



Rules for the 2026 Dons Trust Board Elections

A: Purpose and Status

1. The Dons Trust is a democratic membership organisation. These rules are intended to encourage participation, while ensuring that elections are administered fairly, transparently, independently and professionally.
2. These rules apply to elections to the Dons Trust board (“the board”). They must be considered alongside the Society’s Constitution, the election timetable, the nomination form, the Election Steering Group Terms of Reference, and any applicable Society policies. If any of these rules conflict with the Constitution or member-approved policy, the Constitution or policy prevails.
3. The board has sole responsibility for approving these rules and determining the number and term length of board vacancies in accordance with the Constitution. The Election Steering Group (“ESG”) may provide technical advice but does not set the rules.
4. The following principles apply to the election: independence; neutrality; equal treatment of candidates; accessibility; transparency; confidentiality where required; and proper record-keeping.
5. Where an administrative point is not expressly covered, the ESG may issue procedural guidance consistent with the Constitution, these rules and the ESG Terms of Reference. It may not create a new eligibility test, conduct offence or sanction. Any material guidance must be recorded and published promptly. The Dons Trust Secretary should be consulted under any such circumstance.

B: Election Governance

6. The board will appoint an ESG Chair prior to the election cycle. The ESG Chair will appoint the remaining ESG members in accordance with the ESG Terms of Reference. The ESG is an independent administrative committee with delegated authority to plan and deliver the election.
7. The ESG will manage the logistics, validate nominations against the published criteria, publish candidate materials, arrange engagement activity, administer the ballot and count, keep appropriate records, and prepare a post-election report.
8. The ESG and Scrutineer must keep an appropriate decision log and retain election records securely in line with data protection law.
9. The ESG is not a disciplinary or judicial body. Its powers solely relate to confirming candidate eligibility, management of arrangements, and make judgments solely where they believe that this policy is being breached under Section G.



10. The Society Secretary, or a nominee, will provide administrative support and guidance on the Constitution and Society policies but will not be a voting member of the ESG.
11. The board will appoint an Independent Scrutineer before nominations open. The Scrutineer must be independent of the Society, board and ESG, must not be a Dons Trust member, and must not participate in election planning or operational decisions.
12. The Independent Scrutineer will oversee the integrity of the election, act as the final internal decisionmaker for administrative and procedural appeals, and oversee or independently observe any count, recount or lottery required by these rules.
13. No member of the ESG or the Society Secretary may stand, nominate a candidate or campaign in the election they administer. ESG members must declare conflicts promptly and take no part in affected decisions.
14. Assistant Secretaries may apply for the election but must not be involved in any support to the ESG. They will have access restricted to election information and decision making in the same way that a current board member standing for re-election would have. If elected, they must then stand down as Assistant Secretary.

C: Announcement and Timetable

15. The election period runs from the opening of nominations until the formal declaration of the result or, where relevant, completion of affirmative voting under section 10, concluding by the AGM, and commencing on a date determined by the Board which is at least 5 weeks before the AGM.
16. Within that election period, the ESG shall communicate the dates for opening and closing of nominations, voting opening and any supporting events to promote and publicise the elections such as hustings. Once published, their timetable forms part of these Election Rules. The ESG may alter it only where necessary for the fair or effective administration of the election. Any change, the reason for it and its effect must be published as soon as practicable and notified to candidates.
17. The ESG will formally open the election by publishing: the number and term of vacancies; the nomination and voting arrangements; key dates and deadlines; candidate eligibility requirements; the Board member role profile; the route for questions, complaints and appeals; and links to these Rules and relevant policies.
18. The election announcement may identify skills, expertise and lived experience that the Board's published skills assessment indicates are currently needed or under-represented. This is information for members and prospective candidates and does not create additional eligibility criteria or preference in the count.



