

# **The Constitution of the Leeds Writers' Circle.**

## **ARTICLE I: NAME AND MISSION STATEMENT.**

### Section 1: Name

The approved name shall be the Leeds Writers' Circle.

### Section 2: Mission Statement

The Leeds Writers' Circle exists to help all members to reach their full potential as writers.

## **ARTICLE II: AIMS AND ACTIVITIES.**

Section 1: The aim of the Leeds Writers' Circle (hereafter called The Circle) as detailed in the Mission Statement shall be fostered by:

- a) regular workshops, including the sharing and consideration of members' own work;
- b) occasional visiting speakers;
- c) an agenda of writing competitions;
- d) production and circulation of a programme of workshops, competitions and visiting speakers;
- e) regular review of the activities;
- f) maintenance of membership through the website and other avenues of publicity;
- g) ensuring the funds of the Leeds Writers' Circle are used in ways that foster these activities;
- h) the holding of regular business meetings, including the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM), as deemed necessary by the officers or membership, and Committee Meetings;
- i) setting medium term aims which will be reviewed at the Annual General Meeting and expressed in a separate business plan or in the minutes as appropriate;
- j) short term aims, to be decided at committee meetings, necessary for the efficient week by week running of the circle.

Section 2: The review of aims and activities will be carried out as follows:

- a) Any changes or additions to the aims and activities listed above shall be decided at the AGM or a specially convened EGM.
- b) Occasionally it will be necessary to decide on changes to activities at a scheduled workshop provided there are sufficient members present. This will occur, for example, when an outside agency, such as The West Yorkshire Playhouse, Radio Leeds or a local publisher has asked the circle to take part in a project they are running.
- c) Changes may be suggested by any member at any time during the year.
- d) An extra meeting where members are invited to discuss the programme and make suggestions regarding general activities shall be held two or three weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

### **ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1: Membership to the circle shall not be denied to any person on the basis of race, creed, religion, gender, political affiliation, sexual orientation age or disability.

Leeds Writers' Circle is an equal opportunities employer.

Section 2: The only requirement for membership shall be the paying of the annual subscription.

Section 3: Members shall be eligible to vote at all business meetings of the circle, except committee meetings.

Section 4: An attendance fee will be required from all those attending workshops.

Section 5: Prospective members may attend up to three meetings on payment of the attendance fee only, after which they will be required to enrol as fully paid up members. The subscription fee paid in such cases will be subject to a pro-rata reduction for new members who start attending later in the year.

Section 6: A complaint may be made against any member for conduct which impairs the rights of other members to enjoy the benefits of the Leeds Writers' Circle.

- a) Complaints will relate to serious matters or repeated misconduct, for example:
  - physical or verbal abuse of another member
  - sexual, racial or other harassment of another member
  - misuse of funds.
- b) Any complaints brought before the committee will be recorded by the Hon. Secretary in the minutes of the next suitable committee meeting.
- c) Procedures:
  - i. A formal complaint must be given in writing to the Committee.
  - ii. Any complaints brought before the committee will be recorded by the Hon. Secretary in the minutes of the next suitable committee meeting.
  - iii. On receipt of a formal complaint, the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman will undertake an initial investigation and report his/her findings to the Committee.
  - iv. In these circumstances the committee shall vote to take action according to the following options:
    - to ask the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman to deal with the matter and to report back on what action has been taken,
    - to appoint a 'Disciplinary Sub-Committee' of at least three members to investigate the matter and to make recommendation as to what action should be taken.

d) Sanctions

Following the appropriate investigation, the Committee may consider any or all of the following once misconduct has been proven:

- warn the member or individuals concerned as to their future conduct,
- issue a written reprimand to the member concerned,
- expel the member.

The member accused shall be given a two weeks' notice and an opportunity to defend him/herself before an AGM or an EGM. Any dismissal from membership shall require a 2/3 majority vote by a quorum as defined in the 'constitution'.

Section 7 – Censorship: No complaint may be made against a member for the content of his/her writing, unless both of the following are true:

- the piece is clearly targeted at another member or other members of the circle,
- the piece is deliberately abusive and/or intimidatory towards that member or members.

## **ARTICLE IV. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

### Section 1: President and Vice President

These are honorary positions, usually offered to distinguished former members of the circle and held for life.

### Section 2: The elected officers of the Committee shall be:

- Chair,
- Vice Chair,
- Hon Secretary,
- Hon Treasurer,
- Publicity Officer,
- Competitions Secretary.
- Events Secretary
- Website Host
- Committee Member

Section 3: Extra members may be elected to the committee as deemed necessary by the AGM.

