



Eastleigh Liberal Democrats

Approval Pack 2026/27

For elections to the South West Hampshire Authority in 2027

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Thank you so much for your interest in applying for approval to be a candidate in **2027's** local elections.

Standing as a Liberal Democrat is an exciting and important role. Standing as a candidate gives you the chance to represent our party, and our community, in the bodies that run our local area. And in Eastleigh, we have a brilliant record of turning that chance into success!

To become a candidate, you need to be approved to stand for election and then be selected to a specific seat. In Eastleigh, approvals and selections take place over the Winter so that our candidates are in place and ready to campaign in the Spring.

A single approval process will take place in 2027:

1. Approval for 2027 South West Hampshire Authority elections. Approval is required for all candidates who wish to stand in this election on behalf of the Liberal Democrats.

Approvals and selections are conducted in line with a process agreed between the Local Parties in the new authority area.

This pack contains some useful information about the approval process. If you have any more questions about approvals and selections please do get in touch.

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What We're Looking For

We're looking for candidates who are committed the Liberal Democrats' values, who will be able to represent their residents, and who can contribute to the campaigning that is necessary to win.

We really welcome applications from new candidates. Many of our applicants are successful on their first application, and even if you are not we will provide helpful advice on how to develop the skills that you need for future approval.

The criteria that candidates are judged on are shown in the Candidate Person Specification, which is included at the end of this approval pack.

If you're interested, but not sure if standing for election is for you, please do speak to someone from the local party to hear more about it!

Application Forms

To apply for approval, please complete and return the approval application form.

The application form is designed to give the local party and those who will be sitting on your approvals interview panel the best information possible to make sure we approve and select the right candidates. The local party is keen to help anyone who is passionate enough to get elected. All details provided will be treated with strictest confidentiality.

Completed forms must be received by the **date shown in the notice** and can be emailed to richard@xebre.net or posted to Approvals, Eastleigh Lib Dems, Unit 2, Crescent House, Yonge Close, Eastleigh, SO50 9SX

Eligibility for Election

By submitting an application form you are also confirming that you are eligible to stand in the forthcoming elections, for most this will be a simple formality, but please do ask if you want to check that you are allowed to stand.

All of our candidates must be members of the Liberal Democrats, and must obtain membership before applying for approval. You can sign up for party membership at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/join-local/>

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The Electoral Commission provide more information about eligibility to stand in elections at https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Part-1-Can-you-stand-for-election-LGEW.pdf

If you are not sure about eligibility we can help you work it out. Just get in touch.

Codes of Conduct

There are also some legal and organisational documents that the local party will ask you to sign up to in order to be approved, these are:

- Standing Orders ("Guidelines") of the Liberal Democrat Council Group - this includes the rules the govern our council group and deals with the "group subscription";
- The Code of Conduct for postal and proxy votes;
- The Councillor's Charter;
- National Code of Conduct for elected members;

Copies of all of these are available on request.

The Process

The full approval process is set out in the party's adopted Approval Process, which is provided as an appendix, but a summary is provided here.

The first step is application. Applicants must complete an application form and return it by email, or post, to the local party, before the relevant deadline. (See the timeline later in this pack).

After application, we will seek references from the people who you name on your application form and/or other people in the local party – for example the campaign lead in your local ward or branch.

You will be invited to an interview, where a small panel will ask you questions. All the questions will be related to the person specification. The panel will then make a decision about your suitability to be a candidate. The panel's decision will be communicated to you by email, usually a day or so after the interview.

Finally, we will enter the selection phase. In some cases, we may need to run selection contests where local members have a chance to vote in an internal election to pick the candidate. In some cases, where there is no contest, candidates are selected to seats without a contest.

Approval panels will include a representative from another Local Party in the new authority area. And selections will be subject to the agreement of other local parties. Approved candidates may seek selection to any seat in the new authority area, regardless of which local party completed their approval.

Campaigning

We expect all of our candidates to contribute to campaigns, in the ways that they are able. We have a wide range of roles within our campaign activity, and those who are unable to canvass or deliver leaflets are encouraged to join in with other activities like telephone canvassing, envelope-stuffing and administration.

All candidates will be required to sign a candidate contract, which will include specific campaign targets around delivery and voter contacts.

We also expect candidates to maintain some availability to campaign during the year, and especially during the short campaign in March and April. That means not taking holidays in the weeks leading up to polling day!

Financial Contributions

It is expensive to run election campaigns, and so we expect councillors who are successfully elected to make contributions to fund the local party.

