**CONSTITUTION OF THE NORTH WEST GREEN PARTY** as adopted at the NWGP AGM on 7 February 2015 and amended at the NWGP AGM on 13 February 2016, the NWGP AGM on 17 February 2018, NWGP EGM 7 November 2020, the NWGP AGM 18 February 2023 and the NWGP AGM on 16 March 2024 (14 pages).

**1. DEFINITIONS**

**NAME:** The name of the Party shall be the "North West Green Party," (hereinafter called 'NWGP').

**MEMBERS:** Any member of the Green Party of England and Wales (hereinafter called 'GPEW') living within the North West Region.

**LOCAL PARTY:** A local party is as defined in the constitution of the GPEW.

**NORTH WEST (NW) REGION:** The counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, Cumbria together with the metropolitan areas of Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

**GENERAL MEETING:** A meeting open to all NWGP members, including Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs). A General Meeting may form part of a members’ event.

**2. INTERPRETATION**

NWGP shall be a Regional Party as defined by the Constitution of GPEW and this Constitution shall be read and interpreted in accordance with the aims, workings and Constitution of GPEW. Where inconsistencies occur the Constitution of GPEW will take precedence.

**3. AIMS and OBJECTIVES**

**3.1** To facilitate getting more Greens elected to every level of Government in the NW Region;

**3.2** To support and encourage co-operation and effective targeting of resources within and between NW Local Parties;

**3.3** To co-ordinate Green Party activities across the NW region in all levels of elections, and in any region-wide campaigns which seek to fulfil the Objects of the GPEW, and in any other specified activities as may from time to time be agreed by a General Meeting;

**3.4** To contribute to the well-being of the national party on behalf of the members and local parties of NWGP, in particular through the Green Party Regional Council (GPRC).

**3.5** To facilitate the broadest possible participation of NWGP members in its activities and decision making.

**4. MEETINGS**

**4.1 General Meetings:** The NWGP shall hold at least two General Meetings a year, one of which shall be the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Every effort shall be made to ensure that remote participation is possible in General Meetings, but a failure to provide a working internet connection is not grounds to declare a General Meeting invalid.

**4.2 Notice of meetings:** Notice of General Meetings shall be at least two weeks (and ideally four weeks), by email to all members who have provided GPEW with an email address and not unsubscribed from regional emails, and by post for members not on email who have specifically requested notice of General Meetings.

**4.3 Annual General Meeting (AGM):** An AGM will be held every year, not later than the end of March. The AGM will receive and adopt reports from the incumbent elected and co-opted Committee Officers, Committee Members and Regional Postholders on activities of the previous year and receive and adopt financial accounts for the previous year. Elections will be held to appoint Committee Officers, Committee Members and Regional Postholders for the coming year, and the results will be announced at the AGM. The representatives to GPRC will also report to the AGM.

**4.4 Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs):** These may be called at any time by a General Meeting, or by the Committee, or at the request of 100 current members. The business of the EGM shall be constitutional matters or other matters which are of sufficient urgency that they cannot wait until the next scheduled General Meeting. The calling of an EGM must be notified to members within 7 days of the Co-ordinator/Chair receiving the request.

**4.5 Quoracy:** A quorum for General Meetings shall be 30 or 1% of members of NWGP (whichever is the smaller number); members attending remotely shall contribute to quoracy. If thirty minutes after the time appointed for the meeting a quorum is not present, the meeting shall stand adjourned until such time and place as the Committee may decide. All Members shall be given such notice as is practicable of the time, date and place of the re-convening of such an adjourned meeting. If those present so decide, 'informal business' not requiring a quorum, and which cannot make decisions for NWGP, may continue.

**4.6 Motions and resolutions:** Motions and resolutions may be proposed in advance to be voted on during General Meetings. Motions must be submitted in writing or by email to the Secretary 14 clear days before the scheduled date of the meeting; the proposer must be named but a seconder may be sought during the meeting. Topics of motions and resolutions must be appropriate to the function of the regional party, its officers and/or role holders. For example, a motion could mandate either or both representatives of the region to GPRC to communicate an agreed position from the region on a specific issue, including how to vote on a decision about that issue. All motions and resolutions to General Meetings must have a proposer and a seconder, both of whom are members of NWGP. Motions, or amendments to motions, which respond to matters presented at the meeting in either written or verbal form, may be moved as Emergency Motions (see 4.7) and require a proposer and seconder before they can be formally considered.

**4.7 Emergency motions:** These may be considered by a General Meeting after consent is granted by a two-thirds majority vote of the meeting. Emergency Motions may not make changes to the NWGP constitution. Emergency Motions which are formally passed by the meeting may, if desired by the proposer, be submitted in the name of NWGP to Standing Orders Committee for inclusion in the agenda of a Green Party Conference, or if so requested, may be taken to GPRC by the NWGP representatives.

**4.8 Any Other Business:** Any such items discussed will be noted in the minutes and may be carried forward as an agenda item to the next meeting by majority vote.

**4.9 Agenda:** The final agenda will be published at least 7 days in advance of a General Meeting.

**4.10 Regional Committee report:** Each ordinary General Meeting will include on its agenda a report from the Regional Committee, allowing the meeting to question the Committee on its past and future business. The GPRC representative/s shall also make a written report to each General Meeting, including the Annual General Meeting. Reports will also be expected from other regional roleholders; ideally these will be presented in writing but they may be made as oral reports at the discretion of the chair of the meeting.

**4.11 Attendance and voting rights:** Only members of NWGP may vote at a General Meeting. At the discretion of the chair of the meeting, non-members may attend and contribute to discussions, but they may not vote.