Section 4: The Committee has the right to co-opt extra members for specific purposes.

### Section 5: Candidates for election to committee:

- must be paid up members of Leeds Writers' Circle,
- must have a proposer and seconder.

Section 6: Positions on committee may be held by the same person for a maximum of three consecutive years with the exception of the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer who may continue in post for a maximum of ten years. Any extension to these periods must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote at a quorate AGM or EGM.

Section 7 Officers shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting for the following year's term.

Section 8 In the event that an elected officer is unable to fulfil his/her term of office, there shall be an Emergency General Meeting called to address the question. Any eligible member may be nominated for a vacated officer position.

Section 9 At least two weeks' notice will be provided for any meeting at which an election is held.

## **ARTICLE V. POWERS AND DUTIES OF OFFICERS:**

### Section 1 The President

- a) Support the Leeds Writers Circle.
- b) Act as an impartial referee on difficult questions.

### Section 2 The Chair

- a) Co-ordinate all activities of the circle and support other officers and members.
- b) Preside at all workshops and business meetings of the Leeds Writers' Circle, ensuring they are conducted in accordance with the constitution.
- c) Ensure all workshops are conducted equitably.
- d) Act as official spokesperson of the Leeds Writers' Circle, representing the policies, views and opinions of the group.
- e) Prepare agendas for all business meetings in consultation with the secretary.

### Section 3 The Vice Chair

- a) Preside at the meetings of Leeds Writers' Circle meetings in the absence of the Chair.
- b) Deputise for the Chair as necessary.

### Section 4 Secretary

- a) Record the minutes at all business meetings of the Leeds Writers' Circle
- b) File minutes and submit copies as required to all members.
- c) Notify all members of the Circle's meetings.
- d) Handle all correspondence of the Leeds Writers' Circle and keep copies of correspondence on file.
- e) Report on correspondence received and make copies available to the committee or members as necessary.
- f) Ensure all records of the Leeds Writers' Circle are maintained including an up to date list of members.
- g) Prepare agendas for all business meeting in consultation with the chair.
- h) Deal with enquiries from prospective members.
- b) Liaise with the Treasurer to keep a record of the details of all members, including, name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.

### Section 5 Treasurer

- a) Handle all financial affairs of the Leeds Writers' Circle, to ensure the long term financial stability of the group, by monitoring income and savings, to account for and report to the membership the running costs and income for the current financial year, to budget for the next financial year and maintain a contingency fund of at least one years rent at the market price in case the group is forced to leave the Carriageworks or there is a dramatic increase in cost or decrease in income.
- b) Maintain its financial accounts in the name of the Circle.

- c) Prepare an interim account and report for presentation at the AGM and a full balance sheet as soon as possible after the end of the Circle's financial year in July.
- d) Prepare accounts or financial information for committee meetings as required.
- e) Ensure all payments are authorised by the committee.
- f) Collect subscriptions and attendance fees from members.
- g) Pay all monies received into the bank account of the Leeds Writers' Circle.
- h) Provide necessary information for the auditing of accounts.

#### Section 6 Events Secretary

- a) Oversight of any extra events, such as half day workshops, extra meetings or visits, working in conjunction with interested parties.
- b) Ensuring that a suitable venue is available.
- c) Liaising with workshop organisers and the officers of the Writers' Circle to agree fees, timing of meeting and expenses paid.
- d) Ensuring that details of the event are circulated to members.  
Working with the Vice Chair to publicise the event beyond the Writers' Circle if this is deemed necessary

#### Section 7 Publicity Officer

- a) Maintain the Leeds Writers' Circle's website or liaise with the delegated webmaster to complete this task.
- b) Liaise with the Committee to develop and explore new ideas for publicity.
- c) Arrange dispersal of posters, publicity materials, and arrange placements in newspaper diaries etc.

#### Section 8 Competitions Secretary

- a) With the help of the committee and members compile a list of suitable candidates to act as adjudicators.
- b) Negotiate with suitable candidates to ensure all competitions have an adjudicator.
- c) Liaise with the adjudicators regarding competition deadlines and rules.
- d) Circulate a set of rules for each competition with the help of the secretary.
- e) Administer the collection of entries and to send these on to the adjudicator, maintaining the anonymity of entries.
- f) Act as host of the adjudicators who are able to attend the results meeting.
- g) Present the results to the Circle on behalf of the adjudicators who are unable to attend.

#### Section 9 Website Host

Ensuring that all paid up members have a password to participate in the Members' Forum.

