

Towards a More Effective Party Governance

Autumn Conference 2016



**This document is designed to be read in conjunction
with the following Business Motions and Constitutional
Amendments in the Main Auditorium at Conference**

F13	Towards a More Effective Party Governance	Saturday 17th September	16.30
F14	Party Strategy	Saturday 17th September	17.15
F25	Changes to the Leadership	Sunday 18th September	17.15
F34	Diversity Quotas	Monday 19th September	17.00
F36	Committees	Tuesday 20th September	09.45
F37	Standing Order Amendments	Tuesday 20th September	10.35

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This paper from the Federal Executive aims to explain the general background and proposals for the constitutional amendments and business motions coming to Autumn Federal Conference 2016.

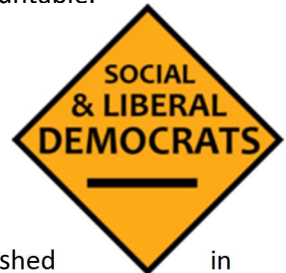
1. Context and consultation sessions with members

The party has formally updated its constitution once since it was formed following the merger of the Liberals and the SDP over a quarter of a century ago, but it hasn't really reviewed or reformed the way that the member committees work, nor updated its processes in light of best practice in the 21st century.



In addition, there has been an evident and growing mistrust of those committees which, you the members, repeatedly told and still tell us are untransparent and feel unaccountable.

This was a major theme in the Presidential Elections of autumn 2014, and repeated in the Leadership election of summer 2015. All candidates in both elections undertook to initiate review and reform.



The first general themes consultation paper was published in advance of Autumn Conference 2015, with a number of public consultation meetings as well as a

member online survey. It was overwhelmingly clear that members wanted to see a real change in the way the party operates.

Following this, a second more specific consultation was published in Spring 2016, again with consultation sessions at conferences and online. We had over 5,000 responses from individual members and party bodies.

2. Response themes

Members' overwhelming perceptions were that our committees are run by a very small group of people, often sitting on multiple committees year after year. The view is that they are elected because they are well known and then perceived, fairly or not, as the establishment. Members also don't know what

the committees do in practice, and felt that most of them do not reach out to keep members in touch with their activity.

More worryingly, many members said they do not understand the difference of role between the Federal and the State parties. This is particularly an English member issue, and there were repeated demands for the abolition of the English party, seen as a secretive organisation with no formal role. It was interesting that a consultation about Federal structures had numerous comments about the English party, which fell outside of the consultation's formal remit.

At consultation meetings, members said that they didn't understand what elected committee members did – were they working together, or were they holding staff/senior members to account? Consultation meetings with staff across the party reinforced this issue: staff commented that interaction with committees or with chairs often felt that they (the staff) were on a different team.

Members who were on committees consistently commented that their committee worked well, but then named other committees that they thought didn't. There was little joined up working, with committees assuming that cross representation should have delivered that joint working. Some representatives were hailed as exemplary for their reports back to their bodies. However, most committee members said they never knew what their representatives on other committees were doing.

Members recognised that following the 2015 General Election results, especially given the reduction in MPs and in staff across the party, we would have to change the way we work. Members and volunteers would have to start doing things that have previously been carried out by staff, especially field staff.

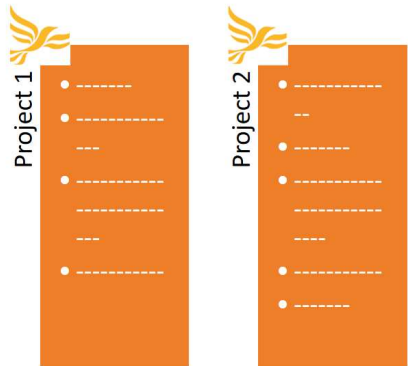
In parallel with these consultations, the party has carried out an extensive General Election review (http://www.libdems.org.uk/2015_election_review), published early in 2016. This highlighted recommendations to change the way the party operates, not just on election campaigning but across the board to really make the most effective use of limited resources.

3. Core themes and proposals

The Federal Executive believes that we need a fundamental reform to the way party committees work.