D: Candidate Eligibility and Nominations

19. Candidates and proposers must be aged 18 or over, be a paid-up member on the date stated in the timetable and nomination form, and satisfy the relevant eligibility provisions of the Constitution, including not being subject to any sanction under the Disciplinary Procedure that prevents them from being a candidate or serving as a Director.
20. A candidate must be proposed by two eligible members. A proposer may propose only one candidate. A candidate may not propose themselves or another candidate, and a serving board member may not propose a candidate. Officers of the Society may not propose candidates, neither may members of the Dons Trust's Disciplinary Pool.
21. Employees of AFC Wimbledon, including playing staff, team management and persons paid by the Club on a contract, casual or freelance basis, are not eligible to stand or propose a candidate. This extends to any individual who is providing paid services directly to the Dons Trust but does not apply to individuals who happen to be working for organisations that provide services to the club or the trust and are not part of the process of commissioning or delivery of those services. The provisions of clause 40 should also be noted.
22. A candidate must submit the completed nomination form and all required supporting material by the deadline and through the method stated in the election announcement.
23. Each candidate must confirm in writing that they:
 - a. Meet the constitutional and Election Rules eligibility criteria;
 - b. Have reviewed the requirements of the EFL Owners' and Directors' Test and are not aware of any reason they would be likely to be disqualified;
 - c. Agree, if elected, to complete required board training;
 - d. Agree to comply with the Constitution, these rules, the applicable codes of conduct and board policies; and
 - e. Consent to any other proportionate checks required to validate their nomination.
24. All candidates must also confirm that they understand that even if elected, their ability to serve as a Board member is dependent on them also passing all necessary checks as required by the Independent Football Regulator (and similar processes as operated by organisers of competitions in



which the club plays), and also confirm that they know of no reason why they would fail those tests.

25. The ESG will validate nominations against the above criteria and may verify identity, membership status, proposer support and completion of required declarations. The ESG may request reasonable supporting evidence.
26. If the ESG considers a nomination administratively invalid, it must notify the candidate promptly, explain the reason and permit one corrected submission by whichever comes later of the nomination deadline or 24 hours after notice was given.
27. A candidate will only have been deemed to have withdrawn if the ESG receive direct written communication directly from the candidate. The effect of withdrawal on the ballot and timetable will be determined by the ESG on a fair and practical basis and communicated to members. If a candidate withdraws, any votes cast for the candidate are void and cannot be recast.

E: Candidate Information

28. Each candidate must provide a manifesto of no more than 600 words, a plain-English summary of no more than 75 words, and a suitable photograph in the format specified by the ESG.
29. Candidate material must not contain unlawful content, threats, harassment, discriminatory abuse, personal data published without lawful basis, or statements presented as fact about another person that are unsupported. Candidates remain responsible for the accuracy of their material and in standing for and submitting their statements indemnify the Trust from any liability arising from their subsequent publication as part of the election process.
30. The ESG may make only formatting, accessibility and legal or data-protection edits. Before removing or changing content, it must identify the concern, provide the candidate a reasonable opportunity to amend it, and give brief written reasons for any final edit. A candidate may appeal under section K of these rules.
31. The ESG will publish all validated candidates' names, manifestos, summaries, photographs, proposer names and any other requested information at the same time.

F: Campaigning and Member Engagement

32. Candidates are encouraged to campaign. The ESG will seek to provide fair and accessible opportunities for candidates to present themselves and answer questions, which may include a live



and streamed question-and-answer event, recorded hustings, matchday activity, written questions, online sessions and introductions to independent fan-led media.

33. Equivalent access means a fair opportunity, not that every event must be arranged around every candidate. The ESG will give reasonable notice, publish recordings where practicable and apply consistent opportunities to participate.
34. Candidates may use independent media and their own channels. Third parties are encouraged to offer fair access, distinguish editorial content from official election communications, and apply their moderation policies consistently. The ESG does not control independent editorial decisions.
35. Candidates must not bribe or improperly induce voters. Campaign spending must be reasonable, lawful and directly related to the election. On request, a candidate must provide the ESG with a brief declaration of material campaign expenditure or support received.
36. Candidates must comply with data protection law. Society membership data, contact lists or personal data obtained through another role or activity must not be used for campaigning unless there is a separate lawful basis and the same opportunity is available to all candidates.
37. Club or Trust facilities, official accounts, mailing lists, staff time or other resources may not be used to support a candidate unless the same opportunity is offered on equivalent terms to every candidate.
38. Candidates are responsible for campaign material they publish or authorise. They must distinguish personal campaign communications from official Society, Club or volunteer communications.
39. Candidates should conduct their campaigns in a way that is respectful to members, other candidates, Dons Trust Board Members, and Club officials and staff.
40. Trust and Club volunteers and Club employees must not campaign while performing official duties. Club employees, including playing and non-playing staff and persons engaged on casual or freelance terms, must not campaign for a candidate or allow words or images to imply official endorsement.
41. The ESG may give administrative guidance or require correction of an election-process breach, such as misuse of an official facility, missed formatting requirements or failure to follow an event protocol. It must act consistently, give reasons, and normally allow prompt correction where the breach is capable of remedy.