Assisting the officers of The Circle in updating the site with regard to posting newsletters, modifying the prospectus, posting new pictures or creating any new pages deemed necessary.  
Attendance at committee meetings as required

### **ARTICLE VI. MEETINGS**

Section 1: Regular business meetings and workshops shall be scheduled and members notified.

Section 2: Business meetings are separate from workshops, which are the main activity of The Circle.

Section 3: Smoking shall not be allowed at either business meetings or workshops.

Section 4: Workshops

- a) Workshops shall be held every other Monday throughout the year, except for public holidays.
- b) Where a public holiday coincides with a workshop, the workshop will be held on the next available Monday and on alternate Mondays thereafter.
- c) Workshops start at 7.00 p.m.
- d) The venue of workshops shall be decided at the AGM or an EGM.
- e) The main activities of workshops are:
  - manuscript evenings, where members read out and receive appraisal of their work,
  - competition adjudications, usually conducted by an outside adjudicator,
  - practical sessions
  - talks or practical sessions conducted by outside speakers.
- f) Workshops shall be conducted by The Chair, The Vice Chair or, in the event that both are absent, by a committee member. Where no committee member is present, any member may volunteer to chair the meeting.
- g) It is the responsibility of whoever chairs the workshop to ensure that it is run as equitably as possible.
- f) Appraisal of manuscripts should be directed towards the quality of the writing, rather than the opinions expressed or the member concerned.
- i) Members are encouraged to ensure that the work s/he submits at a manuscript evening is not so long that:
  - i. it cannot feasibly be appraised in the context of a workshop,
  - ii. it impinges on the rights of other members to receive appraisal for their work.
- j) In respect of the above, the chair of the workshop may ask a member to cut short his or her reading and continue at a later date.
- k) Where a member desires appraisal of a longer piece of work, s/he may:
  - i. circulate copies amongst those members who agree to read it and give their response at a later date, or
  - ii. 'serialise' their piece over a number of sessions.
- l) Members who are not able to read their work through lack of time will be given priority at the next workshop.
- m) Workshops are less formal than business meetings and need not be minuted.
- n) The business of the Circle shall not be conducted at workshops except where an EGM has been called, or an immediate matter requires a majority decision. Examples of such circumstances are:
  - i. where the venue has become unavailable with little or no notice,
  - ii. where an outside agency has asked the Circle to participate in an event.
- o) In the event of such a business meeting being conducted during all or part of a workshop there must be a quorum of members as defined in the constitution. There must also be a proposer and seconder of the motion and the discussion and decisions must be fully minuted.

### Section 5: Competition Rules

- a) Only paid up members of the Circle may enter the competitions.
- b) The author's name must not appear on the manuscript.
- c) The author's name and title of the entry should appear on the envelope containing the entry.
- d) Entries must adhere to the word count / line limit if one is stipulated.
- e) All entries should be typed.
- f) Entries may occasionally be accepted after the closing date at the discretion of the competition organiser.

### Section 6: Speakers and Adjudicators

- a) Speakers' fees will be negotiated at the time of booking by the committee member assigned to the task, up to a maximum of £125.00 plus reasonable expenses without referral to the Committee.
- b) Adjudicators' fees will be negotiated by the Competitions Secretary, up to a maximum of £125.00, plus reasonable expenses without referral to the committee.
- c) Any increase to the adjudicator's fee above £125, up to a total of £250.00, must be ratified by a unanimous decision of the committee. Increases above this sum must be ratified by a quorate AGM or EGM.
- d) Fees for organisers of workshops run at weekend or on extra evenings will be negotiated on an individual basis and will take account of the recommendations of writers' professional organisations.
- e) Guest speakers and adjudicators will have control of their meeting and any questions or interruptions should be by their invitation.
- f) Individual adjudicators may modify competition rules in consultation with the Competitions Secretary.
- g) Adjudicators will be expected to:
  - i) Stipulate their expectations regarding length and type of entries,
  - ii) Decide upon a winner, second and third places,
  - iii) Give brief written comments on all the entries.

### Section 7: Ideas Evenings

- a) Ideas Evenings are devoted to a sharing by members of ideas about the direction and running of the circle.
- b) They may take place in an extra workshop session a few weeks before the Annual General Meeting, and no attendance fee will be charged.
- c) It will be an informal discussion and no final decisions shall be taken at an Ideas Evening.
- d) The committee shall consider suggestions made by members when planning activities for the following year.