**4.12 Decisions:** These shall be reached by consensus wherever possible, but where there is a clear division of opinion, and in the meeting chair’s opinion the matter cannot be deferred to another meeting for more information or discussion, then a vote shall be taken. Any member may make a procedural motion to move to a vote when two speeches have been made for and against a proposal. When a vote is taken the following shall apply:

• A two-thirds majority of those present and eligible to vote is required to amend the NWGP Constitution; a simple majority is required to amend the NWGP Standing Orders;

• A simple majority is required for all other business.

**4.13 Secret ballots:** Any ten members at a General Meeting may request that a vote being taken at that meeting be conducted by secret ballot.

**4.14 Other meetings:** Any other meeting held between NWGP members not convened under paragraphs 4.1, 4.3, or 4.4, or given such powers by the NWGP Committee or a General Meeting, shall not be empowered to make decisions on behalf of NWGP.

**4.15 Minutes:** Minutes will be taken of every General Meeting and will be published in draft form within 28 days of the meeting. The minutes will be approved at the next appropriate General Meeting.

**5. KEY REGIONAL ROLES**

**5.1** Administration of the NWGP shall be by the elected Committee Officers, who together with the GPRC representatives shall form the NWGP Committee and will be individually and collectively accountable to the NWGP.

5.2 Regional employees will be expected to attend committee and general meetings, unless notified otherwise by the Chair.

5.3 Committee Officers, representatives to GPRC and other regional roleholders candidates in European Elections must be members of NWGP, and must have been members of GPEW in good standing for at least one year continuously at the call for nominations . Where no eligible candidate comes forward for election candidates for co-option may be sought; the eligibility rules may be waived by agreement of the Committee.

5.4 Any Committee member, GPRC representative or other role holder may be removed from office, recalled or deselected by a two-thirds majority vote at a General Meeting, provided that notice of the proposal to do so is on the circulated agenda and has been given to the office holder concerned. In line with the practice when a member of the national Executive Committee (GPEx) is recalled, a new ballot will be held for the post and the recalled role holder will be entitled to stand as a candidate, and the recalled role holder will be informed of this right by the Electoral Returning Officer.

5.5 Any Committee member or role holder (other than GPRC representatives) may be removed from office by a vote of the other Committee members. Grounds for removal from the Committee include missing three consecutive meetings of the Committee without good reason. Whilst sending apologies is encouraged when a meeting has to be missed, the act of sending apologies shall not discount that meeting from the tally of consecutive meetings that have been missed. Other grounds for removal may include failure to discharge the reasonable expectations of the role in a timely manner.

**6. The NWGP COMMITTEE**

**6.1** The Committee Officer posts will be: Co-ordinator/Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and Regional Election Agent/ Officer, Equality and Involvement Officer, Local Party Support Officer, Internal Communications Officer, Events and Conferences Organiser, and Fundraising Officer. These Officers shall be elected by the NWGP members; any unfilled roles at the conclusion of the annual ballot may be filled by co-option. There shall also be at least one elected member without portfolio, and no more than three. These Officers will be responsible for delivering the objectives of the NWGP. The remit of each Officer will be described in writing. Each Officer and member without portfolio shall be a voting member of the Committee, whether elected or co-opted. GPRC representatives are non-voting members of the Committee.

**6.2** Further regional role holders may be elected at a General Meeting or co-opted by the Committee to co-ordinate specific activities. Role holders not elected through the annual ballot nor co-opted to an officer role shall have attendance and speaking rights at Committee meetings and should collaborate with the Committee but may not vote. Roles may include, but are not limited to, the following: Wellbeing Champion/s; Councillor Liaison; Trade Union Liaison; Regional Disputes and Complaints Manager.

**6.3** Further roles may be identified and recruited to by the Committee. This may include representatives of defined geographical areas (such as the historic counties of Cumbria, Cheshire and Lancashire, the modern Combined Authorities of metropolitan boroughs, and any subdivision of such an area that may seem appropriate). Members living within a defined geographical area may approach the Committee to request that their representative is identified as a role holder on the Committee – the means of recruiting to that role will be proposed, and the Committee has discretion over whether or not to co-opt that geographical representative to the Committee. Geographical representatives that are co-opted to the committee will have attendance and speaking rights at Committee meetings and should collaborate with the Committee but may not vote; geographical representatives may request access to mailing lists for the area they represent.

**6.4** It is generally expected that Committee Officers and role holders will hold a post for no more than 5 consecutive years, but this may be extended with the agreement of NWGP members at subsequent AGMs.

**6.5** The quorum for committee meetings and decision-making by telecommunications will be 3 Committee Officers, at least 1 of whom must be either the Co-ordinator/Chair, Treasurer, Secretary or Regional Election Agent/Officer. Decisions shall be by consensus wherever possible but a vote will be taken if the voting members of the Committee are unable to achieve consensus. The vote may be taken during a specified period after the meeting to enable all Officers to participate. The Committee will meet at least once subsequent to the AGM to discuss and agree a work plan for itself for the period leading up to the next AGM. It will also meet at least once roughly mid-term to review progress with that plan. On both occasions a full report will be made available to NWGP members via the next General Meeting and its minutes.

**6.6** Notes or minutes of Committee meetings will be taken and these will be published on the members’ website , excluding confidential matters.

**6.7** Other "ex officio representatives" may attend and speak at Committee meetings at the discretion of the Co-ordinator/Chair after consulting with the Committee. Such representatives may include Green Party employees, subcommittee co-ordinators or members representing NWGP on external bodies or committees.

**6.8** The Treasurer and Chair shall hold joint responsibility for NWGP's finances, and as such shall both be bank account signatories. At least one additional signatory will be decided upon by each year's Committee, and shall be selected from the elected Officers of the Committee including the GPRC representatives, according to what may seem most practical for that year. If necessary a former Officer of the Committee may continue as a signatory pro tem whilst a willing Officer is co-opted to a vacant position. All disbursements must be confirmed by two of the signatories. Financial matters shall be conducted according to Electoral Commission and GPEW regulations including the appointment of a PPERA Officer who can substitute for the Treasurer if the Treasurer is unavailable for some pressing reason.

