

Recommended Rules of

The Conservative Rural Affairs Group

1. NAME AND AFFILIATION

1.1 The name of the Group shall be "The Conservative Rural Affairs Group (Agriculture, Rural Affairs, Fisheries and Food)".

1.2 The Group is acknowledged by the Board of the Conservative Party as a "Specialist Group" and as such will be expected to acknowledge the authority of the Board.

2. OBJECTS

2.1 The Objects of the Group shall be to provide an umbrella organisation of value to the Conservative Party in all issues relating to the countryside, agriculture, fisheries and food;

- to provide a three way channel for information, policy discussion and debate between members of the Group, Conservative Central Office and the Parliamentary Party in Government or Opposition
- to communicate as necessary to wider audiences
- to carry out studies
- to maintain and support, or promote the return of, a Conservative Government by promoting the interest of the Party in general and in particular among others sharing their special interest.
- to play a full role in campaigning activities of the Party and to encourage members to be actively engaged in their local constituencies.
- and to raise the necessary funds to achieve these objectives.

2.2 Without prejudice to the objects above the Group may provide:

- Information to members on Conservative policy developments and campaigning
- An opportunity to contribute to the formation of policy within the Party in particular those areas reflecting their special interest.
- study groups specialising in certain topics of interest, drawing on expertise outside the Party.
- An opportunity to brief Party spokesmen on problems of regional or national significance.
- A route for members to gain Parliamentary attention to specific difficulties.
- Informed discussion at a regional and local level
- A link to Conservative MPs and MEPs and prospective candidates interested in the countryside, agriculture, fisheries and food

respectively.

- A national scale bulletin or newspaper.

2.3 Within its remit the Group will seek a wide and committed membership base, aiming to be as useful as possible to the Conservative Party.

2.4 It will build contacts with other non-Conservative organisations which are interested in the same fields.

3. MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Members shall be members of the Conservative Party who have been accepted as members of the Group and paid a subscription to the Group either at national or local level. Any non Party members involved in the Forum should have the status of "Associate Member" or in the case of Companies or Groups "Corporate Members" In neither case will they have voting rights, or be able to hold office.

3.2 All members of the Group shall be bound by these rules.

3.3 All members of the Group shall have the right to attend and vote at any general meeting, including an Annual or special General Meeting of the Regional or Area Group or branch of which they are members, save that no member of the Group may vote at any meeting of the Group unless he has been a Party member for at least 3 months prior to the date of the meeting.

3.4 Any person who has ceased to be a member of the Party and the Group shall have no rights or interest in the property or funds of the Group.

3.5 The Executive Committee may by a majority vote suspend or terminate the membership of the Group of any member whose declared opinions or conduct shall, in its judgement, be inconsistent with the objects of the Group. Similarly, the Executive Committee may refuse membership of Group for the same reasons.

3.5. In such circumstances, the Executive Committee shall write forthwith to the individual giving him notice that his membership has been withdrawn or that his membership of the Group been refused (as the case may be).

3.6. Before such power is exercised, at least fifteen days' written notice shall be given to the Person concerned, indicating in that notice the course of action which the Executive Committee intends to take and afford the opportunity to the person of appearing before the Executive Committee

to make representations as to why no action should not be taken.

4. HONORARY POSITIONS

4.1. The Executive Committee of the Group shall elect a President who shall, ex-officio, be entitled attend the Executive Committee.

4.2. The President, or in his absence the Chairman except for any matter relating to his own election, shall chair and conduct the business of Annual General Meeting of the Executive Committee.

4.3. The Executive Committee of the Group may appoint Patrons or Vice-Presidents.

5. OFFICERS

5.1. The Officers of the Group will be the management team of the Group and shall comprise:

5.1.1 A Chairman;

5.1.2 Up to three Vice Chairmen;

5.1.3 A Treasurer

5.1.4 The number and functions of the vice Chairmen and the Treasurer shall be proposed by the Chairman and agreed by the Executive Committee

5.2. The Officers of the Group shall be individually elected annually by members of the Conservative Rural Affairs Group. Nominations submitted by members of the Group and also members of the Conservative Party or the Board of the Party all to be lodged with the secretary of CRAG not later than the 21 days prior to the AGM each year.

Two nominations are required for a person to be deemed to have been nominated.

Voting procedure, following nominations sent to the Group secretary, voting will be available on line for completion before the AGM .The results will then be announced at the AGM. In the event no nominations have been received by the above dates then the Board of the Party will be empowered to nominate names for the vacant posts.

5.3 No Officer of the Executive Committee or of the Regions or Areas shall hold the same office for more than three consecutive years save that the Executive Committee may, upon a motion put and voted upon by it by secret ballot invite any Officer who has held the same office for three years to offer himself for re-election to that office, for one year only. Subject to this rule, arrangements shall be made to ensure continuity of management of the Group.