### Section 8: Business Meetings

- a) Business Meetings shall be taken to include:
  - i. Committee Meetings,
  - ii. The Annual General Meeting,
  - iii. Extraordinary General Meetings.

b) Committee Meetings

- i. The first committee meeting shall take place on the first available Monday after the AGM.
- ii. Committee meetings shall be minuted.
- iii. As well as the responsibilities defined by their roles as officers, it is the responsibility of the committee to plan the activities of the circle.
- iv. In their planning, the committee shall consider the suggestions of members and include those which they consider are practically and financially feasible.

c) The Annual General Meeting

- i. The Annual General Meeting shall take place in March or April each year.
- ii. An agenda for each AGM shall be drawn up by the Chair in consultation with the Hon. Secretary.
- iii. The Main business of the Annual General Meeting shall be to receive reports and accounts and to elect officers.
- iv. Other matters may be discussed under Any Other Business.
- v. A draft programme, mainly to fix dates, may be handed to members at the Annual General Meeting, but shall not be voted upon.
- vi. Business requiring a vote shall not be conducted unless a quorum of members is present.
- vii. A quorum is defined as 25% of the membership, or four members, whichever is the greater.
- viii. Each motion must be proposed and seconded, otherwise it cannot be voted upon.
- ix. Any amendments to motions must be considered before voting takes place.
- x. Amendments must be proposed, seconded and voted upon before being accepted.
- xi. The final, substantive motion, including amendments, shall be put to the members by the Chair, before voting takes place.
- xii. Debate on a motion may be ended by the Chair asking that voting take place.
- xiii. Alternatively, voting may take place as a result of a proposal by any member, provided the proposal has a seconder and a majority vote.
- xiv. The motion shall be carried by a majority vote of members present at a quorate meeting.
- xv. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall have the casting vote.
- xvi. If the chair declines to use the casting vote, the motion must be declared, 'not carried'.
- xvii. Motions requiring further discussion may be adjourned to a future date.
- xviii. In the event that neither the Chair nor the Vice Chair is present, those present shall elect a chair for the duration of the meeting.
- xix. The Chair is in control of the meeting. All remarks should be addressed through the Chair whose rulings shall be final.
- xx. Voting will usually be done by a show of hands.
- xxi. Voting by secret ballot may be used as deemed appropriate by the meeting, so long as this is supported by a proposer, seconder and majority vote.
- xxii. Members may nominate 'Proxy Delegates' to attend a General Meeting. Such delegates must be members of the Leeds Writers' Circle.

d) An Emergency General Meeting

- i. The Chair or any committee member may call an EGM to discuss any important matter affecting the Leeds Writers' Circle.



- ii. Requests for an EGM from members received by any member of the committee must be passed on to the Hon. Secretary.
- iii. Upon receipt of three or more such requests, the Hon. Secretary must call an EGM.
- iv. At an EGM no matters shall be brought forward other than that stated on the notice calling the meeting.
- v. Members must be given a minimum of two weeks' notice of an EGM.
- vi. The EGM shall be conducted according to the rules governing the conduct of the Annual General Meeting, as defined in section c) above.

## **ARTICLE VII. DUES**

Section 1: The Leeds Writers' Circle may assess membership fees. Changes shall be determined at its Annual General Meeting or at an Emergency General Meeting.

Section 2: All money shall be deposited into an account held in the name of the Leeds Writers' Circle.

## **ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Section 1: Proposed constitutional amendments or changes shall be presented, in writing, to the Leeds Writers' Circle at least two weeks before this amendment is voted on.

Section 2: Approval of a 2/3 majority vote of the members at the AGM or an EGM shall pass this proposed amendment. The amendment shall be effective immediately unless otherwise stipulated in the proposal.

Section 3: A copy of this constitution shall be filed with the Hon Secretary of the Leeds Writers' Circle.

## **ARTICLE IX. DISPOSAL OF THE LEEDS WRITERS' CIRCLE ASSETS**

Section 1: In the event that the Leeds Writers' Circle should become defunct, then its assets will be donated to English Pen, 6 – 8 Amwell Street, London 1R 1UQ with the approval of a 2/3 majority vote at an AGM or EGM.

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## **ARTICLE X. APPROVAL**

Section 1. This constitution was approved on 23 March at a constitutionally quorate AGM.

Proposer  
Pat Belford

Chair's Signature  
David Agnew

Seconder  
Ted Marriott

## **ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS**

The Constitution was Amended at the AGM of the Circle on 23 March 2009:

1. To update the duties of the treasurer and
2. Raise speakers and competition adjudicators fees to a reasonable level.