**6.9** Expenditure may be incurred on behalf of NWGP provided prior approval is obtained at a General Meeting or from the Committee. This expenditure is subject to certification by the Treasurer that there are sufficient funds to cover it. During election periods, candidates may not incur expenditure without authorisation of the Election Agent.

**6.10 Election and co-option of Committee Officers, Committee Members and Regional Postholders**

**6.10.1** Elections for all Committee Officers and other Committee Members shall be held every year, with a closing date notified to fully paid-up members at least 35 clear days in advance.

**6.10.2** The elections shall be held online so far as possible, with provision for postal voting for those unable to vote online.

**6.10.3** No member may hold more than one of the Officer posts.

**6.10.4** Should a vacancy arise mid-term the Officer post may be filled by co-option by the remaining elected Committee Members, subject to ratification by the next General Meeting or ballot of all members.

**6.11 Nominations and conduct of elections to the Committee:**

**6.11.1** Prior to each election the Committee shall appoint an Electoral Returning Officer (ERO). This will be an individual who is not also intending to seek nomination as a candidate in the election. **6.11.2** A call for nominations shall be made with the notification of the closing date of the election. Nominations must be: i In writing, with a supporting statement to be considered by electors, ii Proposed and seconded by members of NWGP, and iii Received by the ERO at least 21 clear days before the closing date of the election. iv notified to the members with the ballots at least 14 clear days before the closing date of the election.

**6.11.3** Elections for Committee Officer posts shall be held in line with the current national party protocols including provision for negative voting, in the form of "re-open nominations" (RON).

**6.12** **Sub-Committees** The Committee may form Sub-Committees for any purpose provided: i The Committee remains collectively responsible for all responsibilities and decisions of any Sub-Committee; ii Any Sub-Committee must include at least one member of the NWGP Committee.

**6.13 Sub-regional Groups:**

**6.13.1** Local parties within the North West region that wish to work together may apply to the regional party to be recognised as a sub-regional group. The applicant group should provide a written summary and evidence of the agreement between the local parties concerned, setting out the terms on which they are to work together and the geographical area covered.

**6.13.2** On an application being approved by the Committee, such a group will be expected to make regular updates on its activity available to NWGP members and to liaise with relevant NWGP Committee Members and Regional Postholders.

**6.14 Representatives of NWGP to GPRC and DC:**

**6.14.1** Two representatives from NWGP to GPRC, and the NW members of the GPEW Disciplinary Committee, shall be selected by ballot of all members of NWGP, in a manner consistent with the Constitution and Standing Orders of GPEW. At least one of the GPRC representatives must identify as not male. Candidates for GPRC must not also be elected NW Committee Officers.

**6.14.2** The term of office will be two years from the time of election, and the maximum number of consecutive terms that can be served is three.

**6.14.3** Nomination and election of the representatives shall be undertaken according to the procedure provided for the election of Committee members in 6.9 and 6.10. If two NWGP representatives to GPRC or DC are due to complete their term at the same time, one of them will be invited to stand down six months early (or as close to that time as practical in light of any other regional ballots taking place) so that a staggered end date may be achieved. The representative standing down will be entitled to stand for re-election, providing that they will not have served their maximum term (ie six years from time of initial election) before the end of the next two-year period.

**6.14.4** A casual vacancy for a NWGP representative to GPRC may be filled by co-option at a General Meeting following a call for nominations to all members. Notice of the intention to co-opt and nominated candidates must be circulated with the agenda. The co-opted person will have the full rights and responsibilities of an elected person during the period of co-option. A ballot will be held as soon as is reasonably possible to fill the vacancy by election.

**6.14.5** GPRC representatives shall report back from GPRC and take any regional concerns to the appropriate part of GPEW on behalf of the Committee. As representatives of the NW region, they are expected to contribute positively and with goodwill to the effective functioning of GPRC. The NWGP Committee may investigate and/or initiate proceedings to recall a GPRC representative (in accordance with clause 5.4) who has not met these expectations. GPRC representatives may be subject to recall if they have not attended three consecutive meetings of the NWGP Committee without good reason. Whilst sending apologies is encouraged when a meeting has to be missed, the act of sending apologies is not a way to discount that meeting from the tally of consecutive meetings that have been missed. The NWGP Committee has the right to initiate recall on these grounds (in accordance with clause 5.4).

**7. PROCEDURE RELATING TO HELD FUNDS**

**7.1** In the event of the dissolution of any local party recognised by NWGP, all the remaining monies and assets after outstanding debts have been met must be passed to NWGP (unless the local party constitution contains conflicting provisions). The NWGP Committee may decide to allocate held funds in an appropriate way taking into account the purpose for which the money was given (if known) and the need to re-establish a new local party for the same, or a similar, geographical area. This may include using held funds to support the election campaign of a neighbouring local party which is taking responsibility for organising candidates in the area formerly covered by the dissolved local party, noting that the funds may be used to support the election campaign/s of one or more target candidates who are not standing in the geographical area covered by the dissolved local party. In exceptional circumstances – such as a winnable by-election – the held funds may be used to support an election campaign of a target candidate elsewhere in the region, but the expectation is that an equivalent amount of funding will be made available to the re-established local party covering all (or most) of the original geographical area.