G: Conduct and Disciplinary Matters

42. Complaints that a candidate has breached these rules may be made to the ESG, who can also instigate action without a complaint where they have knowledge of a potential breach. The ESG's remit is solely in relation to the elections and to rule solely on whether a candidate has breached election rules. In the event of finding a candidate has breached election rules they can:
- a. Take no action;
 - b. Remind candidates of their responsibilities;
 - c. Where they believe that these rules have not been breached, but the behaviour is sufficient to warrant further consideration, to take no action to remove them from the election, but refer the member for consideration under the Disciplinary Policy;
 - d. Where they believe that these rules have been breached, and the threshold for Disciplinary Action has been reached, remove the member from the election, and refer them for consideration under the Disciplinary Policy;
 - e. Where they believe that these rules have been breached, but the threshold for Disciplinary Action has not been met, to remove them from the election, but make no referral for consideration under the Disciplinary Policy.
 - f. Candidates may appeal against a decision to take actions c-e against them under clause 67 of these rules.
43. Complaints made about candidates' conduct outside of the election process or about behaviour taking place before the opening of nominations should be made under the society's Disciplinary Policy. Any complaints received regarding a candidate's behaviour may be investigated under the Disciplinary Process but no resulting Disciplinary Panel may be held until voting has closed.
44. A member is ineligible to stand only where the ESG deems the application as not having been completed properly or otherwise be out of order under section D, or where before the close of nominations a Disciplinary Panel has imposed a sanction that excludes that member from election or board service and that sanction remains in force. A sanction shall apply until such time as it is overturned by an appeal under the Disciplinary Process or a resolution of a Dispute under section 10 of the Society Rules.
45. No Disciplinary Panel may sit in judgement on a complaint regarding a member who is a candidate in the elections between the opening of voting and the close of voting. If by the time a Panel sits in



judgement on a complaint involving a member and that member has subsequently been successful in an election, the Disciplinary Panel's range of possible sanctions shall include those which apply to Dons Trust Board members as well as members, even if that person is still awaiting confirmation by the Independent Football Regulator.

46. If a successful candidate becomes constitutionally ineligible, receives an exclusionary disciplinary sanction, or fails (or refuses to comply with) the Independent Football Regulator's Owners, Directors and Senior Executives test (and similar tests by organisers of competitions in which the club plays), they may not serve as a Dons Trust Board member. The Society will explain the outcome to members, including the reason to the extent lawful, fair and proportionate, while respecting confidential and personal information.

H: Contested Elections: Voting and Counting

47. An election is contested where the number of validly nominated candidates exceeds the total number of vacancies to be filled.
48. Voting will use the multiple non-transferable vote system. Each eligible member may cast up to one vote for each vacancy, may cast fewer votes, and may not cast more than one vote for any candidate.
49. Voting eligibility will be determined by the Constitution and the published cut-off date. Individuals who join the Society after the cut-off date will not be eligible to vote.
50. The ESG will provide eligible members with voting instructions and access to candidate information. Reasonable alternative voting arrangements will be made available where required for accessibility or where approved in the timetable.
51. Candidates will be listed on ballot papers either in alphabetical order by last name or randomly allocated if the online voting mechanism allows for this.
52. The candidates will be ranked by votes received. Vacancies will be allocated in descending order, with full-term vacancies allocated before shorter vacancies.
53. If additional vacancies arise before the candidate announcement, the board will notify the ESG and, where practicable, include them in the election. The announcement must state the number and length of all available terms and how they will be allocated.