Councillors receive “allowances” (equivalent to a small salary) for their council duties, and contributions are made from that allowance. Candidates who are not elected are not expected to contribute financially.

There are two types of contribution that we ask for:

1) Immediately following elections, successful candidates will be asked to contribute to the campaign costs for that year’s elections. The amount varies depending on the degree of campaigning required, the costs that we incur, and the number of candidates that we successfully elect! This contribution is typically made in one lump sum, or over a period of several months. In 2023, the contribution was around £750 per candidate.

2) A monthly contribution, which is at least 10% of the gross annual allowance received by the councillor. Councillors who receive ‘special responsibility’ payments (e.g. committee chairs and cabinet members) are expected to make larger contributions than those who receive only the basic allowance.

The contributions will be set by the council group directly, in conversation with the local party executive.

Approval Outcomes

There are four different outcomes that an approval panel can award, depending on the type of approval sought and the panel’s decision about each applicant’s suitability. Outcomes are awarded for election to a specific body, although it’s possible to apply for approval to stand in multiple elections at the same time.

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- 1) **Approval:** is granted to candidates who meet the person specification. Approved candidates are eligible to stand on behalf of the party in the elections for which they are approved.
- 2) **Conditional Approval:** is granted when the Panel believes that the applicant is generally suitable for approval but where some elements of the person specification are not met. Conditional approval allows candidates to be selected to stand for election, and targets will be provided to help the candidate demonstrate their suitability for full approval. Candidates will be re-assessed closer to the election, and a full approval may be granted at that point, subject to demonstrating sufficient development.
- 3) **Pre-Approval:** is granted to applicants who would like to stand in elections more than 12 months away. Pre-approved candidates are expected to begin campaigning and establishing their profile, in order to meet the full person specification the following year. **Pre-approval will NOT be used for 2027 elections.**
- 4) **Rejection:** which is made when the approval panel believe that the applicant is not suitable to stand for the party in the election for which approval is sought. Normally that's because the applicant can't demonstrate that they meet enough of the person specification, but in some cases it may be because the panel has other serious concerns. Rejected candidates are usually encouraged to remain active and to seek approval again once they have developed their skills further. Prior rejection is not in itself grounds for rejection next time, and not everyone is successful the first time that they apply.

Appendix 1: The Approval and Selection Process

This policy describes the process that Eastleigh Liberal Democrats will follow for the approval and selection of applicants for Borough and County Council elections. Parliamentary approvals and selection are run using a different party process.

This policy must be read and interpreted alongside other relevant party policies, including (but not limited to) the equality and data protection policies.

Commencement

Where opportunities exist for election to a council, and either a) there are no existing approved (or conditionally approved) applicants eligible and/or willing to stand in the election, or b) the local party executive determines that approvals should be opened, then this approval and selection process will begin.

The local party executive will appoint an Approvals Chair to oversee the approval and selection process.

Advertising

Opportunities for approval for election will be advertised at least twice in Borough wide communications to members via email. The deadlines for applications and expressions of interest will be included in those advertisements. The elections for which approval is open will be clearly communicated.

Application Form & Letter

A cover letter and application form will be made available to interested members via the local party website, and prospective applicants will be given a deadline by which to return their application forms. The Local Party organiser's contact details will be given to prospective applicants as the point of contact for any issue.

All forms must be returned to the Local Party organiser for processing, and hard copies will be held securely in the Local Party office.

Completed application forms must be received by the local party before the application deadline. Application forms received after the application deadline may be accepted at the discretion of the Approvals Chair.

Interviews

Interviews will take place in a timely manner after the application deadline, with members of the interview panel receiving application forms at least 3 clear days before the interview date. Where application forms are accepted late, interview panels may be convened as needed.

The Interview panel should also request feedback on each applicant from members in their local branch relevant to the person specification.

Interview Panel

The interview panel will be made up of three representatives of the Local Party, at least one of which will not be a Councillor from that council. Where possible, the interview panel will be the same group in all interviews to ensure consistency. A fourth person, who is not part of the interview panel, will be present to take minutes of the proceedings.

The panel will usually be chaired by the Approvals Chair, but in their absence or at their request the Panel will agree a panel chair for each sitting of the Panel.

The chair of the panel may NOT be a sitting councillor.

The panel must include at least one woman.

If a full interview panel cannot be convened due to exceptional circumstance, the applicant will be offered the option to continue with a partial panel (of no less than two people, who may take their own minutes) or to reschedule the interview. In this circumstance, minutes will be made available to a third Panel member prior to a decision being taken.