**7.2** Funds may be held on behalf of groups that operate within the NWGP, such as NW Young Greens, NWLGBTIQA+ Greens and others. These funds may not be reallocated in the way that funds from dissolved local parties can be. In the event of the dissolution of a group which has placed held funds with NWGP then advice should be sought from the related national party body, such as Young Greens or LGBTIQA+ Greens, and their recognising body – in these cases, that is Equality and Diversity Committee. Every effort will be made to reallocate held funds towards bodies of the party that are closely aligned with the dissolved group, and/or to retain held funds until the group is reestablished.

**8. RESOLUTION of DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS & DISCIPLINARY MATTERS BY THE NORTH WEST GREEN PARTY**

**8.1** The Standing Orders for Party Discipline for the GPEW passed at Spring Conference 2015, together with other all party documentation, established a constitutionally binding complaints & disciplinary framework for the Green Party of England & Wales.

**8.2** According to these national requirements NWGP must be able to deal with complaints, disciplinary matters or disputes that have initially not been resolved by the local party. These should be raised at the appropriate level of the party.

**8.3 Complaints & Disciplinary Process**

**8.3.1** The NWGP shall follow the process set out in the Standing Orders of NWGP .

**8.3.2 Wellbeing Champions**

The Wellbeing Champion post is not mandatory but it is encouraged; ideally it would be job-shared. Its role is to assist Local Parties to deal effectively with any disputes/conflicts that may arise, to generally help to promote good working relationships and the wellbeing of NWGP members and also to work with Alternative Disputes Resolution Committee to provide dispute resolution in connection with cases being dealt with by the NWGP Complaints & Disciplinary Procedure.

A request for dispute resolution may be made by members, Local Parties or NWGP bodies directly to the Wellbeing Champion/s. Dispute resolution shall be on a consensual basis and shall remain confidential unless the participants agree to disclosure. If those involved are dissatisfied with the outcome they may then approach the national Alternative Disputes Resolution Committee.

**9. STANDING ORDERS**

9.1 Standing Orders may be created to govern the operation of the NWGP not provided for in this Constitution.

9.2 Standing Orders may be created, amended or deleted by a resolution passed at a General Meeting.

**10. AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION**

**10.1** This Constitution may only be amended by resolutions at an AGM or EGM.

**10.2** Motions to change the Constitution must be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 21 clear days before the scheduled date of the meeting, and the text of the motion circulated with the formal notice of the meeting. If there is a proposal to amend the motion to change the Constitution then this must be sent to the Secretary no later than 7 days before the meeting.

**10.3** Changing the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority vote at the meeting. If there is an amendment to the motion to change the constitution, it requires a simple majority to pass. The motion as amended becomes the substantive proposal.

**10.4** An up-to-date version of this Constitution and its appendices shall be available to all members of the NWGP via the NWGP area of the members’ website.

**11. APPENDICES AND ANNEXES**

**11.1** NWGP organisational documents shall be recorded and updated by officers of the Committee and shall be appended to this Constitution, including any:

**i** Standing orders, or role or remit descriptions for the Committee, subcommittees or their members, or for the conduct of General Meetings;

**ii** Any documents relating to agreed requirements for candidates or elected representatives, public speakers and those making public statements on behalf of the NWGP;

**iii** Other procedures or protocols that may be agreed, including those for members, such as on dispute resolution, internal communication, codes of conduct, etc.

**12 DISSOLUTION**

**12.1** The NWGP may be wound up by a resolution and two-thirds majority vote at an AGM or EGM called for the purpose.

**12.2** In the event of the dissolution of the NWGP, all the remaining monies and assets after outstanding debts have been met must be allocated in an appropriate way taking into account the purpose for which the money was given and the need to re-establish a new Regional Party structure. **12.3** In the event of Dissolution, the relevant bodies of the GPEW shall be informed.

**STANDING ORDERS OF NORTH WEST GREEN PARTY**

**COMPLANTS & DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE** (Adopted in February 2023, amended in March 2024)

**DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINARY**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**North West Green Party**

**1. Introduction**

Any member who is concerned about how another party member, or a party body has acted, is advised to raise that concern using the correct procedure.

Disciplinary measures should be seen as a last resort and not as a substitute for good working practices, nor for the use of consensual dispute resolution. However, there are two particular circumstances when it is not appropriate to consider using an informal approach first.

a. If the concern is of a **Safeguarding** nature, it must be referred to the Regional or National Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible. safeguarding@greenparty.org.uk

b. If there is evidence of **illegal activity** going on within GPEW, the concern can be raised internally under the **Whistleblowing Policy**. ceo@greenparty.org.uk .

In some situations it may be necessary to report the concern externally (for instance, to the police) as well as internally even if the concern is not of a safeguarding activity and is not covered by the Whistleblowing Policy. For instance, if there is violence, or threat of violence, this is likely to require notification to the police in addition to following the process below. The advice of the police should be followed where it might conflict with internal GPEW processes, and it is recommended that a note should be kept of the advice given (including date received) so that it can potentially be used in evidence if an internal process might be delayed as a result.

1.1 Informal approaches

For all other matters of concern, in the first instance it is better for a dispute, complaint or grievance to be dealt with informally by discussing the issue with the individual or party body concerned to see whether it may be resolved amicably. If this is not possible, bringing in a third party to act as an intermediary should be considered. This person could then act as a mediator to try and resolve the dispute, grievance or complaint informally.

Any member who wishes to raise a grievance about decisions made by a particular body or committee in the party, should in the first instance, make an approach raising the concerns in writing to the Chair/Co-ordinator of that body. If the initial informal contact with the Chair/Co-ordinator does not result in a resolution of the grievance, they could ask that the matter be raised at the next meeting of that party body.

If the concern is with the actions or behaviour of the Chair/Co-ordinator of NWGP the approach should be made to the designated Regional Disputes and Complaints Manager (RDCM) (see 2.2 below)

1.2 Formal approaches

A member who feels they cannot resolve their dispute, complaint or grievance in this way may want to engage in a formal dispute or complaint process.