- a) We need to set a party strategy, led by the Leader’s priorities, passed by the Federal Board (the Federal Executive in a new and more strategic role), from which each committee will have its own work plan to deliver the party strategy. Committees will report back on that delivery to the Board, who will formally report to Conference on the delivery of the party’s priorities.
- b) Given their respective remits, the Federal Policy Committee and the Federal Conference Committee have and should retain a special relationship with Conference, enshrined in the Party’s Constitution.
- c) We should be following good practice from both the business and charitable sectors, understanding the role that member committees have in delivering the member-facing services for which members, not staff, are responsible. Federal Conference Committee and Federal Policy Committee already do this, but we would like to see this extended to other party committees and sub-committees.

- d) All committees should ensure that they have a clear work plan that informs their activities. The senior staff member for that area of activity would attend the committee – as currently happens on some but not all Federal Committees – and the committee will understand where their non-executive guiding role ends and where staff executive role starts.



- e) Party Committees should routinely use Equality Impact Assessments as part of their planning and monitoring roles.
- f) Whilst we propose to continue cross-representation on committees, we also want to see more joint meetings on key issues. The Federal Executive and the Federal Finance and Administration Committee have used this process this year and it has worked well, reducing the need for

repetitive meetings running in parallel. We also want to see small joint task and finish groups set up to deal with very specific cross-committee issues.

- g) All committees should have a clear communications plan to notify and involve members in their work where relevant. Putting reports of meetings up on the member section of the website (currently patchy at best) is a minimum, but it relies on members digging out that information. We believe



that committee representatives would have a duty to ensure that they report back to their body, including those that have links with, for example, Specific Associated Organisations (SAOs) or regions. This doesn't need to be onerous, as the representatives can use the formal committee report on the website as a starting point.

- h) Diversity of our committees, both directly elected and representative, should be a priority. A mechanism that reserves one third or one half for women or men isn't good enough. Worse, no guarantee of black, Asian and minority ethnic, disabled or LGBT+ members is unacceptable when the Equality Act makes it clear that that under-representation of these groups in political parties is a serious barrier to equality. We want to expand our current arrangements to ensure better inclusive representation. This means a system which ensures 40% of a committee's membership is comprised of men and women respectively, and where practicable 10% of spaces should be reserved for disabled, BAME and LGBT+ individuals, respectively.
- i) Fair or not, members' perception of those elected on to Federal Committees is that it is a small clique, with an even smaller group that sit on many committees, and for many years. Members have said that they want to see wider representation. We propose that a member can only be directly elected on to one committee at a time (although they might then be the representative of that committee on another). At present when candidates stand for re-election, their attendance at meetings is listed. We propose that we add to that how long someone has served on

a particular committee without a break. We also believe that terms of office should run for 3 years, instead of 2, in order to focus the committee on the delivery of the strategy and work plan. There is also a practical reason for moving to a three-year cycle of elections: OMOV means many more members can vote. Having Federal, State and Regional elections all at the same time would be very expensive to manage (extra staff will have to be drafted in) and also means that committees change all in one go. We propose that the elections are Federal in year one, State in year two and regional (where relevant) in year three.

- j) A number of party committees have not been visible to members (the Diversity Engagement Group, Training Task Force, Campaigns and Communications Committee). We propose bringing them formally into the Federal Structure, as set out below and in the constitutional amendments. We also believe that the Joint States Candidates Committee and the Joint States Membership Committee should be part of the Federal structure to ensure joined up working. As an illustration, one of the major problems highlighted in the General Election Review was the lack of discussion between the English Candidates Committee and their processes for selecting candidates for the 2015 General Election, with no capacity for debate with the Federal campaigns arm.
- k) After the General Election some members proposed that the party should elect a Deputy Leader from the wider membership, rather than the parliamentary party in the Commons. Members' responses to the consultation have been mixed: whilst keen on a wider democratic mandate, there was recognition that the Leader would have to be able to work with the Deputy, and there were conflicting responses as well as a degree of confusion as to their potential role. Some suggested the Deputy Leader should be elected, others thought that the Leader should be able to choose their deputy. The Federal Executive is therefore offering members two choices to vote on at conference. The first is a Deputy Leader is a parliamentarian (including Scottish and Welsh representatives as well as those in Westminster or the European Parliament) elected at the same time as a Leader on a joint ticket, with arrangements in place in the event that the Deputy resigns mid-term. The second is that the Deputy Leader is elected by the Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons from among their number.

