



Canvassing Code of Practice for Council and Member Nominated Director Elections

Co-operative Group Limited

November 2016



Canvassing Code of Practice for Council and Member Nominated Director Elections

Purpose

At the heart of our Co-op is the principle of one member one vote with members electing their representatives to the Council and also individuals to serve as Member Nominated Directors on the Society's board. We aim to encourage voting as part of a vibrant and healthy democracy.

We also want these elections to be open - with Members having information which helps them to decide who to choose – and fair to those participating.

The Board and Council have agreed this Code to help you, as candidates, understand what is and is not appropriate when canvassing. We hope it is clear.

To help you in reading this Code we have used some terms which have capital letters. Where these capitalised words are used they have the meanings explained below.

We have also used words and phrases with capital letters which are used in our Rules. Please refer to the Rules for their meanings.

Our Co-op Associates: Co-operatives UK, the Co-operative Party, and the Co-operative Press.

Co-op Premises: any premises we own or use but the Returning Officer can also decide that other premises can be 'Co-op Premises'. For example if a Co-op meeting is being held in a hall or hotel, then for that time it may be 'Co-op Premises'.

MND: member nominated director.

Political Body: any trade union, political party, or other association with political aims or objectives

Returning Officer: in MND elections this is the Group Secretary or another person appointed by the Board and in Council elections this is the Council Secretary or another person appointed by the Council.

Voting Period: the period beginning on the first day of voting (or any earlier date notified by the Returning Officer) up to the end of voting in the relevant election.

'We' and 'us': Co-operative Group Limited.

'You': a candidate in the Council or MND election.

1. Information we will make available about you

1.1. We will ask you to provide a written election address and recent photo to appear on our election website and in written materials sent out to members. You will be told



how long this should be, when it should be provided and any other rules which apply to these documents.

- 1.2. You may also be asked if you want to contribute another longer address which will go on our election website. If we are going to do this, we will let you know and will advise you of the format, length and any other requirements.

2. Canvassing by you

- 2.1. So long as you comply with this Code, you can canvass as you wish. This is different from the previous Code because we want members to have as much information and involvement as possible.

- 2.2. Some examples of how you can canvass (if you want) include:

- Using social media
- Putting contact details on your nomination address in case members have a query of you
- Letting members know you have a blog, twitter account or other internet information available
- canvassing members outside Co-op Premises about the election and your involvement as a candidate
- asking for endorsement or recommendation from anyone other than one of our Co-op Associates or any Political Body.

3. Unacceptable conduct

There are some things which you should not do because this is not consistent with a fair and transparent election. Please read these very carefully. You are expected to be fully aware of these restrictions.

When you can canvass

- 3.1. You must not canvass before the Voting Period begins.

Undue Influence or bribery

- 3.2. Canvassing must not be aggressive or intimidating.
- 3.3. You must not:
 - pressurise a member as to how they vote.
 - pay any member to vote or not to vote in any election (or ask anyone to do this on your behalf).
 - give gifts or entertain any member to influence their vote in any election (or ask anyone to do this on your behalf).

Use of Co-op Premises

- 3.4. You must not:
 - distribute any canvassing materials in Co-op Premises.



- put up a poster on any noticeboard or other publicly visible area on Co-op Premises.

We may decide to make information on candidates available on Co-op Premises,

Contact lists and resources

- 3.5 You can't use any of our resources, contact lists or membership data or those of Our Co-op Associates to help you in your canvassing.

Costs

- 3.6. You should not incur any costs in your canvassing, including any for advertising in national or regional commercial media, unless agreed by the Returning Officer.

Content of your canvassing

- 3.7. You must not canvass in any way which is:
- critical or disrespectful of any other candidate.
 - disparaging of us.
 - discriminatory, abusive or insulting.
 - untrue or misleading.

Our Co-op Associates

- 3.8. None of Our Co-op Associates is permitted to endorse or recommend a Council or MND candidate.

Political Bodies

- 3.9. You must not ask for endorsement or recommendation from any Political Body.

Returning Officer

- 3.10. The Returning Officer may ask you to stop any form of canvassing and make all reasonable efforts to stop others from canvassing on your behalf which is not, in the view of the Returning Officer, in line with this Code or in keeping with a fair and transparent election.

4. Board or Council endorsement or recommendation

The Rules allow the Board and Council to provide background information to members including about candidates. They may also indicate their support (or otherwise) for candidate.

5. Any Queries

Please contact the Returning Officer if you have any queries. He/she will decide what this Code means. His/her decision is final.

6. Breach by you or others

- 6.1. The Returning Officer will investigate a potential breach of this Code if a formal complaint, supported by evidence, is brought within a month of the end of the Voting Period.



6.2. The Returning Officer will decide what investigations are necessary and decide if a breach has happened.

6.3. The Returning Officer may disqualify you for a breach taking into account:

- your conduct - especially if the breach was deliberate or you ignored our advice.
- the evidence.
- the seriousness of the breach.
- our precedent and practice in such cases.

6.4. The Returning Officer may reprimand you for a breach which is not serious enough for you to be disqualified.

6.5. The Returning Officer will report his/her findings to you, the complainant, the Council, Board and all other candidates in the relevant election as soon as practicable.

7. Returning Officer

A decision of the Returning Officer in the conduct of any election and the interpretation of this Code is final.

8. This Code and the Rules.

The Rules override this Code where the Rules and this Code are not consistent.