In the case of a grievance, the Constitution or Standing Orders of the party body may specify how concerns will be managed. An unresolved grievance may be considered as a dispute or complaint.

Disputes or complaints should be managed through the procedure detailed below.

Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW) Standing Orders for Party Discipline passed at Spring Conference 2015, and amended by Conference since, established a constitutionally binding complaints and disciplinary framework for GPEW.

[SOPD after Autumn Conference 2021.pdf (greenparty.org.uk)](https://members.greenparty.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/SOPD%20after%20Autumn%20Conference%202021.pdf)

The relevant GPEW documentation is

• the GPEW Code of Conduct

• the Bullying and Harassment Policy and any other documents appended to the Code of Conduct.

• the GPEW Social Media Policy

Please read the guidance on the national website in addition to this procedure at <https://my.greenparty.org.uk/content/complaints-process>

**Glossary**

This list of definitions applies with reference to GPEW and is designed to help you to decide how best to address your concern.

**Dispute:** an argument or disagreement with one or more other Green Party members

**Complaint:** raising concern about the behaviour of another member who may be contravening the GPEW Code of Conduct or Constitution

**Grievance:** concern over things going wrong in a group, for example, procedures not being followed, faulty decisions made, etc.

**Complainant:** the person or persons making the complaint. References to complainant in the singular should also be taken to refer to the plural, where applicable in this document.

**Respondent:** the person or persons about whom the complaint is being made. References to respondent in the singular should also be taken to refer to the plural, where applicable in this document.

**Disputes and Complaints Manager (DCM):** the person to whom complaints should be addressed and is the person responsible for ensuring correct and fair process is followed. Both the region and larger local parties should have a designated DCM.

**Alternative Disputes Resolution Committee (ADRC):** the national GPEW body which provides an independent mediation and dispute resolution service

**Mediation:** a process to help parties in a dispute to acknowledge and resolve differences. Decisions about outcomes are made together between the individuals engaging in the process

**Confidentiality:** allowing only those permitted by agreement or established rules to have access to defined information

**Disciplinary Panel:** a group of members appointed to consider and adjudicate on the complaint

**Appeal Panel:** a group of members appointed to consider an appeal by a complainant or respondent who is dissatisfied with the decision of a local party

**‘McKenzie Friend’**: someone who supports you in a GPEW disciplinary hearing, providing moral support. They may take notes for you and help with presenting evidence, and can give advice but they would not usually be allowed to question witnesses or speak on your behalf. Under GPEW processes the ‘McKenzie Friend’ is expected to be a member of the party.

**2. Management of disputes, complaints and appeals by the regional party**

2.1 If a dispute or complaint has not been resolved informally, it could be taken to the formal stage. According to the national requirements, every regional party must be able to deal with complaints and disputes that have initially not been resolved between the people involved, or at local party level.

Members are advised to complete the NWGP Regional Dispute and Complaints form or the NWGP Regional Appeals form, as appropriate. Both forms are available on request from the Secretary of the NWGP Committee. They may wish to request assistance in this from the Regional Disputes and Complaints Manager.

2.2 The NWGP Committee will nominate one regional member to be the Regional Disputes and Complaints Manager (RDCM). The Role Description for the RDCM is given in the appendix. This person may be an officer of the NW Committee in another capacity, but they will not be a voting member of the NW Committee in this role. They will be asked to provide non-confidential reports to the NW Committee. As their RDCM role requires them to act independently of Green Party Regional Council and Disciplinary Committee at national level, the RDCM must not be a member of either of these bodies.

2.3 The NWGP Committee will decide who will investigate a complaint. They will appoint two members who are not part of the Regional Committee to investigate a complaint, the Investigator Panel. They are encouraged to hold and keep updated a list of appointed members from which the Investigator Panel can be drawn.

2.4 The NWGP Committee will appoint and hold an Approved List of members who may be called upon to form a Disciplinary or Appeal Panel. They will also be able to liaise with mediators who are available within the region, as part of the service offered by Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADRC). If there is any potential conflict of interest between the RDCM in the matter of the complaint, the dispute or complaint should be addressed to the Chair/Co-ordinator, the Secretary or another member of the NW Committee, who will then pass the complaint to one of the members of the Approved List. This member will then work in an Acting RDCM capacity.

2.5 A NWGP Disciplinary Panel is empowered to deal with the following:

i. Complaints that have been referred to the region from the national Disputes and Complaints Referral Group by the national Complaints Manager.

ii. Complaints against any member of any local party in NWGP Region which does not have a Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedure enabling it to manage complaints at local level.

iii. Complaints against any member of a local party which due to its nature it would not be appropriate to deal with under the local party Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedure.

iv. Complaints against a NWGP member in relation to their membership of the NW Committee or any activities organised by that body. This includes working groups, sub-regional groups and regionally organised meetings.

An Appeals Panel is empowered to deal with appeals against the decisions of Local Parties taken under their Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedure. This panel is not empowered to deal with appeals against the decisions of the Regional Panel: all such appeals will be referred to the national Appeals Committee.2.6 Members of Local Party Panel Approved Lists (if local parties have them) may also be included on the Regional Investigator Panel and Approved List but shall not be involved in processes involving their own local party or members of their own local party.

2.7 It is a requirement that the RDCM, investigators and members of the Approved List shall receive training in discrimination law, bias and unconscious bias, and Safe Spaces. Such training will be provided as an online package by the national party.

**3. Considerations**

3.1 At the outset, the complainant and respondent shall be asked by the RDCM whether they consider that any adjustments need to be made to the process for reasons of disability, and if so, what those adjustments should be.

