

# Winchester Independents

Taking party politics out of local government.

## **Interim Constitution of Winchester Independents**

### 1. Preamble:

The purpose of this Interim Constitution is to enable the Group to register with the Electoral Commission, and thereby allow members of the Group standing for election to Winchester City Council to have the Group's name and emblem beside their names on ballot papers for the election that will take place in May 2016. As membership of the Group grows, its members will debate, agree and adopt a full constitution.

### 2. Name:

The name of the Group as used on ballot papers is Winchester Independents. It may also be referred to as the Winchester Independents Group.

### 3. Definitions:

References in this interim constitution to "The Group" are to Winchester Independents. References to "the Council" are to Winchester City Council.

### 4. Aims:

Members of the Group will be, by definition, independent, and each member will therefore have and express her or his own views on matters to be decided by the Group or by the Council. However, members of the Group are committed to the following common principles:

- i. to remove party politics from the proceedings of Winchester City Council;
- ii. to end the practice of electing one-third of the members of the Council in three or every four years, and reintroduce that of electing all members every four years
- iii. to remove from the proceedings of Winchester City Council any and all control or influence exercised by political parties, pressure groups or whips;
- iv. to reform the decision-making structure of Winchester City Council by abolishing the present "Cabinet" system and reverting to the traditional "Committee" system;
- v. to reduce the number and length of meetings of Winchester City Council and its committees; to reduce the length and improve the quality of written and verbal reports presented to them; to make the timing of all meetings of the Council and its committees more compatible with the work and family commitments of their members; and by these means and others to attract candidates for election to the Council with a wider range of age, background, experience and knowledge than in the past;
- vi. to ensure that the Council's vision of Winchester and its future, and its policies and actions in pursuit of it, show a full understanding of and a proper respect for the character and history of the City and District, and reflect the needs, wishes and aspirations of the people of the City and District.

## 5. Ways of Working:

Members of the Group agree to adhere to the Bell Principles, as follows. They 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, their real world experience and expertise, their constituencies and their 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 their communities constantly and innovatively

- treat political opponents with courtesy and respect, challenging them when they believe they are wrong, and agreeing with them when they 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 their activities.

## 6. Membership:

Membership of the Group is open to:

- i. elected members of Winchester City Council who are members of no political party, and who pledge themselves to support the aims and adhere to the ways of working set out in the two preceding sections of this interim constitution;
- ii. prospective candidates for election to Winchester City Council who meet the criteria in sub-section i above; and
- iii. others on the electoral roll for the Winchester District who are members of no political party and who demonstrate their commitment to the aims and ways of working set out in the two preceding sections of this interim constitution.

## 7. Subscriptions:

New members of the Group will pay a one-off fee of £25, and on and from from the 1<sup>st</sup> January after their membership starts an annual subscription of £25.

## 8. Meetings:

Decisions on actions to be taken and policies to be adopted by the Group in relation to Winchester City Council business will be taken at meetings of the Group's elected Councillors. Every effort will be made to reach such decisions by consensus, but in the event of a vote those in the minority will be free to express their dissenting views on the matter in question in whatever forum may be appropriate.

Decisions on the Group's internal affairs, including a full constitution to replace this interim one, will be taken by meetings of all the Group's members. Again, every effort will be made to achieve consensus, but in the event of a vote the minimum number present and eligible to vote must be 51% of the membership, and the matter then decided by a simple majority of the votes cast.

Alternatively, decisions on the Group's internal affairs may be taken by postal or email ballot. Again, provided that 51% or more of the Group's members vote in such a ballot, the matter will be decided by a simple majority of the votes cast.

#### 9. Group Officers:

The Officers of the Group shall be the Leader, the Treasurer and the Nominating Officer. The Treasurer shall keep the records required by the Group's Financial Scheme, appended to this Interim Constitution. The Nominating Officer shall keep a register of the Group's membership. The Register of Members shall be open to inspection by any member on reasonable notice to the Nominating Officer.