

DEFINING A CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

Introduction

The Constitution, as amended from time to time, sets out the structure of an Association and the rules that it should follow. It also sets out the objects of an Association:

The Objects of the Association shall be to sustain and promote the objects and values of the Party in the Parliamentary constituency of (“the Constituency”); to provide an effective campaigning organisation in the Constituency; to secure the return of Conservative Candidates at elections; and to raise the necessary funds to achieve these objectives; to contribute to the central funds of the Party. (Schedule 7, clause 2)

But it does not set any benchmarks as a means of measuring whether or not an Association is delivering those objects. Within the Party, there will often be talk of a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ Association but it is not made clear what an Association has to do to be evaluated in such a way.

The guide opposite is a checklist to measure how an Association can be seen to be achieving its objectives.

It should be noted that the measurements will not always be the same across all seats. Though it does not purport to be an exhaustive list, the items below are mainly the absolute essentials to run a successful Association.

The Constitution requires all Associations to adopt an annual strategy plan. A template will be supplied for this but it will need to incorporate many items relating to the points below.



How well do you score?

The best Associations publish a self-assessment against these items in their Annual Report and Accounts using a simple “Pass/Partial/Fail” score against each of the 33 criteria. How well does your Association currently score?

Category	Benchmark	Score 
Membership	A Conservative Association should have a current membership level of at least 0.75% of the Conservative vote at the last General Election. All Members should be recorded on VoteSource.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Member contact	An Association should be in contact with its Members. During the year, every member should receive a phone call from either an officer, councillor, MP or parliamentary or local government candidate to thank them for joining or renewing. The caller should ask what they are interested in, invite them to functions, and ask for their help. Members should be asked whether they have any additional skills that might be of help to the Association as well as canvassing and delivering. They should also be asked for their email address to make it easy to keep in touch with them. Members should receive a regular newsletter either in hardcopy or electronic form.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Telephone response	If a member of the public or Member telephones an Association Office they should generally find the phone is answered during standard office hours. If someone leaves a message on an Association answer phone, the Association should contact them promptly.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Offers of help	If a Party Member or a member of the public offers to help, they should receive a response within a week, thanking them, setting out how that offer will be taken up and when they should hear further.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Activist Recruitment	The Association should have a plan in place to recruit activists and potential council candidates from the membership and the wider supporter base.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Website and Facebook	Every Association should maintain a functioning website and Facebook Page. It is not sufficient for the website to exist, it must contain news that is up to date. There should be events listed on the events tab. There should be clear contact information and it should be easy for a member or volunteer to engage with the Association. If someone makes contact via the website, they should receive a prompt response and there should be a policy that the Association adheres to in terms of how quickly they are contacted, by whom and in what way.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Newsletters and voter communication	The Association should have a programme of newsletters for the ensuing year. This should include a minimum of three communications outside election time.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Email addresses	The Association should actively ensure that it has email addresses for as many Members as possible and should constantly be adding to the number of email addresses it has for supporters.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Delivery network	The Association should know how many deliverers it has. These should be assigned to specific routes and a constant record kept of where any gaps may be. The Association should know how long it would take to get a leaflet out to each household or to a key target area.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Poster Sites	The Association should maintain an up to date list of poster sites for use in election campaigns.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/> Partial <input type="checkbox"/> Fail <input type="checkbox"/>

Voter identification	There should be a written programme of canvassing or surveying throughout the year, including any elections. Pledge targets and a target for voter contacts should be set each year.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
18 year olds and new voters	The Association should have a plan in place for introducing the Party to first time and new voters.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Rules	Every Association should maintain an up-to-date and formally adopted set of rules. These should be clear in respect of those rules that are optional, for instance where the rules say you may have “one or more representatives”.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Meetings	The Association should have a schedule for its obligatory meetings during the year – AGM and Executive Council Meetings. Proper notice of these meetings should be given to all Members and it should be noted that constitutional notice periods are minimum.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Executive Council	The Association should know who is on its Executive and should be able to supply an up-to-date list if requested. Members should be properly appointed. The Executive should clearly establish any committees such as CPF, Youth, Women, Business, Patrons Club and so on, and should ensure these are either functioning or closed down.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Branches	The Association should aim to create functioning branches (a functioning branch is one that meets, campaigns and raises money) and should know what proportion of the constituency is covered by these. There should be an annual target of improvement in branch coverage.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Campaign support	Every Association should have a plan in place for giving help to other seats during elections or by-elections. This should include a list of activists who are prepared to be called upon when these events occur.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Selection of local government candidates	The Association should maintain an approved List of local government candidates and have a selection process in place that is according to the rules supplied by CCHQ. All candidates (including sitting councillors) are required to submit forms for inclusion on the Approved List and a file of these should be maintained.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Local elections	The Association should routinely contest all vacant seats at elections and byelections.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Councillors	The Association should ensure that all sitting councillors are paid-up members of the Conservative Councillors’ Association as required by the Constitution.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Elected representatives	The Association should have a means by which its elected representatives can keep in touch with Members and keep engaged with them.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Finances	The Association should have a published budget (available to its members) that includes sufficient income and expenditure to finance the objectives listed in this document. This includes the ability to raise funds for and contribute to all elections including European, Police Commissioner, Mayoral and Assembly (where applicable), as well as local government and Parliamentary.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>

Fundraising	The Association should have a programme of fundraising activities to finance its budget along with its membership subscriptions.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Property	If the Association has any property or assets it should have a properly written trust deed and trustees who are annually appointed/reappointed by the Association.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Association Office	An Association should have an office or use of an office that adequately serves the purpose of enabling it to fulfil the above objectives. This should be manned during office hours and must be cost-effective. It should have equipment that is used to its capacity and is not left unused.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Freepost Account	The Association should have an up-to-date freepost account for campaigning and fundraising purposes.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
VoteSource	The Association should have at least two authorised members who are able to use the Party's campaigning and membership software. All information relating to membership, telephone numbers and email addresses should be maintained on this system.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Blueprint & Connect	All Associations should have logins for these systems.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Compliance	Officers of the Association should be aware of the compliance requirements in the PPERA legislation in terms of donations and accounts. The officers should be aware of their obligations as an employer and the position of the Association regarding Data Protection	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Bullying & harassment	The Association should have a written policy on its attitude to bullying and harassment and should know how to process a complaint in this regard. Guidance on this to be supplied by CCHQ following the governance review.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Suspension & expulsion of a Member	The officers should be aware of the guidelines on this and should not begin to undertake this process without taking advice from CCHQ.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Staff	Unless the Association has the benefit of an outstanding amount of voluntary time from an administrator and campaign manager, it is unlikely to be able to fulfil the objectives set out above without employing staff. The Association should be able to finance staff to organise the Association and its campaigning and fundraising. It should be noted that employing staff requires the Association to have sufficient resources for the staff to function i.e. a budget that includes a significant campaigning element. Staff should have a proper contract and all should be paid at least in line with minimum wage legislation.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>
Where to get help beyond the Association	The Association should know who its Area officers are and how to contact them. The officers should also know who to contact at CCHQ if they have queries or problems.	Pass <input type="checkbox"/>	Partial <input type="checkbox"/>	Fail <input type="checkbox"/>

How well did you score?

Total Pass

Total Partial

Total Fail