3.2 Every reasonable effort should be made by all concerned to respect confidentiality. However, it should be explained to complainants that some details may necessarily need to be shared in confidence with members involved in the investigation and hearing of the complaint.

3.3 If the dispute or complaint involves any individual Officer of the NWGP Committee that Officer must have no involvement in the management or determination of the complaint.

3.4 Where the respondent is an elected representative of the Party (such as a councillor or MP) there may be separate and independent responses by the Regional Party and by the representative body. The Chair/Co-ordinator of the NWGP of the Party (or another member of the Committee if the Chair/Co-ordinator is directly involved in the case) shall liaise with the RDCM to ensure that full account be taken of the timing of any disciplinary action when a complaint has also been made to the elected body (such as the local Council or Parliament).

3.5 Any NWGP member who receives a request to be involved in the management and/or determination about a complaint, and who has a knowledge of the subject matter of the complaint or is known personally to either the complainant or respondent, must declare their interest and make a judgement as to whether they are able to act in a fair and impartial way in considering the complaint. If they are not, they must recuse themselves from any further involvement in consideration of the case. Any member who has been involved at the local party level in the complaint may not be involved in the regional Disputes, Complaints and Disciplinary process.

3.6 No member of the national Disciplinary Committee may be involved in disputes and complaints proceedings at regional level (unless as complainant, respondent or witness) as this may conflict with any role they may have in further procedures or appeal procedures.

3.7 All actions will need to be logged by the RDCM. This listing will contain, at a minimum, the date of receipt of complaint, issues identified by Panel, initial assessment by Panel. Depending on next steps, the listing will go on to detail the outcome of any mediation process, assessment of outstanding issues by Panel, offer of oral hearing, outcome of oral hearing and recommendations, confirmation of decision, appeal to national Appeals Committee, outcome of appeal, any involvement of national Disciplinary Committee and outcome. These records will be stored in the confidential document area designated by the NWGP Committee.

3.8 The RDCM should be aware of the potential for the complaints process to be used to harass or undermine members of the Party. If the RDCM has a concern that the complaint might be Unreasonable, Persistent, Vexatious, Abusive or Malicious (UPVAM) they should discuss this concern with the Chair/Co-ordinator and Secretary of NWGP Committee; if one or both of these officers is involved then the two other members of the Committee should be approached. If their decision is that the complaint process is being used to harass or undermine another member then the RDCM and the Committee members involved will raise and discuss this concern with the Complainant. GPRC has an UPVAM procedure that can be used to assist in identifying and managing such complaints.

**4. Dispute resolution**

A request for formal dispute resolution may be made by a member to the RDCM who will then contact the regional mediator team or the national Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADRC) directly. If they have not already done so, the complainant should be encouraged to complete the relevant NWGP Disputes and Complaints form, to expediate the referral to mediation. Should the regional mediator team be unable to assist the case can be escalated to the national ADRC: they will probably need the national level Disputes and Complaints form to be completed <https://members.greenparty.org.uk/complaints>

**5. Disciplinary complaints**

5.1 If a member considers that another member of NWGP has acted in either or both of the following ways, a) and b) below, and they have not already done so, they should complete the NWGP Disputes and Complaints form and forward it to the RDCM

a) that the Respondent has contravened the Constitution of the Green Party of England and Wales as interpreted by the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) or contravened the Constitution of NWGP as interpreted by the NWGP Committee.

b) that the Respondent has committed a breach of one or more of the number of Standards in the Party’s Code of Conduct. Such a breach can include an allegation that the Respondent has risked bringing, or has brought, the party into disrepute.

 A complaint that does not meet one of these criteria, a) or b) above, is not a disciplinable matter.

5.2 The date of the receipt of a completed complaint form by the RDCM will be deemed to be the commencement date of the complaint process. The RDCM will keep an accurate up-to-date record of the progress of the complaint, liaising with the relevant parties as necessary, according to the Role Description in the Appendix.

5.3 On receipt of a completed complaint form the RDCM must:

a) refer any Safeguarding concern to the national or regional Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours. safeguarding@greenparty.org.uk

b) refer any report of alleged illegal activity within the party using the national Whistleblowing Policy. ceo@greenparty.org.uk

c) consider whether there is an immediate risk to the well-being of the party, a party body or an individual member on the basis of the allegations made by the complainant.

In the case of c) above, the RDCM should ask the Green Party Regional Council (GPRC) to consider imposing an immediate No Fault Temporary Suspension (NFTS, also sometimes called NFS) on the respondent, by contacting the national Complaints Manager complaints.manager@greenparty.org.uk . At this point, the NWGP complaint process will be deemed to be paused; GPRC will advise on whether the region can continue to deal with the complaint or has to escalated to the national disciplinary process: in the latter case it will be necessary to complete the national Disputes and Complaints form <https://members.greenparty.org.uk/complaints>

Whether or not a NFTS is imposed, the complaint will then be managed through the national complaints process according to SOPD. This may result in a complaint being referred back to the NWGP from the national party, in which case the paused regional complaint process will be deemed to have restarted on the date that the RDCM receives the referred back complaint.

5.4 Within three days of receipt of a complaint, the RDCM will contact the respondent to inform them of the complaint, arrange to send them the complaint form together with a copy of this policy and procedure. The RDCM will communicate with the complainant to inform them how the complaint will be progressed. The Complainant and Respondent shall be asked whether they require any adjustments to be made to the complaints process for reasons of disability and if so, what these adjustments should be. They will be informed that every reasonable effort will be made to respect confidentiality, while explaining that some details may need to be shared in confidence with other GPEW members and that the outcome of the case may be reported to NWGP Committee members.

