

Dear Club Member,

The NLC's current Dress Code was changed to Dress Advice from **July 2023**, following votes at May's Members' Council and The AGM. This note aims to set out what you and your guests are recommended to wear in the Clubhouse or on The Terrace and is being published alongside a detailed Visual Style Guide which will play a major part in the changeover to the Club's new Dress Advice.

"The National Liberal Club recommends that Members and their guests dress in a smart-business or smart-casual manner that would be appropriate for visiting most good hotels, restaurants or theatres. The Club's Dress Advice aims to encourage a clean, presentable atmosphere and create a sense of belonging whilst respecting comfort and self-expression. We ask that sartorial choices of others are respected."

This will apply throughout the whole year everywhere in the Club: there will no longer be different Dress Codes for The Dining Room, Lounge and Smoking Room.

Previous confusion about what constitutes "smart-casual" has now been clarified *visually* to assist Members, Guests and Staff alike in decision-making. There are three categories described variously as "**recommended**", "**accepted**" and "**discouraged**". We hope that the attached visual guidance will also clear up some misconceptions that Members had about what garments were and were not considered suitable by showing examples of jeans and trainers that are accepted and others that are discouraged. The Club recognises the need for nuance, guidance and tolerance.

We advise that members dress according to the "recommended" category when visiting the Club but it is up to the individual member and their guests to decide whether to dip into the "accepted" category. Discouraged items may occasionally be worn (in special circumstances) at the discretion of the Hall Porters or Senior Management Team. This allows a degree of 'wiggle room' in personal or health circumstances that will not see the wrong pair of shoes being turned away from a family funeral.

The list of banned items is relatively unchanged from the previous version of the rules.

**sportswear, shorts, tracksuits, cargo pants, shellsuits,
ripped or torn clothing.**

We hope that the move away from explicit "permitted"/"banned" to a more respectful tone of advice will result in Members accepting the decisions of the staff and no longer raising personal objections about other Members' attire, based on their own personal preferences.

Enshrined in the Dress Advice is the request to respect the decisions of the staff on these matters.

The Club is also moving to a more gender-neutral form of Dress Advice for all sexes, meaning that men should no longer face far more prescriptive rules than women, provided their clothes are “recommended” or “accepted”, and those with an alternative gender identity may choose to wear clothing appropriate to any gender expression with which they identify.

We are hopeful that this new approach reduces confusion and allows those who wish to maintain a “Club” atmosphere are as happy as those who wish to prioritise a “Liberal” ethos. If you do feel, however, that you need to make a complaint about how another member or their guest is dressed, please report it to the Front Office staff or to senior management. The staff are responsible for addressing all such matters.

**Finally, just a few of the headline changes that take effect
from Monday 3 July**

- 1) Ties will no longer be obligatory for men in the Dining Room in the evenings.
- 2) Tailored jackets are “recommended” dress for men but jackets will no longer be obligatory, provided a suitable smart alternative is worn. Men who are wearing a jacket in the Club may remove it at their own discretion if they feel too hot.
- 3) Jeans are not “recommended”. They are “accepted” only if uniform in colour, unfaded and smart. Light, stonewash or faded denim is “discouraged”.
- 4) The Club will permit a limited range of trainers, pumps, loafers and other casual shoes, providing they are clean, smart and not sportswear.
- 5) Men’s sandals are “discouraged”, in line with the results of our recent members’ survey, but not banned. This is the National **Liberal** Club, after all!

The full text passed at the AGM is set out below.

The new Dress Advice for The National Liberal Club - from 3 July 2023

- 1) Paragraph 1 of the Appendix is renamed “Dress Advice” and is replaced with:

“The National Liberal Club recommends that Members and their guests dress in a smart-business or smart-casual manner that would be appropriate for visiting most good hotels, restaurants or theatres. The Club’s Dress Advice aims to encourage a clean, presentable atmosphere and create a sense of belonging whilst respecting comfort and self-expression. We ask that sartorial choices of others are respected.”

- 2) Paragraph 2 is replaced with:

- i. Outdoor clothing, such as coats and wellington boots should, when practicable, be removed immediately on entry to the Clubhouse, and stored in the places provided for this purpose, at the risk of the owner.
- ii. Whilst Members and their guests may take handbags, document folders and laptop computers around the Club, other baggage and impedimenta should not be taken into the Club rooms. Such items may be deposited with the Hall Porter for safe-keeping.
- iii. Outdoor coats may be worn on the Terrace, but The Club recommends that they are not worn inside the Clubhouse

3) Paragraph 3 is replaced with:

- i. Members are advised to dress in a manner that is at minimum smart-casual. Business attire is actively welcomed, but not mandatory. Military, Religious and National dress are also welcomed. Guidance as to the interpretation of these standards is provided within visual guides that are available at the front desk and on the Club website.
- ii. Members and their guests are free to dress according to any gender expression with which they feel comfortable.
- iii. Members and guests are requested to comply with additional specified dress requirements when attending Club events that have their own additional dress code (e.g. Black Tie).
- iv. Sportswear is prohibited.
- v. There is an established convention in The NLC that the Dining Room is considered the most formal room in The Club, and The Lounge the most casual. The Club requests that these conventions are respected by its Members and guests where possible.
- vi. Members and guests are requested to respect the decisions of the staff in upholding the Club Dress Advice.

4) New Paragraph 4, called "Interpreting the Advice" shall read:

- i. Visual style guides are provided online and at the front desk to help interpret the Club Dress Advice
- ii. Where jackets are worn, The Club recommends that these err towards a smarter 'tailored' style.
- iii. Members who wear trousers are recommended to wear clean tailored trousers, cords or chinos. Although jeans are not generally recommended, they may be worn if uniform-colour, unfaded and smart. Light, stonewash or faded denim is strongly discouraged. Examples are available in the Club Visual Guides.
- iv. Footwear should be clean, presentable town footwear. Whilst the Club permits some trainers, pumps, loafers and other casual shoes, it strongly recommends that they are clean, smart and not sportswear.
- v. Whilst Members and their guests may remove a jacket when they see fit, The Club requests that they are placed on the back of one's chair or carried, and not left around the Clubhouse. Garments should not be deposited on furniture to

'reserve' spaces in the Club. The Club acknowledges the discomfort of wearing jackets in hot weather, and loosens restrictions accordingly on such days.

- vi. In determining the meaning of "smart-casual," the following items of clothing are not permitted: shorts, tracksuits, cargo pants, shellsuits, sportswear, ripped or torn clothing. Members or guests not dressing in a manner that is at minimum smart casual can be asked to leave the premises by the Front Office or Senior Management Team.
- vii. Whilst The Club understands that certain garments (such as jeans or trainers) are not always considered "smart", The Club acknowledges that there are exceptions to blanket dress rules which may be based on an individual's health circumstances, the weather, specific Club events, or even the specific garment in question. Exemptions to the dress advice can be made at the discretion of the front office or Senior Management. The Club requests that Members and their guests respect the decisions of the staff.