Interview Questions

All applicants without a current pre-approval should be asked the same set of core questions as well as any extra questions based on any questions raised by the applicant's form, local feedback, and the answers that they give.

Applicants with pre-approval will be asked about the contribution they have made to local party campaigns since the pre-approval was granted, and any areas for development noted in the pre-approval decision.

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All questions will relate to aspects of the person specification, or to other aspects that the Panel considers materially relevant to the approval decision.

For any additional questions, notes will be made of both the questions and responses.

Panel Minutes

Minutes will be taken at each interview by the appointed minute-taker. Additional notes will also be taken by panel members on substantive points to show how they came to their decision. Notes may form part of any appeal process as evidence for decisions made, and will be stored in the Local Party office as soon as possible after the interview has concluded.

Minutes will be comprehensive and are to include all substantive points made by panel members or the applicant. Minutes shall be reviewed for accuracy and as soon as possible after the interview, and any amendments noted to ensure accuracy.

Interview times and dates

Interviews will take place in a timely manner after forms are received. A range of times will be offered to applicants to facilitate participation. However, the Panel may reject applicants where, after reasonable efforts, no time for an interview can be agreed, and where failure to make an approval decision would cause delays to the Local Party's wider approval and selection process.

Outcomes

The interview panel will use the approved person specification as the basis for their decisions to approve, pre-approve, conditionally approve, or reject applicants. All decisions will be based on topics discussed in the interview, but where an applicant has been a candidate in the past, the Panel will take into account prior performance against the criteria when making their decision, using campaign data from Connect (if available) and feedback from team members.

All applicants will be told the result of individual interviews are by the panel Chair, as soon as possible after a decision has been reached. Reasons for conditional approval or rejection will be clearly stated.

Decisions will be made as follows.

Unconditional or 'Full' Approval

Where applicants meet the criteria in the person specification, and approval is sought for an election less than twelve months away, they will be approved unless there are significant material factors that the Panel considers make the applicant unsuitable to represent the Liberal Democrats. Approved applicants are eligible for selection to seats for which they are approved for a period of 12 months from the approval application deadline.

Pre-Approval

Where applicants meet all or most of the criteria in the person specification, and approval is sought for an election more than twelve months away, they will be pre-approved unless there are significant material factors that the Panel considers make the applicant unsuitable to represent the Liberal Democrats. Any areas of weakness will be communicated to the applicant and recorded for subsequent approval. Pre-approved applicants are expected to contribute to local party campaigns. Pre-approval lasts for a period of 18 months from the time that the decision is communicated, and pre-approved applicants will undergo a modified approval process, as documented elsewhere in this policy.

Conditional Approval

Where applicants meet most but not all of the criteria in the person specification, and approval is sought for an election less than twelve months away, they will be granted a conditional approval. Any areas of weakness will be communicated to the applicant and to the local party executive. Conditionally approved applicants are expected to contribute to local party campaigns and to demonstrate that identified areas of weakness can be resolved. Approved applicants are eligible for selection to seats for which they are approved for a period of 12 months from the approval application deadline, but are not entitled to stand in public elections as a Liberal Democrat candidate until the conditional approval is converted into full approval.

Rejection

Where applicants do not meet all of the criteria in the person specification, and the Panel reasonably believes that they will not be able to meet the criteria in time for the election, or if there are significant material factors that the Panel reasonably considers

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make the applicant unsuitable to represent the Liberal Democrats, then they will be rejected. Rejected applicants may apply for approval again in the future.

Review of Conditional Approvals

Where conditional approvals are granted, a Panel may be convened or re-convened to review the approval by considering evidence (which may consist of a further interview) of progress against the areas of weakness that were identified when the conditional approval was awarded.

Based on the applicants' progress on the areas of weakness, the Panel may alter the approval outcome to Approved or Rejected, or uphold the Conditional Approval pending a further review.

Appeals

If an applicant is given a conditional approval or rejected, or they believe that the process outlined in this policy was not followed correctly, they may appeal the decision.

Applicants must lodge the grounds for their appeal with the Local Party Chair within 7 calendar days of receiving their decision.

If an appeal is requested, then a group of three people will be convened by the Local Party to consider the appeal. The Appeal Panel must contain at least one party member from outside the Local Party and must not contain anybody from the original interview panel. The Appeal Panel will be given all minutes and notes from the original interview.

Appeal Process

The Appeal Panel will ask the original set of interview questions again, along with any extra questions raised during the appeal interview and paperwork received. The applicant may have a witness present throughout their interview, although this person is only allowed to observe and not participate.

