

COBSEO REGULATIONS

TITLE

1. The official title of the organisation shall be Cobseo, The Confederation of Service Charities.

OBJECTS

2. The stated objectives of Cobseo are to represent, promote and further the interest of the Armed Forces Community by:
 - a. Exchanging and coordinating information internally.
 - b. Identifying issues of common concern and coordinating any necessary and appropriate action.
 - c. Acting as a point of contact for external agencies to the members of Cobseo.
 - d. Representing and supporting the needs and opinions of its member organisations individually and collectively at central and local government levels, and with other national and international agencies.

MEMBERSHIP

3. Membership is comprised of charities and other organisations that promote the welfare or general interests of the Armed Forces Community. They may hold Full, Associate or Affiliate status, according to the defined criteria within which they qualify. Only Full Members and Regimental Members are company law members of Cobseo.
4. Applications for Membership may be submitted for consideration by the Executive Committee. The Committee must be satisfied that the applicant is:
 - a. Willing to commit to the conditions that would otherwise risk withdrawal of membership.
 - b. Actively supportive of the Armed Forces Community; and able to demonstrate effective and responsible governance.
 - c. Willing to work collaboratively with Cobseo and its members in pursuit of the values and purpose of the Confederation and not be affiliated to, or supportive of, any groups or organisations whose aims conflict with those of the Confederation.
 - d. Shown not to be in financial deficit and that a viable plan for sustainability is in place.
5. In addition, all applicants must fit within the basic criteria applicable to one of the three distinct categories of membership, as follows:
 - a. **Full.** Open to registered charities¹ whose primary purpose is to support the Armed Forces Community, have been registered for a minimum of a year², and whose submitted Trustees' Annual Reports (TAR) and accounts demonstrate consistent and satisfactory operating procedures.
 - b. **Regimental.** Eligibility for Full membership is extended to the Regimental and Corps

¹ Registered as a charity with the relevant regulatory body in the UK or Crown Dependency; the Charity Commission, OSCR, Charity Commission Northern Ireland, Jersey, etc.

² Demonstrated by the submission of the first operating period's TAR and accounts.

Associations of serving regiments and corps, that are also constituted as charities. Known as Regimental Members, these Associations have the same entitlements as Full Members apart from the right to stand for election to the Executive Committee, and their membership subscriptions are sponsored by ABF The Soldiers Charity. Regimental Members are also company law members of Cobseo.

- c. **Associate.** Eligibility is extended to a range of charities and other organisations that make a significant contribution to the Armed Forces Community, and must be either:
- A registered charity where support to the Armed Forces Community is only a part of its purpose;
 - A not-for-profit organisation³, social purpose business⁴, or registered society⁵, where support of the Armed Forces Community is either the primary purpose, or a demonstrable part of its activities; or
 - By exception, an organisation with specific programmes or services that support the Armed Forces Community (eg Academic Institutes, Citizens Advice Bureau, membership organisations).
- And in each case have operated satisfactorily for a minimum of three years.
- d. **Affiliate.** Eligible for Associations and Association Branches, or similar organisations, whose primary purpose is supporting the Armed Forces Community that are charities in their own right, but whose interests are currently represented at Cobseo by larger organisations such as the TRBL, Service Benevolent Funds, or Regimental Cap badges.

WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

6. Member status may be withdrawn if the Executive Committee agree that the organisation:
- Has failed to adhere to the agreed banded fees structure and payment terms;
 - Is considered to have operated in an unlawful, illegal or inappropriate way;
 - Has ceased positively to promote the welfare and general interests of the Armed Forces Community;
 - Has not upheld, or be upholding, one or more of the Cobseo values; and/or brings Cobseo into disrepute;
 - Has altered its name, constitution or structure in such a way that it causes concern; or
 - No longer meets the relevant membership criteria.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

7. An Executive Committee consisting of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Cobseo, eight Permanent Executive Members and nine Elected Executive Members shall manage the business of Cobseo. All representatives shall be the Chief Executives or equivalent of the charity.
8. The eight Permanent Members shall be:

³ Normally companies limited by guarantee or community interest companies limited by guarantee.

