

The Rule Book – Section N

Model Constitution for a Society Co-operative Party

Introduction

1. These Rules do not replace the registered Rules of Co-operative Party Ltd and shall at all times be consistent with the registered Rules. In the event of any inconsistency, the registered Rules of the Co-operative Party Ltd. shall apply.

Name

2. The Society Co-operative Party.

Objects

3. To secure direct Co-operative representation in Parliament, the European Parliament, Scottish Parliament or National Assembly for Wales, as appropriate, and on local and other administrative bodies in accordance with the decisions of the NEC to promote the political policy of the Co-operative Party; and to undertake in furtherance of these objects such promotional activity or other work as may be deemed desirable either alone or in co-operation with other committees or organisations having similar objects with a view to the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth.

Boundary

4. The Party shall operate within the NEC Region and shall consist of all Co-operative Party members resident within the local authority boundaries of

Constitution of the Society Party Council

5. The Society Party shall be governed by a Council consisting of:
 - () Representatives from each of the Branch Parties
 - (not more than 2) representatives from each affiliated organisation, appointed in such a manner as determined by the affiliated organisation
 - () Representatives as determined by the relevant Subscribing Society or Societies
6. If not already delegates, the regional NEC member, the regional Youth Representative and the Co-operative Party nominated member(s) of the Labour Party Regional Board should be invited to attend. The Party Council's official Labour & Co-operative MPs, and Assembly Members and candidates shall also be invited as ex-officio members.
7. All such representatives shall be individual members of the Co-operative Party.
8. If a representative ceases to be a member of the electing nominating body, that that body shall be asked to elect/nominate another member.

Branch Parties

9. Branch Parties may be established comprising individual members and organised to carry on the political work of the Society Party in accordance with model constitutions for Branches approved by the NEC.
10. Branch Parties shall operate and be financed under regulations laid down by the Society Party Council.
11. Party Council may delegate some of their functions to Branch Parties. However, in all respects Branch Parties shall be subordinate to the Party Council, especially in matters of affiliations, finance and candidatures.

Delegations

12. The Party Council may itself appoint delegates to Constituency Labour Parties, with or without seeking advice from the relevant Branches. The Party Council may also delegate this function, in whole or part, to Branches. Where such delegation is made, the Party Council shall determine which members may vote in the appointment of delegations.

Affiliated Bodies

13. Auxiliary bodies (as defined by the NEC) may affiliate to the Society Party and shall pay an affiliation fee.

Individual Membership

14. Individual members shall be members of a Retail Co-operative Society or a recognised co-operative as determined by the National Executive Committee of the Co-operative Party and shall pay the annual subscription as approved by the National Annual Conference of the Party. Individual members shall sign the declaration as follows:

I declare myself a Co-operator and agree to accept the programme, policy and constitution of the Co-operative Party, national and local. I will do all in my power to promote the policy of the Co-operative Party as declared from time to time. I am not a member of any political Party other than the Labour Party or the Social Democratic and Labour Party. I am a member of a recognised co-operative as determined by the National Executive Committee of the Co-operative Party.

15. Where in the opinion of the Society Party, the above declaration is not being honoured by the person concerned then the Society Party Council may take such disciplinary action as outlined in the National Rules of the Co-operative Party.
16. There shall be consultation between the Secretary of the Society Party Council and a National Official representing the NEC to determine whether the Society Party Council should take further action or whether the matter should be dealt with by the NEC under its disciplinary powers in the National Co-operative Party Rules.
17. Where in the opinion of the NEC the above declaration is not being honoured by the person concerned then the NEC may take such disciplinary action as outlined in the National Co-operative Party Rules.
18. A member who stands against the official Labour candidate or gives any form of support shall be deemed to be in breach of the declaration and may be expelled subject to the disciplinary rules outlined in the National Rules. Furthermore, no member may become a member of any group in opposition to the official Labour Group in Parliament, the European Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for

Wales or other administrative body where such a group exists. Any member who stands for election either as a Labour and Co-operative Candidate or Labour Candidate shall accept and retain the Labour Whip of the body to which he/she is seeking election. Failure to do so may render him/her liable to disciplinary action subject to the disciplinary procedures as outlined in the National Rules.

19. Full membership rights shall commence three calendar months from the date the application is received by the Co-operative Party Head Office, providing all conditions of membership have been met and there are no objections to the application. Prior to full membership, the applicant can attend branch meetings as a visitor.
20. The application shall be considered by the Society Party Council/Voluntary Party at the next appropriate meeting after application. Notification of any acceptance or rejection of the application shall be given to the applicant within three calendar months of receipt of the application.
21. Applicants for membership must furnish proof of membership of a Retail Co-operative Society or a recognised co-operative as determined by the National Executive Committee of the Co-operative Party, within three calendar months of their application to join the Party.
22. The Society Party and the NEC shall also have the power to suspend membership. Membership may be suspended for a period of up to six months whilst the procedure described in the National Rules is being undertaken.

Executive Committee

23. The Society Party Council shall elect annually an Executive Committee consisting of persons elected by and from members of the Society Party Council. The Executive Committee shall comprise the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and () other members.

