Terms of Reference: Election Steering Group (ESG)

1. Purpose and Status

The Election Steering Group (ESG) is an independent committee of the Dons Trust, with devolved powers from the Dons Trust board (DTB) to oversee the planning and delivery of elections. Its purpose is to ensure elections are conducted fairly, transparently, and in line with the Constitution and Election Rules. The ESG is a purely administrative body and does not set Election Rules or adjudicate conduct matters.

2. Guiding Principles

- Independence from the DTB and candidates.
- Neutrality and impartiality in support of all candidates and members.
- Transparency, accountability, and proper record-keeping.
- Administrative focus – not a disciplinary or judicial body.

3. Authority and Delegation

The DTB retains sole authority for approving Election Rules and determining the number of board vacancies in line with the Dons Trust Constitution. The ESG has delegated authority to administer elections in accordance with those rules, including validating nominations, managing the timetable, administering ballots, and overseeing member engagement.

4. Core Responsibilities

- Planning and managing the election timetable and logistics.
- Validating nominations against eligibility criteria.
- Publishing candidate materials and organising hustings and engagement activity.
- Administering campaign rules relating to the election process.
- Coordinating ballot issue, verification, counting, and results.
- Preparing a post-election report with lessons learned.

5. Matters Outside Scope

The ESG does not set policy, adjudicate conduct, act as the final appeal body, or provide voting advice. Conduct matters must be referred to the Society Secretary in line with the Dons Trust's Disciplinary Policy.

6. Membership and Composition

- An ESG Chair appointed by the board and affirmed by members.
- Between two and five additional members of the Dons Trust.
- The Society Secretary (or nominee) providing administrative support and guidance on the Dons Trust Constitution and policies but not chairing or making decisions.
- Members must not be candidates, nominate candidates, or campaign in the election they administer.

7. Chair

The ESG Chair leads the group in line with the approved role profile and is responsible for neutrality, decision-making discipline, and liaison with the Independent Scrutineer and Secretary.

8. Meetings and Decision-Making

- Meetings will be held as required, with an increased frequency during election periods.
- Quorum: Chair plus two members.
- Decisions will be made by simple majority. In the event of a tie, the Chair has the casting vote.
- Decisions and actions are formally recorded.

9. Appeals and Independent Scrutineer

Administrative and procedural appeals against ESG decisions are referred to the Independent Scrutineer, who acts as the final internal stage of appeal.

10. Review

These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed after each election cycle and at least annually, with any amendments approved by the DTB and communicated to members.