⁴ Normally Private Companies Limited by Shares and Community Interest Companies limited by shares that are able to offer a financial return to shareholders and investors, and with objectives dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of the Armed Forces Community.

⁵ Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

- 1) ABF - The Soldiers Charity
 - 2) Forces in Mind Trust
 - 3) Help for Heroes
 - 4) Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
 - 5) Royal British Legion
 - 6) Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity
 - 7) SSAFA
 - 8) Veterans Scotland
9. The nine Elected Executive Members shall be nominated from Full Member charities. Members shall be appointed at the Annual General Meeting for a period of three years. After three years, Elected Executive Members must stand for re-election if they wish to remain on the Committee. Except when no eligible candidate is nominated, arrangements will be made to ensure that at least one of the Elected Executive Member slots is filled by a Member from Membership Bands 1 or 2.
10. Members of the Cobseo Executive Committee shall be Directors of the Company limited by guarantee.
11. The Executive Committee shall appoint a Chair who shall hold office for three years. This appointment can be extended at the discretion of the Cobseo Executive Committee.
12. The Executive Committee shall elect a Vice-Chair from the full Executive Committee who shall hold office for three years and be eligible for re-election.⁶
13. The supersession of the Chair and the Vice-Chair should, if possible, be separated by at least one year.
14. The Chair and Vice Chair shall be Directors of Cobseo for as long as they hold office.
15. The Executive Committee will appoint a Director of Operations who shall be responsible for the day-to-day operation of Cobseo, and act as the Company Secretary.
16. The Executive Committee may co-opt specialist knowledge or expertise where necessary; however, the size of the Executive Committee shall not exceed 20 members.
17. The Executive Committee shall make such rules for the conduct of business as are necessary for the furtherance of the objects of Cobseo.
18. A quorum for meetings of the Executive Committee shall be seven members, with a minimum of three members from each of the 'permanent members' and 'elected members'.

FINANCE

19. The accounting year for Cobseo shall be 1 January – 31 December.
20. Cobseo's financial accounts shall be audited.

⁶ If the person is an elected member of the Committee rather than a permanent member they will not be required to stand for re-election during their term of office.

21. A Finance Committee shall be established to provide advice to the Executive Committee.
22. Cobseo's management accounts shall be reviewed by the Finance Committee and presented to the Executive Committee at each of its quarterly meetings.
23. The Directors Annual Report and Financial statements shall be reviewed by the Finance Committee and presented for approval to the Executive Committee prior to their promulgation at the Annual General Meeting.

MEETINGS

24. Cobseo shall hold a General Meeting once a year. The Executive Committee may convene an Extraordinary General Meeting at any time. A quorum of seven Executive Committee members is required to convene this meeting with a minimum of three members from each of the 'permanent members' and 'elected members'.
25. The Chair or Vice-Chair shall chair all meetings of Cobseo and of the Executive Committee. If neither is present, the members of the Executive Committee present shall appoint one of their number to chair the meeting.
26. No business shall be transacted at any General Meeting unless a quorum of 40 Full Members is present at the time the meeting begins.
27. At any General or Executive Committee Meeting a resolution put to the vote shall be decided either by a show of hands, or by secret ballot where appropriate (eg Executive Committee elections). Each Full Member organisation shall have one vote.
28. Full Members and Regimental Members are the company law members of Cobseo entitled to nominate an authorised representative to attend and vote at General Meetings. Associate Members may send an authorised representative to attend [Annual] General Meetings but have no voting rights. Affiliate Members have no attendance rights at General Meetings.

CHANGES TO REGULATIONS

29. Changes to Cobseo Regulations must be approved by the Executive Committee.

UPDATED: February 2022.