making a complaint.

Article 13. Amendments and Dissolution

- 13.1.** This document may be amended by the Annual General Meeting subject to a proposal made by the Executive Committee, or by such a proposal being approved by electronic poll of Party Members, provided that the proposed amendments have been published at least 28 days in advance of the vote.
- 13.2.** Proposed amendments shall be approved by a simple majority vote, except in the case of amendments to Articles 1, 2, 3 or 13 which shall require an absolute majority.
- 13.3.** The Executive Committee may propose to the Annual General Meeting the dissolution of the Party. In the event of dissolution being agreed, the current Members of the Executive Committee shall act as Party Trustees and will be responsible for the orderly winding up of the Party's affairs.

Annex A. Code of Conduct

- 1.** This Code of Conduct applies to all party members, irrespective of any voluntary or professional position they may hold. It governs their behaviour with regard to respect for other members and the effect this may have on the functioning of the Party. It may also apply to behaviour towards people outside the party if this may impact on the reputation of the Party. It covers all forms of communication and interaction, including face to face, by letter, telephone, e-mail, or other means, or via third persons.
- 2.** All members have the right to be treated fairly and with respect, equally, and in a manner in keeping with the Party's rules. They have the responsibility to treat others in the same way.
- 3.** We want our members to discuss and debate freely about policy, strategy and other party activities. We encourage and expect a broad diversity in views and opinions, and Members should be sensitive to other people's feelings and respect their right to have and express different views to their own. Members must refrain from behaviours which might stifle such debate, or create an intimidating or unwelcoming environment for others
- 4.** All members must avoid any behaviour which may be interpreted as intimidation, harassment or bullying. This includes any undesired behaviour which has the purpose or effect of breaching a person's dignity, or creating for that person a hostile, intimidating, humiliating, degrading or otherwise offensive environment; and behaviour which uses violence, force, threats, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively dominate others.
- 5.** Any behaviour which is unlawful, dishonest, deceitful, violent, or threatening will be regarded as bringing the Party into disrepute. It must be reported and will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 6.** Any breach of conduct which may constitute a breach of the law must be referred to the relevant authority, such as the police.
- 7.** The use of party headed notepaper and the party logo whether on paper, in e-mail or any other means should only be for legitimate party communications. Any communications sent 'on behalf of the Shropshire Party' must not be for personal gain or conflict with the party's Fundamental Values and Principles.
- 8.** Representatives of the party must be conscious that their actions in their private lives can reflect on the party. All members seeking election to any internal party office, or selection as a candidate to represent the party publicly in any capacity, or seeking or accepting any official role in the party, must disclose anything from their personal history which may bring the party into disrepute. This includes publicly expressed or published opinions (such as on social media) which significantly conflict with the party's values, ethics or the Fundamental Principles described in the Party Constitution. All such disclosures must be treated with due confidentiality.
- 9.** Representatives of the party must ensure that their communications regarding policies do not conflict with official Party Policy. In the event of holding and expressing a dissenting view, they must clearly state the party's official policy and their own personal view.
- 10.** All members must endeavour to work in a collaborative and co-operative manner and ensure that all members are encouraged to contribute to

discussions, debates and decisions in meetings; that all participants are heard; and that decisions are taken by consensus wherever this is possible.

- 11.** Members should refrain from publicly criticising other party members. If criticism is necessary, it should be done in a constructive and sensitive manner, and always focusing on a member's actions, behaviour or words, and not their person.
- 12.** Members involved in campaigns must be particularly conscious of the need to act at all times during the campaign within electoral law. This includes in relation to the use of appropriate campaign material, recording and reporting campaign expenditure, and the receipt of any donations.
- 13.** All members must at all times be prepared to respect the privacy and confidence of other members, supporters and the public. This includes upholding and always acting in accordance with data protection and privacy laws, and the party's published Privacy Policy.