

The Rule Book – Section O

Model Constitution for a Voluntary 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 Voluntary Co-operative Party.

Objects

3. To secure direct Co-operative representation in Parliament, the Scottish Parliament or National Assembly for Wales, as appropriate, and on local and other administrative bodies in accordance with the decision 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

Individual Membership

5. 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 membership 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.

6. Where in the opinion of the Voluntary Party, the above declaration is not being honoured by the person concerned then the Voluntary party may take such disciplinary action as outlined in the National Rules of the Co-operative Party.
7. There shall be consultation between the Secretary of the Voluntary Party and National Official representing the NEC concerning whether the Voluntary Party should take further action or whether the matter should be dealt with by the NEC under its disciplinary powers in the National Party Rules.

8. Where in the opinion of the NEC the above declaration is not being honoured by the person concerned the NEC may take such disciplinary action as outlined in the National Rules of the Co-operative Party.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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.

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.

12. The Voluntary 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 this Constitution is being undertaken.

Affiliated Organisations

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

Officers, Representatives and Candidates

14. 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.
15. The officers shall be:
 - The Chair
 - The Vice-Chair,
 - The Secretary
 - The Treasurer, and
 - The Membership Officer
16. Other officers as needed, such as Campaigns Officer, Education Officer, Co-operative Liaison Officer, Youth Officer and Equality Officer.
17. Officers shall be 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 Party where the NEC shall have the power temporarily to

waive 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.

18. Where finances allow, reasonable expenses may be reimbursed.
19. In exceptional circumstances, honoraria may be paid to officers, subject to approval of the NEC.
20. 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.

Executive Committee

21. The Party shall elect an Executive Committee consisting of the officers and three other members.

Auditor

22. An auditor shall be appointed by the Party to audit its accounts.

Annual Meeting

23. The Annual Meeting of the Party shall be held in the month of It shall receive annual reports from the Secretary, Treasurer and Auditor of the Party. It shall also elect its Officers and the Executive Committee of the Party from written nominations prior to the commencement of the Annual Meeting.

Meetings

24. The Party shall hold regular meetings at such times as may be decided by the members.

Finance

25. The funds of the Party shall be provided by:
 - Subscriptions or grants from the National Party, individuals and Co-operative organisations;
 - Other money raising efforts approved by the Voluntary Party.

Contracts

26. 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

27. 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.

28. To uphold and enforce the Constitution, Rules and Standing Orders of the Party, the Party 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 or take other disciplinary action against individual members of the Party subject to the provisions of the Disciplinary Rules set out in the National Rules.
29. 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 which occur between individual members or 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.
30. An Annual Report and audited financial statement shall be submitted to the National Party not later than 31 March.

Candidatures

31. The Voluntary Party shall seek affiliation and representation on all such bodies and organisations as come within the objects of the Co-operative Party. The Voluntary Party shall actively engage in securing representation on public and other administrative bodies and such organisations as shall be approved by the Voluntary Party, and shall render aid, physical and financial, as may be decided from time to time in the pursuit of its objectives. The Voluntary Party shall receive nominations and where desirable, make nominations for representatives as indicated in this Rule. For 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 by the Voluntary Party. For local bodies, the voluntary Party shall approve, or otherwise, all candidatures and shall only accept financial responsibility after known costs have been considered and approved in connection with each candidature approved.

Alteration to Rules

32. 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 at which it is to be discussed and circulated at least seven days prior to this date.
33. The proposal must be supported by two thirds of the members voting. No such Rule shall become operative until it is approved by the NEC.

Incorporation of the National Rules into this Constitution

34. 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 the members of this Voluntary Party at the time of such amendment or alteration.