5.4 If an Officer elected at the Annual General Meeting ceases to hold office, for whatever reason, the Committee shall have power to elect a successor

until the next Annual General Meeting.

5.4.1 The Officers of the Group shall ex-officio be members of all Committees of the Executive Committee and of regional, area and local Committees and if any Officer so requests, he may be entitled to notices of all Committee meetings.

5.4.2 The Officers of the Group shall have day to day responsibility for the management and administration of the Forum but shall report to and implement any decision of the Executive Committee. The actions of the Officers shall not be inconsistent with any decision of the Executive Committee or the objects of the Group.

5.5 Not less than one month prior to the Annual General Meeting of the Group each year, Officers of the Group, its Regions and Areas shall as appropriate:

5.5.1 prepare all Group accounts which shall be submitted for audit or certification by a person or persons appointed by the Group and a certified true copy of the duly audited or certificated statements of accounts shall be available for all members of the Executive Committee;

5.5.2 produce a Report which shall be available for all members of the Executive Committee and shall include the following information: the number of members in the Group and the change in membership over previous year; the number of active Regions, Areas and local Branches including details of new or closed Branches over the year; details and activity of Forum Committees; details of activity during the year.

5.5.3 produce a summary of the activities of the Group for submission to the Board of the Party.

6. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

6.1 The Group shall have a national Governing Body which shall be known as the Executive Committee and which shall comprise the national officers of the Group and the regional Chairmen as elected, or their representatives, and one other from each region nominated by the region as their "Nominated Executive Representative".

6.2 Up to three further persons may be co-opted by the Executive Committee

6.3 The Chairman of the Group shall be chairman of the Executive Committee and in his absence the Executive Committee shall be chaired by one of the Vice Chairmen.

6.4 The Executive Committee may appoint a Secretary to the Executive Committee. If an Executive Secretary be appointed as under Rule 8, the Executive Secretary shall also be the Secretary of the

Committee.

6.5 The Executive Committee shall meet not less than twice every year. Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Chairman or request of the Executive Committee.

6.6 The Executive Committee shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

6.6.1 The Executive Committee shall have the power (subject to any resolutions of the Group made at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General Meeting) to deal with all matters affecting the Group and its membership, and to exercise control over all Regions, Areas and Local Groups and specialist committees.

6.6.2 The Executive Committee may, pursuant to paragraph 6.8 below, establish such committees of the Group as it shall think fit.

6.7 Funds of the Group

6.7.1 The Funds of the Group shall be under the control of the Executive Committee, and managed by the Treasurer.

6.7.2 The Executive Committee shall appoint not less than three signatories for Group bank accounts, bank drafts or cheques or similar documents which shall always require signature by two authorised signatories.

6.8 Notice of meetings

6.8.1 The Chairman of the Group shall give not less than 14 days notice of each meeting of the Executive Committee to each member of it and such notice shall State the date time and venue for the meeting;

6.8.2 Give an Agenda together with the draft minutes of the last meeting for approval by the Executive Committee.

6.8.3 Business not specified in the notice convening the meeting may be considered and dealt with only by leave of the Chairman provided that two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote agree to treat such business as urgent.

6.8.4 In an emergency, and at the absolute discretion of the Chairman the Chairman may summon a meeting of the Executive Committee at shorter notice to deal only with the business stated in the notice convening the meeting.

6.9 Committees of the Group

6.9.1 The Executive Committee may appoint Committees or Study Groups, with Chairmen and Secretaries, with specific terms of reference; such Study Groups or Committees shall automatically lapse after one year unless reappointed.

6.9.2 The minutes of any meeting of any Committee of the Group shall be sent to the

Chairman of the Group and Executive Secretary forthwith after approval.

6.9.3 The Executive Committee may resolve to disband any committee of the above at any time and for any reason provided that prior notice of the proposed resolution shall be given in the Agenda for the meeting; and the chairman of the relevant Committee informed.

7.1 The Group may have a regional structure which may cover geographical areas identical to those of the regions of the Conservative Party.

7.2 Regional Groups may set up Area Groups consistent with new areas of the Conservative Party.

7.3 Each Area of the Group may decide to have branches covering one or more Westminster Constituency Forums. The function of each branch shall be to work to sustain and promote the objects of the Group subject to the directions of the Area Committee.

7. REGIONAL

Each REGIONAL Committee shall consist of the following Officers:

7.4.1 A Chairman;

7.4.2 One or more Vice-Chairmen

7.4.3 There may also be a Secretary.

7.4.4 The Chairmen of each of the Areas within the Region.

7.4.5 The officers of each area, who shall be entitled to appoint alternates from among the full members of the Group.

7.5 The Officers of the Region shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Region.

7.6 Nominations for Officers of the Region shall be made to the Chairman of the Region in writing not less than 7 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting. All members of the Group in the Region shall be entitled to attend and to vote at 9 Annual General Meeting. Any member of the Group may make a nomination. The nominee's consent shall be required.