5.5 The RDCM should consider whether the matter could be resolvable through dispute resolution. If so, the RDCM may liaise with the complainant and the respondent with a view to clarifying issues and/or resolving the complaint. Constructive communication between the parties will be encouraged and mediation will be offered if appropriate in the circumstances. Such conflict resolution provision may be via the national Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADRC) or a member of the regional mediator team. If a mediation process is agreed by Complainant and Respondent, the complaint process will be deemed to have paused. If mediation is successful, the complaint will be deemed to have been resolved.

5.6 If attempts at conflict resolution have not been successful, the RDCM will, within 14 days of this notification, appoint investigators (as in clause 2.3) and from the Regional Approved List a three-member Regional Disciplinary Panel (as in clause 2.4).The complainant and respondent will be informed of these appointments and have the right of objection to one member of the Panel and/or an investigator, within one week of receiving notification of the Panel and investigator appointees.

5.7 The investigators and Panel will be informed by the RDCM of any adjustments to be made to the complaints process for reasons of disability and if so, what these adjustments should be. The Panel will make every reasonable effort to respect confidentiality, while understanding that some details may need to be shared in confidence with other GPEW members.

5.8 The role of the investigators is

• to gather all relevant information

• to determine the facts about a matter

• to identify where there is common ground between the complainant and the respondent,

and to identify where the facts are in dispute

• to identify where the available evidence bears upon the disputed facts

• to present a written report for the Disciplinary Panel, within 28 days of their appointment as investigators. The report should detail the outputs of the investigation and make recommendations for the hearing if appropriate.

The investigators may find the national Disciplinary Committee investigation procedure helpful, and are recommended to contact either or both of the NWGP members of Disciplinary Committee.

5.9 On receipt of the Investigators’ report, the RDCM will arrange the Disciplinary Panel meeting for the hearing and adjudication, liaising with the Disciplinary Panel as appropriate. The meeting should take place no more than 56 days from receipt of the report by the RDCM and take into account any adjustments that may need to be made for reason of disability, for any of the participants. The Investigators’ Report should be sent to the Disciplinary Panel members immediately, and any further documentation, including any responses from Complainant and Respondent, at least 5 days before the hearing.

5.10 The RDCM will notify the complainant and respondent of the date, time and venue for the hearing, sending the report and informing them that they may each make a response to the Investigators’ report. Any written responses should be submitted to the RDCM 7 days prior to the hearing. The Panel shall also offer the complainant and the respondent the opportunity to present evidence in person at the hearing. They may be accompanied at the hearing by another GPEW member, acting in the role of a ‘McKenzie Friend’ (see glossary).

5.11 The purpose of the Panel is to hear and adjudicate on the complaint, and to establish the most likely picture of what happened (or did not happen) from an analysis of the facts. The Panel hearing will be held in confidential session, with requests to both complainant and respondent to adhere to any agreed confidentiality. The investigators will attend the hearing to present their report and answer questions put to them by members of the Panel. The conduct of the hearing may follow the procedure used by DC at national level.

Following the hearing the Panel will consider the investigators’ report, any submissions (either oral or written) from the respondent and/or complainant and answers to questions put to the investigators.

The Panel will then decide whether the complaint is upheld on the basis of the evidence provided.

If the complaint is not upheld, it will be dismissed.

If a complaint is upheld, the Panel should use the principle of proportionality to decide on any appropriate sanctions. The Panel shall have the power to impose one or more of the list of sanctions provided in Appendix 3.

5.12 Any decisions of the Panel should take into account Party documentation such as the NWGP Constitution, GPEW Code of Conduct, SOPD and the GPEW Constitution in addition to any relevant procedural documents, strategy documents and role descriptions.

5.13 Once a final decision has been reached this will be communicated to all parties in writing by the RDCM within 7 days.

5.14 A case will be deemed unresolved if either the complainant or respondent consider that any of grounds a, b or c below apply, and they notify the RDCM of this within 14 days of receiving notification of the final decision of the Panel:

1. that the finding or actions of the process was unfair
2. that new evidence is available, and that there is good reason why it was not available previously
3. that a procedure was incorrectly followed.

5.15 The NWGP Disciplinary Panel may offer or be asked to review their decision, but is not required to do so. Both the complainant and the respondent , or their representatives, have the right to request that the panel considers undertaking a review.

5.16 On receipt of a notification by the complainant or respondent, or their representative, that they consider the matter unresolved the RDCM will initiate a review process (as in clause 5.15) within 21 days. If a Complainant or Respondent is dissatisfied with a NWGP decision on a disciplinary complaint, there may be a route, specified under the national Standing Orders for Party Discipline, for an appeal to the national level of GPEW.

5.17 If either the complainant or the respondent is still unhappy, whether or not a review has been carried out, and their unhappiness is based on one of the grounds a, b, or c noted at 5.14, then a formal appeal may be raised to the national Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee will approach the appeal in the same way that they approach appeals of decisions made by national Disciplinary Committee.

5.18 Any appeal against the decision of the Disciplinary Panel must be raised in accordance with the provisions for appeals set out in Standing Orders for Party Discipline. If a review is instituted (see clause 5.16) then the deadline for raising an appeal will be extended.

**6. Appeals against decisions of local parties**

6.1 On receipt of an appeal from a complainant or respondent (now named the ‘appellant’) against the decision of a local party under its Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedure, the RDCM will convene a three person Appeal Panel from the Approved List held by the NWGP Committee.

6.2 On receipt of all the relevant documentation from the local party and the appellant, the RDCM will forward the file of documents to the Appeal Panel and set the date of the appeal hearing, which should be within 28 days of receipt of the appeal. In the case of appeals against Local Party decisions the Panel may decide that the Local Party's decision was correct.

6.3 If the Panel finds the Local Party’s decision was not correct, and decides to uphold the appeal, it can substitute its own decision. Alternative sanctions may be considered which are listed in Appendix 3. The decision can recommend what action the Local Party should take, including sanctions to be applied or changes to working practices to be made.