- l) Members asked for consistency of structures and principles of accountability and transparency throughout the party, whether at a Federal, State, Regional or local party level. Therefore, the Federal Executive hopes that the non-federal party bodies will review their own structures and the different proposed ways of working, and report back to their members for their comment and endorsement.
- m) There were a considerable number of responses to the consultation from members who were extremely concerned about the English Party and how difficult it was to know and understand what their responsibilities are, as well as a large number who just assumed that the Federal Party had responsibility for everything. This is much less prevalent in the comments from Welsh and Scottish members about their State parties. The Federal Executive notes with concern that the English Council structures are invisible to most members, who don't understand the balance of the differing roles and responsibilities of the regions and the English party, and therefore urges the English party to consider its own detailed governance review, ensuring that it consults fully with all members, prior to putting proposals formally to them.
- n) Finally, there have been a number of problems in the past few years relating to the disciplinary processes of the party, and it has been agreed by the Federal Executive that there will be a detailed review by experts of the Party's disciplinary processes, which will report to Federal Conference in 2017.

Federal Board

The Federal Board replaces the Federal Executive, and will now set the Party's strategy. Through its strategic role, it will monitor the implementation of the Party's strategy as voted on by Conferences by other Federal Committees, and where needed propose new strategic aims. The Operations Committee has been created as a sub-committee of the Federal Board, in order to co-ordinate action amongst Party Committees, between meetings of the Federal Board, and will report back on any actions taken.



The Membership of the Federal Board is below:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Directly Elected Members	Non-Voting
Party President (Chair)	15 Elected Members	Chief Whip (Commons)
Party Leader	3 Elected Members, one elected by each State Party	Federal Treasurer
3 State Party Chairs		Federal Chief Executive
7 Federal Committee Chairs or Vice Chairs		1 Local Government Rep
3 Parliamentarians		1 Federal Staff Rep
1 Councillor Rep		
Liberal Youth Rep		

Federal Policy Committee

The Federal Policy Committee’s remit remains the same as previously, but its membership has been altered slightly, as has its relationship with the Federal Board given plans for the new Party Strategy procedures.



The Membership of the Federal Policy Committee is as follows:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Directly Elected Members	Non-Voting
Party Leader or Deputy	15 Elected Members	Chair of the Federal Conference Committee
Party President		1 Local Government Rep
6 Parliamentarians		
1 Federal Communications & Elections Committee Rep		
2 Councillor Reps		
3 State Party Reps		

Federal Conference Committee

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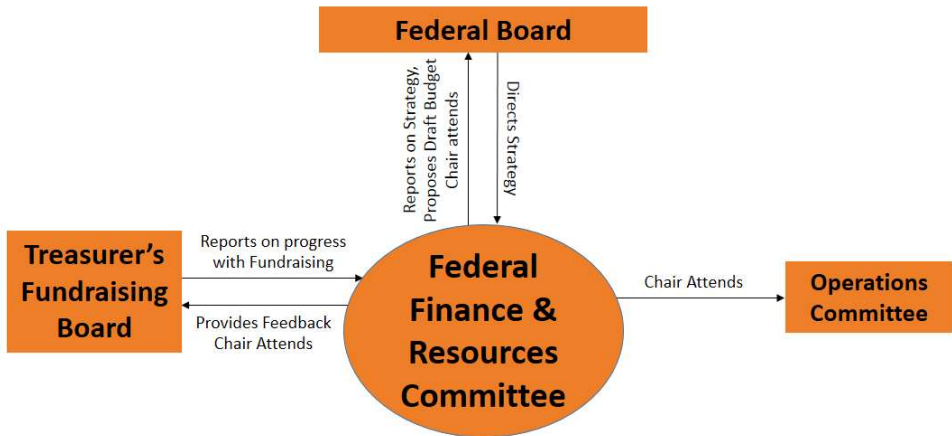


The Membership of the Federal Conference Committee is as follows:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Directly Elected Members	Non-Voting
Party President	12 Elected Members	Federal Chief Executive
Chief Whip (Commons)		1 Federal Finance & Resources Committee Rep
3 State Party Reps		1 Federal Staff Rep
1 Federal Board Rep		
2 Federal Policy Committee Reps		
1 Federal Communications & Elections Committee Rep		
1 Federal People Development Committee Rep		

Federal Finance & Resources Committee

The Federal Finance & Resources Committee replaces the Federal Finance & Administration Committee, a sub-committee of the Federal Executive. Its membership remains broadly the same, although its relationship with the Federal Board has been formalised.