Officers, Representatives and Candidates

24. The Officers of the Party shall (except in the case of full-time Officials) be elected by ballot vote at the annual meeting. They shall remain in office for one year and be eligible for re-election.
25. The officers shall be:
 - The Chair
 - The Vice-Chair,
 - The Secretary
 - The Treasurer, and
 - The Membership Officer
 - Other officers as needed, such as Campaigns Officer, Education Officer, Co-operative Liaison Officer, Youth Officer and Equality Officer.
26. Officers shall have been individual members of the Co-operative Party for not less than six months at the date of election except in the case of a newly formed Society/Voluntary Party or Branch Party, where the NEC shall have power to waive temporarily this restriction. This rule shall also apply in respect of nominees for public bodies and representatives of the Co-operative Party on other bodies to which this Party is affiliated.
27. Where finances allow, reasonable expenses may be reimbursed.

28. In exceptional circumstances, honoria may be paid to officers, subject to approval of the NEC.
29. Any officer or delegate shall be deemed to have vacated their position if they fail to attend three consecutive meetings of the Party Council or the body they have been delegated to. This shall not preclude them from standing for re-election to the position.

Auditor

30. An auditor shall be appointed by the Party to audit the accounts and he/she shall submit a report to the annual meeting of the Party. Where appropriate the Auditor shall be the Society's Auditor.

Meetings

31. The Society Party Council and Branches shall hold at least four meetings a year including an annual meeting, at such times as may be decided by the respective members.
32. Party meetings and events shall be conducted in a friendly and orderly manner and organised in such a way as to maximise participation for members and so that no member shall be precluded from attendance because they cannot gain access to the meeting place for any reason. Harassment or intimidation of any member is unacceptable, as is any form of discrimination on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic, national or social origins, religion or disability.

Funds

33. The funds of the Society Party shall be provided by:
 - Such sums as are provided by the Society under the rules of the Society
 - Affiliation fees from other bodies
 - Money raising efforts approved by the Society Party Council
 - Proportion of individual membership subscriptions as determined by the NEC

Contracts

34. The Party shall not enter into any contract with a value in excess of £1,000 without the express permission of the NEC.

National Organisation

35. The Party shall register with the national Co-operative Party and accept the policy as agreed upon and as amended from time to time by the Annual Co-operative Party Conference and by the NEC and shall operate such regulations as may be approved or issued by the NEC of the Party, provided that any regulation issued as a general instruction to Parties shall be subject to confirmation by the Annual Conference of the Party. No Party shall be considered registered until it has its constitution endorsed by the NEC.
36. To uphold and enforce the Constitution, Rules and Standing Orders of the Party, the NEC may take any action it deems necessary for such purpose, including disbanding, suspension or otherwise disciplining any Party organisation; in furtherance of such duties it shall have the powers to suspend, expel or take

other administrative disciplinary action against individual members of the Party subject to the provisions of the Disciplinary Rules set out in the National Rules.

37. The NEC shall have the power to adjudicate in disputes that may arise at any level of the Party including between affiliated and other Party organisations; between Party organisations and individuals in those organisations; and in disputes that occur between individual members within the Party's organisations. Where the Rules do not meet the particular circumstances, the NEC may have regard to national or local custom and practice as the case may require. The NEC's decisions shall be final and binding on all organisations and individuals concerned.
38. An Annual Report and audited financial statement shall be submitted to the National Party not later than 31 March.

Candidatures

39. The Society Party Council shall, acting through that Council, affiliate and seek affiliation and representation on all such bodies and organisations as come within the objects of the Co-operative Party. The Society Party Council shall actively engage in securing elected and other administrative representation on public and other administrative bodies and shall render such aid, physical and financial, as may be decided from time to time in the pursuit of its objectives. The Society Party Council shall receive nominations and, where desirable, make nominations for representatives as indicated in this Rule. For official Parliamentary, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales or mayoral candidatures, approval must be obtained from the NEC of the Co-operative Party, before selection of the candidate.

All nominated persons must have been members for six months of a recognised Co-operative Society as determined by the National Executive Committee of the Co-operative Party.

Alteration to Rules

40. No Rule shall be altered, or new Rule adopted, unless written notice is given to the Secretary at least 28 days prior to the meeting of the Party Council at which it is to be discussed and circulated at least seven days prior to this date. The proposal must be supported by two-thirds of the members voting. No such Rule shall become operative until it is approved and registered by the NEC of the Party.

Incorporation of the National Rules into this Constitution

41. It is hereby declared that the National Rules of the Co-operative Party are deemed to be incorporated into this Constitution. It is also made clear that if the National Rules are altered or amended in the future, then such altered or amended National Rules shall be deemed to be incorporated into this Constitution as at the date of the alteration or amendment to the National Rules. For the avoidance of doubt, it is made clear that such incorporation of the present National Rules and any future alteration or amendment to the same shall be deemed to be automatic and will not require any meeting or vote by members of this Society Party as at the time of such amendment or alteration.