54. A tie affecting the allocation or length of a term will be resolved by a lottery or other means (e.g. a coin toss) agreed by the impacted candidates, conducted by the ESG and observed by the Independent Scrutineer. Tied candidates will be invited to observe where practicable.
55. If physical ballots require counting, the count will be conducted securely and overseen by the Independent Scrutineer. The ESG may order a recount where necessary to verify accuracy.
56. Subject to any appeal (see section I), the ESG will declare and publish the result as soon as practicable, including total valid ballots, turnout and the votes received by each candidate.

I: Uncontested Elections and Affirmative Voting

57. An election is uncontested where the number of validly nominated candidates does not exceed the total number of vacancies. In this event, validly nominated candidates will be presented to members for affirmative approval by simple resolution as part of the AGM.
58. A resolution will be put before members to approve or reject all candidates as a single group, and to indicate whether they support or do not support an individual candidate. If the resolution to accept the nominated candidates as a single group is agreed as a simple resolution, all candidates will be deemed elected.
59. If that resolution is not agreed, then the votes cast for and against each candidate will be counted, and any candidate who receives more votes in support than not in support will be deemed elected. A candidate not approved will not take office and the resulting vacancy will be dealt with under the Constitution.
60. The requirement to undertake an affirmative vote shall not apply where all of the following occur.
 - a. Where voting in an election has commenced and:
 - b. where candidate(s) are subsequently ruled ineligible to stand or take office; and
 - c. where the results in there now being as many or fewer candidates as there are vacancies; and
 - d. where this arises after the circulation of papers and resolutions for the AGM at which those members would ordinarily have been presented for affirmative approval under this section

Where there are both full-term and shorter vacancies and the candidates do not agree the allocation, full terms will be allocated first by reference to any individual affirmative vote totals that provide an unambiguous ranking. If no ranking is available or a tie remains, allocation will be decided by an independently observed lottery.



61. The AGM notice and voting materials must explain the affirmative voting process, the available terms, and the consequence if a resolution is not carried.

J: Independent Football Regulator and Competition Regulations

62. Successful candidates will submit to the Independent Football Regulator's Owners, Directors and Senior Executives test (and other similar process as required by organisers of competitions in which the club plays). They will not take office until such time as they have confirmed by the Independent Football Regulator. Anyone either not passing these tests or not complying with the process to the extent that the test cannot be undertaken will not be able to serve on the Dons Trust Board, and their seat will be deemed vacant.
63. Until such time as all successful candidates have received all regulatory clearances required to take office, outgoing candidates shall remain in office. Candidates awaiting clearance may attend meetings of the Dons Trust Board as non-voting observers, and do not count towards a quorum.
64. Where there is more than one candidate awaiting clearance, and where not all candidates received clearance at the same time, newly cleared candidates shall replace retiring members of the Dons Trust Board on the basis of mutual agreement of retiring members, and by drawing of lots amongst the retiring members where agreement is not possible.

K: Questions, Complaints and Appeals

65. Election-process questions and complaints should be sent to the ESG using the contact details in the election announcement. The ESG will aim to acknowledge them within two working days and decide them promptly, having regard to the election timetable.
66. Anonymous election-process complaints may be considered where supported by credible evidence, but anonymity may limit the investigation. Requests for confidentiality will be respected so far as possible, subject to fairness and due process.
67. A candidate or member directly affected by an administrative or procedural decision of the ESG may appeal to the Independent Scrutineer. The appeal must identify the decision, the alleged error, the desired remedy and relevant evidence, and must be submitted within two working days of notification unless the Scrutineer permits a later appeal for good reason.
68. The Scrutineer may obtain information from the ESG, Secretary, candidate, complainant or election provider; must act impartially; and should give a concise written decision with reasons as quickly as the timetable reasonably permits.



69. The Scrutineer may uphold, vary or set aside an ESG decision, require the ESG to reconsider it, direct a proportionate administrative remedy, or dismiss the appeal. The Scrutineer may not determine disciplinary liability or override the Constitution.
70. The Independent Scrutineer's decision is the final internal stage for election administrative and procedural appeals. The Board will not hear or determine such appeals.
71. An appeal does not automatically suspend the election. The Scrutineer may direct a pause or other interim step only where necessary and proportionate to prevent material unfairness.

Agreed by the Board at its meeting on 14/10/26