

Drafting and Submitting a Motion

When and how do I submit my motion?

You will need to submit your motion two weeks before Conference starts. **For the 2024 conference the deadline for submitting motions is October 30th at 6.00 pm.** Emergency motions and amendments can be submitted up to 10 am on Thursday 14th November 2024 and procedural motions can be submitted at any time.

Who can write a motion?

Any member can write a motion. However, you will need to get at least 5 party members or your local party to back your motion if you want to submit it for debate at Regional Conference.

The Regional Party can also submit motions for debate.

What types of motion are there?

There are several different types of motion, amendment and debate requests that members can submit:

- **Policy motion:** a proposal for a particular policy
- **Business motion:** a proposal about how the Party works internally
- **Emergency motion:** a proposal that relates to a specific development after the deadline for submitting normal policy or business motions
- **Topical Issue discussion:** instead of a motion, members can submit a request to have a discussion on a policy issue of significant and topical relevance, conducted without a vote
- **Amendments:** a proposal to change a business or policy motion. Emergency motions cannot be amended
- **Separate vote:** a vote on a specific word, line or section of a motion

What happens after that?

All the submitted motions are discussed by Regional Conference Committee, who then select which motions are going to be debated. You will be emailed by a member of the Regional Conference Committee to tell you if your motion

has been selected. All selected motions will then be published in the Regional Conference Agenda and sent out to all conference attendees.

What if my motion isn't selected?

You will be told by the member of the Regional Conference Committee why your motion was not selected. If you don't agree with this decision, you then have the right to appeal in writing by 10 am on Thursday 14th November to the Regional Conference Committee.

What makes a good motion?

Length

There are no official word limits but it's important to make sure your motion is not overly long. The Regional Conference Committee generally looks less favourably on an emergency motion which is more than 250 words or a policy motion that is over 500 words.

Style and content

Motions should be written as concisely as possible. Facts and figures are important but should be kept to a minimum. If quotations are included then they should be kept short. References to reports, White Papers, draft bills etc. should be written on the assumption the audience haven't read them and some basic explanation is needed.

Check that any factual points are accurate - motions that have inaccuracies are less likely to be selected. You should also not rely on a single source, especially if it is a newspaper article or a campaign.

A good source of information on many topical political issues is the set of House of Commons Library Research Papers available online here.

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/>

The policy recommendations are the most important part of the motion and what you should give most thought to.

A common reason for motions not being selected is that they contain a lot of criticisms and a detailed description of the problem but are thin, unclear or entirely negative in their conclusions.

When writing your policy recommendations it is better to stick to a few substantial points which make for a coherent plan, rather than a long list of small changes.

You should refrain from personal attacks – the law of defamation applies to Regional Party Conference.

In general a motion is more likely to be selected if it:

- Contains genuinely new and interesting proposals
- Is on a subject where we don't have much policy and which hasn't been debated at conference recently
- Is on a subject of high political salience for the Region (Should we do this?)
- Is likely to lead to an interesting debate, with amendments and speakers both for and against.

It is less likely to be selected by the Conference Committee if it is:

- A repeat of old policies with nothing really new
- On a subject which has been debated recently
- On a subject where we expect an official policy paper at the next couple of conferences
- Unlikely to lead to a good debate, for example if it is so uncontroversial that no one will want to disagree with anything in the motion.

Structure

The best motions are structured as follows:

1. Description of the issue or problem which the motion seeks to address
2. The Liberal Democrat principle(s) which underlie the solution
3. Highlighting existing Liberal Democrat policies which will contribute to the solution
4. The further policy proposals which normally conclude the motion and are its most important element

It is normal to break down each section of the motion into a series points. This makes it clearer, and also easier to deal with amendments later.

The first section should describe the issue being addressed by the motion, usually using words such as Conference "notes", "is concerned by" or "regrets".

The motion can then "believe", "reaffirm", "recognise", "declare" or just list the principles that apply.

Policy recommendations are usually introduced by "calls for", "calls on the Government to" or even "calls on Liberal Democrat Parliamentarians to press for", but could also follow from "recommends", "proposes", "urges", "demands", "insists", or "resolves".

Please note that under the party constitution elected representatives cannot be mandated. You should therefore avoid language like "Conference requires Liberal Democrat MP's to...". Something like "Conference calls on Liberal Democrats in Parliament to work for..." would be better drafting.

The final set of proposals should be listed 1.,2.,3. etc. Previous sections should alternate between different styles of letters and numbers. For example:

Conference notes with concern:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitment to:

- i)
- ii)
- lii)

Conference calls for:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.