8. AREAS

8.1 Officers of the Areas

Each Area set up shall consist of the following Officers.

8.1.1 A Chairman;

8.1.2 One or more Vice Chairmen

8.1.3 A Secretary.

8.2 The Officers of the Area shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Area., at which all full members of the Forum within that Area shall be

entitled to vote.

8.3 Local Branches

8.3.1 Each Branch shall have a Committee ("The Branch Committee") which shall consist of the Officers and such number of members as is decided by the Branch to be representative of its membership in the Branch and necessary for its adequate working. The Officers shall be elected at a Branch Annual General Meeting at which all those full members of that Branch shall be entitled to vote.

8.4 Funds and property

8.4.1 Regions, Areas and Branches shall have power to raise funds and (subject to any directions of the Executive Committee, including a direction preventing such bodies from holding a bank account) to control its funds, but such funds shall belong to the Group.

8.4.2 The relevant Committee shall appoint not less than three signatories for bank and other accounts, of whom any two shall be required to sign any necessary documents.

8.4.3 All Branch accounts shall be submitted for audit or certification by a person or persons appointed by each Branch and a certified true copy of the duly audited or certificated statements of accounts shall be sent to the Treasurer of the Forum immediately following the Annual General Meeting of the Branch.

8.4.4 Upon request from the Chairman of the Group or the Executive Committee, a Branch shall provide forthwith such information as is requested relating to the affairs of the Branch, including information relating to finances and membership.

8.5 Rules of the Regions, Areas and Branches

8.5.1 Where no specific provision is made, these rules shall be deemed to apply as appropriate to Regions, Areas, and Branches.

8.6. In the event of the organisation ceasing its activities all assets and funds must revert to the Conservative Party

8.7 All Regions Areas and Branches shall send copies of the minutes to their regional or national chairman and the shadow team for information.

9. EXECUTIVE SECRETARY and Staff

9.1 The Executive Committee shall have power to appoint an Executive Secretary who shall be responsible to the Executive Committee for the

day to day co-ordination and control of the work of the Group at National level.

9.2 The Executive Secretary shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

9.3 The Executive Secretary will work with and support the management team of the Group at national, regional and area level, and liaise with Central Office and the Parliamentary Party.

9.4 The Executive Secretary shall receive notices of and be entitled to attend all committee and other meetings of the Group and Branches, but shall not be entitled to vote.

9.5 The Executive Committee shall have the power to appoint such other paid staff as it may think fit.

10. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

10.1 The Annual General Meeting of the Executive Committee shall be held before the end of April being within four months of the end of the Groups' financial year (which shall be December) each year, for the following purposes:

10.1.1 To receive and adopt the audited or certificated accounts of the Group prepared in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5.10.1 above;

10.1.2 To receive and adopt a Report prepared by Officers of the Group.

10.1.3 To elect the Officers

10.1.4 To elect Honorary positions within the Group

10.1.5 To appoint auditors or such other persons who may be qualified to certify accounts;

10.1.6 To transact such other business as may be brought before it.

10.1.7 Notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be given to each member of the Executive Committee at least twenty-one days before the date of the meeting.

11. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS

11.1 A Special General Meeting of the Group may be summoned at any time by the Chairman of the Group, or

12. QUORUM

12.1 For all General Meetings of the Group the quorum shall be not less than 10 members or 20% of the total membership of the Group (whichever is less).

12.2 The quorum of the Executive Committee and of its Committees shall be one-fourth of their respective members, except that the quorum shall in no instance be less than three.

12.3 VOTING AT MEETINGS

12.3.1 At all meetings of the Group, including meetings of the Executive Committee and its Committees, voting shall be by a show of hand in the first instance except that

12.3.2 in relation to the election of Officers, voting may be by secret ballot;

12.3.3 Except where expressly provided otherwise, any motion at any meeting of the Group, including meetings of the Executive Committee and its Committees shall be carried on a majority vote.

12.3.4 The Chairman (or chairman of the meeting) shall have a second or casting vote in all cases where the voting is declared to be equal.

12.4 INTERPRETATION

12.4.1 The Executive Committee shall have power to deal with any matter not provided for in these Rules.

12.5 ALTERATION OF THE RULES

12.5.1 A General Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Group shall have the power to amend, to add to, or to rescind rules of the Group by a vote in favour of such a resolution consisting of not less than one half of the total number of Members of the Executive Committee, the opinion of the Board on such amendments having been obtained in writing beforehand.

12.5.2 Notice of the proposed alteration must reach the Chairman of the Group in writing at least fourteen days before the day of the meeting.

Notice of the proposed alteration must be given to members of the Group at least seven days before the meeting.

13. All groups should recognise that statements or Publications issued by them express the view of the authors and do not necessarily express Conservative Party Policy, and this must be made clear on any material published.