The Appeal Panel may ask additional questions where they are necessary to understand or clarify matters relating to the original decision.

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The Appeal Panel will inform the applicant as soon as possible whether the original decision has been upheld or not. If the decision to reject or give a conditional approval is upheld, then a justification will be provided.

Region

If the applicant wishes to, they may appeal the decision of the Local Party Appeal Panel, within 7 days of receiving the decision, to the Regional Party. The Local Party will provide any evidence requested to the Regional Party.

Selection

Applicants will usually express an interest in specific wards or divisions on their approval application form.

Following completion of approvals, the Approvals Chair – in discussion with the local party executive and other local parties in the South West Hampshire Authority area - will provisionally select eligible applicants to available seats in the election based on applicants' preferences, in such a way as to reasonably minimise the number of contested seats, considering the local profile and campaign contribution of applicants.

Provisional selections will be communicated to the relevant applicants, who will have five days to request that they are provisionally selected to a different seat. The selection chair may indicate whether a contest is likely in a given seat, but will not inform candidates about the identity of other potential candidates.

If after provisional selections are complete (and following applicant requests to change seats) there are seats with more than one provisionally-selected candidate, then a selection contest will take place. The selection contest will determine which applicant will become the candidate.

Where seats are uncontested, the single provisionally-selected candidate will become the candidate.

On all issues to do with the ensuing selection contest the Local Party will appoint a Returning Officer, who may be the Approvals Chair. The Returning Officer will have final say on any disagreement.

Applicants

All applicants will be informed there will be a selection contest and can decide whether to stand or not. If two or more applicants wish to stand then the selection contest proceeds. If only one applicant wishes to stand in the contest, then that applicant will be duly appointed as the selected applicant. If all applicants withdraw, the approval process will be re-opened.

Artwork

Each applicant for election will be asked to produce a one side of A4 black and white manifesto, this can include pictures, but applicants are not allowed to mention others in the party or have endorsements. These will be printed in the Local Party office.

Data

Each applicant will be supplied with data from the party's official membership database, they may only use the data provided to contact members and will be asked to destroy all data given to them after the election.

Voting

All party members who have been a member for over one month in the branch in which the ward is part of for Eastleigh Borough Council elections or Division for Hampshire County Council elections that is being contested are eligible to vote.

All eligible members will be supplied with a letter explaining the process, the applicant's manifestos, a ballot paper and a pre-addressed envelope with which to send back their ballot paper.

Ballot papers will be numbered so that ballots that are not received by the member can be cancelled and replaced. The list of issued ballots will be destroyed after ballot papers have been verified, and at no point will be available to anyone other than the Returning Officer.

Selection contests will take place over two weeks from when the ballot paper is sent out, with a deadline made to clear to members and the applicants. Applicants may contact members at any time within the two week period.

The votes in the selection contest will be counted after the election closes, at a time that the applicants are told in advance. Applicants may come to the count or send someone in their place, as well as bring a witness.

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The returning officer's decision at the count is final.

Not Standing

If at any point in the above processes any applicant wishes to withdraw from the process, they should communicate their withdrawal to the Approvals Chair.

Person Specification for Unitary Authority Candidates

	Essential	Desirable
Political Affiliation	• Membership of the Liberal Democrats • Political views broadly in line with those of the Liberal Democrats • Working knowledge of local and national Liberal Democrat policy on key issues	• Experience of Liberal Democrat policy-making, through for example conference attendance
Campaign Experience	• Awareness of Liberal Democrat campaign activities such as delivery and canvassing • Ability to contribute and recent track record of contributing to campaign activities such as delivery, canvassing, telephone canvassing, or administration	• Experience drafting or editing copy for leaflets or other publications • Experience using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to communicate with others using public-facing profiles or pages • Engagement with relevant national or local training • Experience of recruiting and managing activists * • An established local profile in one or more county divisions * • An established network of activists and volunteers who contribute to your campaigning *
Team working and Communication	• Ability to lead a team to achieve campaign objectives • Ability to communicate with others verbally • Experience using basic digital tools such as email for communication.	•
Availability	• Ongoing availability for daytime and evening council and group meetings • Ongoing availability to campaign during the year, and during the 'short campaign' period.	•
Council experience	• An awareness of the role of a Councillor	• Experience of participating in, or chairing, formal meetings on a council or other body

* For new candidates, it is likely that these criteria will be demonstrated during a pre-approval or conditional approval phase.