6.4 The RDCM will act as Minuting Secretary for the Appeal Hearing and inform the Appellant and local party of the result of the appeal.

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 Abbreviations:

GPEW Green Party of England and Wales

GPRC Green Party Regional Council

ADRC Alternative Disputes Resolution Committee

SOPD Standing Orders for Party Discipline

LPDCM Local Party Disputes and Complaints Manager

RDCM Regional Disputes and Complaints Manager

Appendix 2 Role description for the RDCM

1. Receive complaints from the national Complaints Manager, smaller local parties and individual members of NGWP.

2. Receive appeals from members who have used local party procedures

3. Keep an accurate confidential log of all complaints to include: date of receipt of Dispute and Complaint form; date of receipt of appeals; contact details of the complainant and respondent; Safeguarding or Whistleblowing referrals; No Fault Temporary Suspension referrals; dates of receipt of all documentation; outcome of mediation; special arrangements required by complainant or respondent; members of the Panel and investigators; outcome of Panel decisions; appeal to national Appeals Committee; outcome of appeal; any referral to Disciplinary Committee and outcome. These records will be stored in the designated confidential document area designated by the NWGP Committee.

4. Take formal minutes of Disciplinary Panel meetings.

5. Ensure that the processes established in NWGP Disputes, Complaints and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure are followed, and that cross-references, email addresses, weblinks and other resources associated with this procedure are kept up to date and communicated to those involved in the process.

6. Offer assistance and signposting to other appropriate bodies and relevant party procedures relating to grievances, disputes and complaints.

Appendix 3 Sanctions

The following sanctions are available to the Regional Disciplinary Panel:

* written warning;
* censure;
* request for voluntary signed commitment as to future conduct by reading and signing they have read the Code of Conduct and agreeing to abide by it;
* moderation or exclusion from NWGP email, social media or online activities for a defined period;
* excluding the respondent from participation in any specified meeting/meetings or activity of NWGP for a fixed period;
* exclusion from specified, or all, NWGP activities, including those of its working groups, sub-regional groups or subcommittees etc, for a defined period;
* imposition of acceptable conduct conditions on the respondent’s participation in NWGP activities for a fixed period, for example an instruction not to approach one or more specified members in meetings (if appropriate, a set of conditions may be set out in a formal agreement);
* removing the respondent from any internally-elected position in NWGP;
* exclusion from standing for positions of responsibility within NWGP (committee posts, election candidate etc) for a defined period. However, regional sanctions must respect the right of local parties to exercise autonomy in their selection of candidates for publicly-elected roles (such as for local councils and parliament), and the right of individual members to stand for internal election to national-level posts;
* exclusion from standing for any position within the Green Party elected by NWGP for a defined period;
* a motion to de-select or remove elected or non-elected Officer or postholder or candidate, in accordance with any local party constitution;
* recommending to the Green group on a local council that the Green Party designation should be withdrawn from a respondent who holds public office (e.g. a councillor), for a fixed period.

In addition to any of these sanctions, the respondent may be encouraged to offer an apology to the complainant and/or encouraged to undertake relevant training. If the Disciplinary Panel is persuaded that the respondent has full insight into the complaint, has tried to make amends and that a recurrence is unlikely, they may decide to discharge the complaint so that it is upheld but no sanction is applied.

Please note that sanctions awarded by the region can only affect regional roles, activities and/or responsibilities.

Suspended sanctions

The Disciplinary Panel may, at its discretion, impose a sanction which is suspended with immediate effect, to expire after a fixed period. In the event of any further complaint against the respondent being received within that period and subsequently upheld, the Disciplinary Panel may impose the suspended sanction in addition to any sanction awarded for the further complaint.

Recommendations for national disciplinary action

Should the national Disciplinary Committee become involved in reviewing the case, the Disciplinary Panel may wish to make recommendations – noting that these are not binding and that the national Disciplinary Committee may decide to set aside any sanctions imposed by the Disciplinary Panel. The recommendations include:

* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee of disqualification of the Respondent from election or co-option to any office in GPEW, for a fixed period;
* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee of deselection of the respondent from any candidacy for public office;
* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee of disqualification of the respondent from seeking within GPEW nomination for election to any public office, for a fixed period;
* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee of disqualification of the respondent from seeking within GPEW nomination for internal election to any office within GPEW, for a fixed period;
* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee of a request for withdrawal of Green Party designation from a respondent who holds public office (e.g. a local authority councillor), for a fixed period;
* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee for a sanction of suspension of GPEW membership for a fixed period;
* recommendation to the national Disciplinary Committee for a sanction of termination of GPEW membership.

Appendix 4 Guidance

Guidance from national GPEW that may be issued on procedures for handling disputes, complaints, grievances and appeals must also be taken into account by NWGP. Such guidance may include but may not be limited to: requirements for reporting new cases & decisions; confidentiality; which level of the Party is appropriate to decide a case, and so on.

All members of the Green Party of England & Wales are also bound by a number of national organisational documents that govern behaviour. These must be taken into account by NWGP both in its day-to-day operation and when disputes, grievances and complaints arise. Examples of such documents are: the Members’ Code of Conduct; the Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination policy; the Safe Spaces policy; the Safeguarding Policy.

**Review**

This Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedure will be reviewed annually by the NWGP Committee; any amendments must be approved by an Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting of the NWGP.

This Regional Disputes and Complaints Policy and Procedure was adopted on \_18 February 2023\_

Last reviewed on \_\_16 March 2024\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_*S.J.E. Riches*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Co-ordinator/Chair NWGP.

Date \_\_\_\_18/03/2024\_\_\_\_\_\_