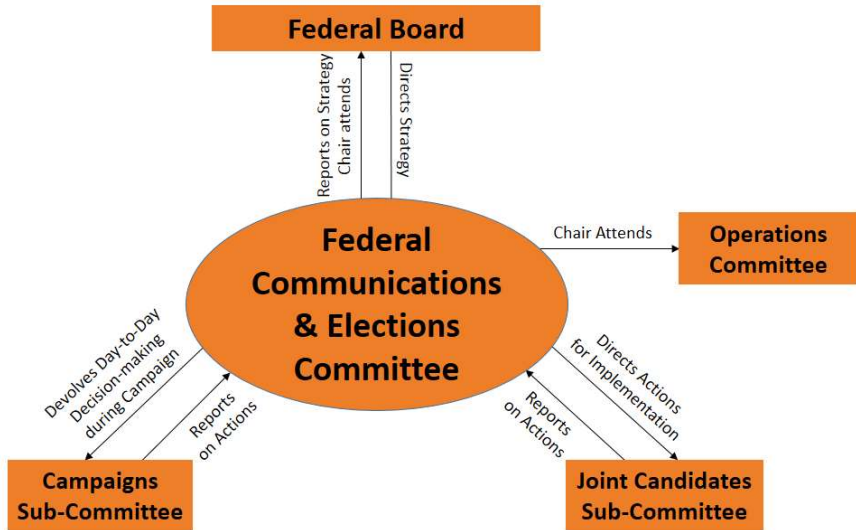


The Membership of the Federal Finance & Resources Committee is as follows:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Members elected by the Federal Board
Party President	Chair (Registered Treasurer)
Federal Treasurer	5 Elected Members
3 State Party Treasurers	
Federal Chief Executive	
1 Federal Staff Rep	
1 Parliamentary Office of the Liberal Democrats Rep	

Federal Communications & Elections Committee

The Federal Communications & Elections Committee replaces the Campaigns and Communications Committee, currently sub-committee of the Federal Executive. In addition, following the recommendation of the 2015 General Election Review, it has taken on strategic responsibility for Candidates at a Federal level, with the current Joint States Candidates Committee coming



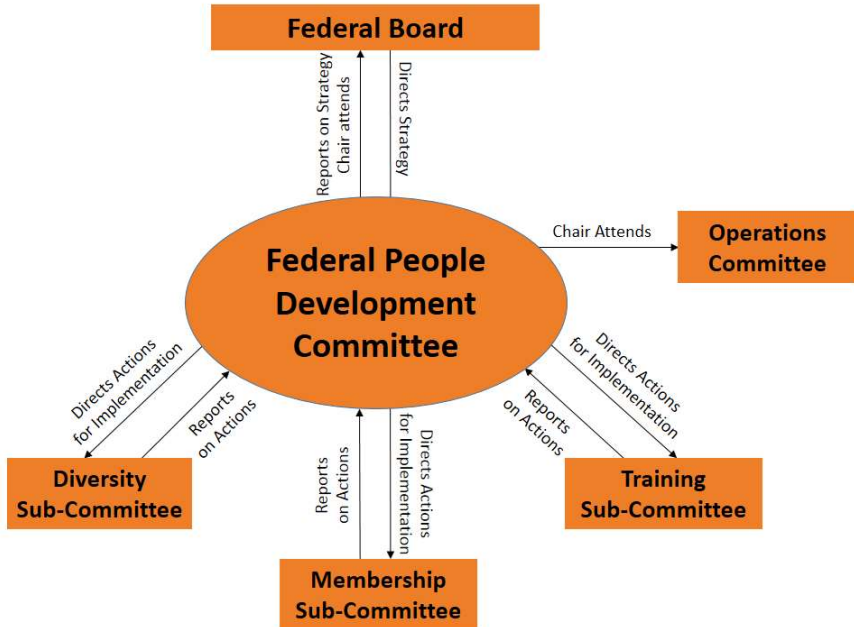
under its remit.

