Role Profile: Chair of the Election Steering Group (ESG)

Purpose of the Role

To lead the Election Steering Group as an independent, administrative function of the Dons Trust, providing confidence to members that Board elections are planned and run fairly, professionally, and impartially. The ESG Chair plays a crucial role in maintaining trust in the Dons Trust's democratic processes, while remaining independent from the board and disciplinary processes.

Status and Accountability of the Role

- The ESG Chair is appointed by the Dons Trust board and affirmed by the members.
- The ESG Chair is not a member of the Dons Trust board and does not act as a board delegate.
- The role operates within the framework of the Trust's Constitution, Election Rules, and ESG Terms of Reference.

Term of Office

- Appointed for a term of up to two years.
- Eligible for reappointment for up to two further terms, subject to affirmation, with a maximum continuous service of six years.

Key Principles

- Stewardship: Act as guardian of the Trust's democratic processes, prioritising integrity, and ensuring member confidence in elections.
- Independence: Provide clear distinction between the board and the administration of elections.
- Neutrality and Impartiality: Enable fair scrutiny and member engagement without influencing outcomes, supporting candidates equally and without preference.
- Clarity and Professionalism: Ensure election processes are well-organised, clearly communicated, and robust, recognising that the Trust is "voluntary but not amateur".

Key Responsibilities

Leadership of the ESG

- Receive applications from prospective members of the ESG and appoint an ESG for the election cycle, in line with the requirements of the Terms of Reference of the ESG.
- Chair the Election Steering Group, setting agendas and ensuring effective ways of working.
- Ensure the ESG operates strictly within its administrative remit, avoiding involvement in conduct decisions or rule-setting.

Election Planning and Delivery

- Oversee the development and delivery of the election timetable, working with the board and Secretary, ensuring key milestones are met.
- Ensure candidates are aware of, and compliant with, the approved Election Rules.

Candidate and Member Experience

- Ensure that candidates are supported with clear information, guidance, and induction material to reduce barriers to participation.
- Oversee fair and consistent handling of campaign guidance and any reported campaigning breaches, referring conduct matters via agreed protocols where necessary.
- Support the organisation of hustings, member engagement activities, and publication of candidate materials.

Liaison and Escalation

- Act as the primary point of liaison between the ESG, the board, Secretary, any external election providers, and the Independent Scrutineer.
- Ensure that any significant behavioural concerns arising during the election are formally referred to the Secretary, without the ESG acting as arbiter.

Reporting and Continuous Improvement

- Present a post-election report covering turnout, administration, and lessons learned.
- Support continuous improvement of election processes, drawing on feedback and best practice.

Person Specification

- A strong understanding of governance, transparency, and accountability in membership or community-based organisations.
- High levels of personal integrity, sound judgement, and credibility with members.
- The confidence to act independently and neutrally, including in periods of controversy or pressure.
- Experience chairing meetings, managing volunteers, or overseeing complex administrative processes.
- Excellent communication skills, with the ability to explain processes clearly to members and candidates.
- Prior involvement in Dons Trust or AFC Wimbledon governance may be beneficial, but candidates must no longer be directly involved in current board activity.

Time Commitment

- Variable, with the heaviest commitment during election periods.
- Outside elections, light-touch involvement focused on preparation, review, and handover.