The Membership of the Federal Elections & Communications Committee is below:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Members elected by the Federal Board	Non-Voting
Party President	1 Chair	Federal Chief Executive
Party Leader	2 Federal Board Members	Chief Executive of ALDC
Chief Whip (Commons)		
2 Parliamentarians		
1 ALDC Rep		
3 State Party Reps		

Federal People Development Committee

The Federal People Development Committee brings together Diversity, Training and Membership for the first time. This will enable the Party to take a more strategic and holistic view of membership support and activation. The work of the current Diversity Engagement Group (Diversity), the Joint States Membership Committee (Membership) and the Training Task Force (Training) will be continued as part of its remit.

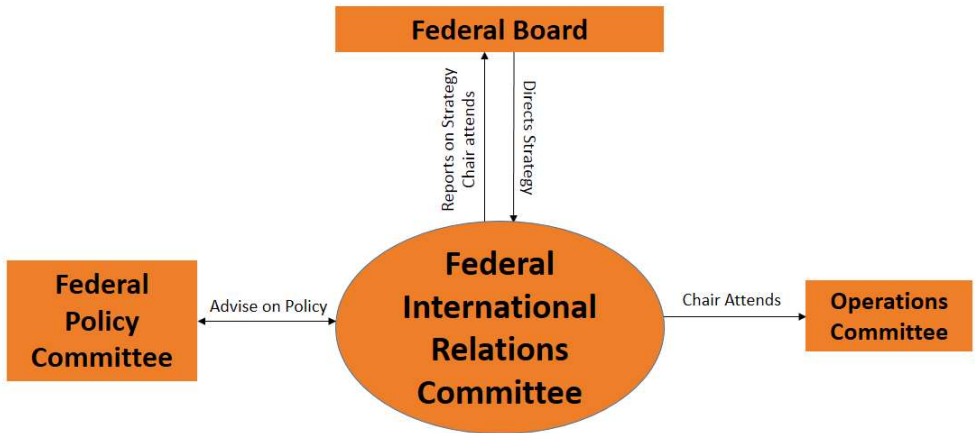


The Membership of the Federal People Development Committee is below:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Members elected by the Federal Board
Party President	6 Elected Members
Chair of Liberal Youth	
Chair of Ethnic Minority Liberal Democrats	
Chair of the Liberal Democrat Disability Association	
Chair of Liberal Democrat Women	
Chair of the Campaign for Gender Balance	
Chair of LGBT+ Liberal Democrats	
3 State Party Reps	

Federal International Relations Committee

The Federal International Relations Committee replaces a third sub-committee of the Federal Executive, the International Relations Committee, and brings its membership more up to date as well as formalising its purpose. It will continue to manage the Party’s relationships with sister parties internationally, as well as oversee the organisation and provision of training for sister parties outside the UK. In addition, the FIRC will co-ordinate the work of internationally-minded organisations within the framework of the Party, and advise the Party on international policy where appropriate.

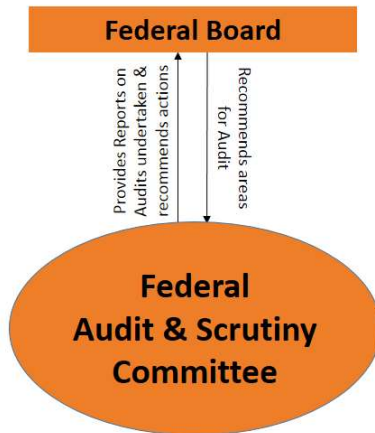


The Membership of the Federal International Relations Committee is below:

Representatives / Ex Officio	Directly Elected Members	Non-Voting
Party President	6 Elected Members	1 Liberal Democrat British Group Rep
1 Federal Board Rep		1 Liberal Democrat European Group Rep
1 MEP Rep		1 Committee of the Regions Rep
3 State Party Reps		1 Brussels and Europe Local Party Rep
1 Liberal Youth Rep		Liberal International Bureau Members
1 Federal Policy Committee Rep		Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe Bureau Members
1 Westminster Foreign Affairs Team Rep		Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Bureau Members

Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee

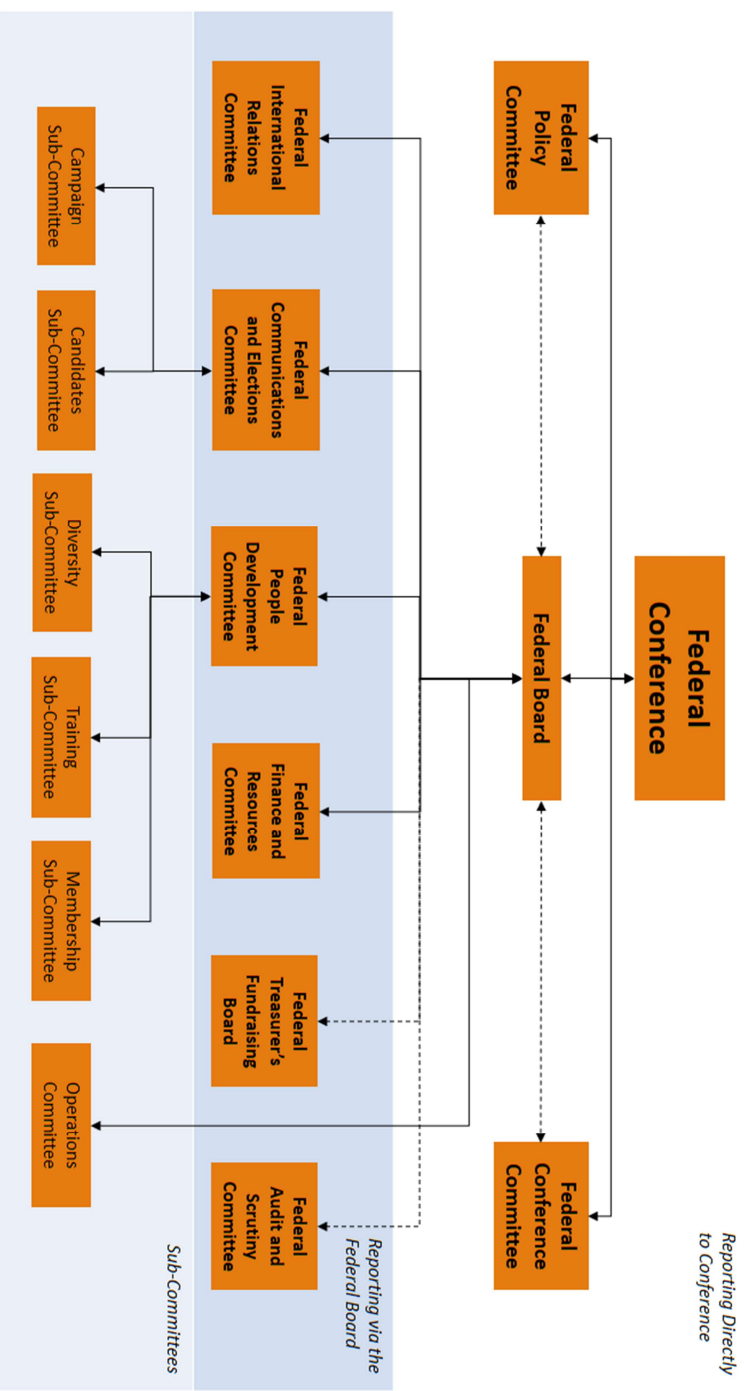
The Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee replaces and formalises the functions of the current Audit Committee, a Committee which meets jointly and is largely comprised of the membership of Liberal Democrats Ltd, formerly known as the Trustees. The purpose of this committee will be to commission internal audits, ensuring effective governance and scrutinising the party's conduct, for example following a General Election. It is the only committee which may act entirely independently of the Board, to ensure its ability to act impartially where required.



The Membership of the Federal Audit & Scrutiny Committee is as follows:

Members appointed by the Federal Board	Non-Voting
6 Appointed Members	Party President
	Party Leader
	Federal Treasurer
	Chair of the Federal Finance & Resources Committee
	1 Federal Communications & Elections Committee Rep

Proposed Federal Party Structure



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