

COBSEO REGULATIONS

(Updated December 2024)

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, Regimental, Non-Profit CIC, Associate, or Affiliate status, according to defined criteria.
4. Applications for Full, Non-Profit CIC, and Associate membership may be submitted for consideration if the basic criteria are met. Regimental and Affiliate categories are not open to application.
5. Armed Forces charities must have operated for over 18 months¹ at the point of application for Full membership. Non-Profit CIC's must have operated for over three years² as must applicants for all categories of Associate membership.
6. The Executive Committee must be additionally satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated consistent and satisfactory operating procedures and is:
 - a. Willing to commit to the conditions that would otherwise risk withdrawal of membership.
 - b. Actively supportive of the Armed Forces Community
 - c. Demonstrating effective and responsible governance.
 - d. Willing to work collaboratively with Cobseo and its members in pursuit of the values and purpose of the Confederation.
 - e. Not be affiliated to, or supportive of, any groups or organisations whose aims conflict with those of the Confederation.
 - f. Shown not to be in financial deficit and that a viable sustainability plan is in place.
7. The five distinct categories of membership are as follows:

¹ Demonstrated by the submission of one or more TAR and accounts.

² Demonstrated by the submission of three or more TAR and accounts.

- a. **Full.** Charities³, whose primary purpose is to support the Armed Forces Community.
- b. **Regimental.** Charities, which are the Corps and Regimental Associations of the Army, and exclusively those nominated and sponsored for Cobseo membership by the Army Benevolent Fund (ABF).
- c. **Non-Profit CIC**⁴. Community Interest Companies, where the primary purpose is support to the Armed Forces Community.
- d. **Associate.** Eligibility is extended to a range of organisations that make a significant contribution to the Armed Forces Community, and must be either:
 - i. Registered charities where support to the Armed Forces Community is only a part of their purpose.
 - ii. Non-profit companies⁵ (where not CICs), social purpose businesses⁶, registered societies⁷ or other organisation type⁸, all having specific programmes or services where support for the Armed Forces Community is either the primary purpose or a demonstrable part of its activities.
- e. **Affiliate.** These are registered charities whose interests are currently represented at Cobseo through their direct relationship - as the branches and local associations – with a RAFA, RNA, Parachute Regiment, or Legion Scotland ‘parent’ and are counted as members in number rather than registered with Cobseo by name.

WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

8. Member status may be withdrawn if the Executive Committee agree that the organisation:
 - a. Has failed to adhere to the agreed banded fee structure and payment terms.
 - b. Is considered to have operated unlawfully, illegally or inappropriately.
 - c. Has ceased positively to promote the welfare and general interests of the Armed Forces Community.
 - d. Has not upheld, or be upholding, one or more of the Cobseo values.
 - e. Has brought Cobseo into disrepute.
 - f. Has altered its name, constitution or structure in a way that causes concern.
 - g. No longer meets the relevant membership criteria.
 - h. Has otherwise fallen short of the Code of Conduct for Members.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

9. 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 Executive Member charity.

³ Charities, usually registered with a relevant charity regulatory body in the UK or Crown Dependency, the charity commissions for England & Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Jersey.

⁴ Community Interest Companies limited by guarantee.

⁵ Normally companies limited by guarantee.

⁶ Normally private companies limited by shares, and Community Interest Companies limited by shares that can offer a financial return to shareholders and investors; and objectives dedicated to supporting the wellbeing of the Armed Forces Community.

⁷ Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

⁸ Normally Academic Institutes.

10. The eight Permanent Members shall be:
 - 1) Army Benevolent Fund
 - 2) Forces in Mind Trust
 - 3) Help for Heroes
 - 4) SSAFA
 - 5) The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
 - 6) The Royal British Legion
 - 7) The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity
 - 8) Veterans Scotland
11. 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 Members must stand for re-election if they wish to remain on the Executive Committee. Arrangements will be made to ensure that at least one Elected Executive is filled by a Member from fee Bands 1, 2 or 3 (gross annual income under £1M).
12. Members of the Executive Committee shall be Directors of Cobseo, the Company limited by guarantee.
13. 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.
14. 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.⁹
15. The supersession of the Chair and the Vice-Chair should, if possible, be separated by at least one year.
16. The Chair and Vice Chair shall be Directors of Cobseo for as long as they hold office.
17. 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.
18. The Executive Committee may co-opt specialist knowledge or expertise where necessary; however, the size of the Executive Committee shall not exceed 20 members.
19. The Executive Committee shall make such rules for the conduct of business as are necessary for the furtherance of the objects of Cobseo.
20. A quorum for meetings of the Executive Committee shall be seven members, with a minimum of three members from each of the Permanent Executive and Elected Executive members.

FINANCE

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

⁹ If the person is an Elected Member of the Executive Committee, they will not be required to stand for re-election during their term of office.

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

MEETINGS

26. Cobseo shall hold a General Meeting once a year.
27. The Executive Committee shall meet quarterly and 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 Permanent Executive and three Elected Executive members.
28. All General and Executive Committee Meetings shall be chaired by the Cobseo Chair or Vice-Chair. If neither is present, the members of the Executive Committee present shall appoint one of their number.
29. No business shall be transacted at any General Meeting unless a quorum of 40 Full Members is present when the meeting begins.
30. At any General or Executive Committee Meeting, a resolution put to the vote shall be decided either by a show of hands or, where appropriate, by secret ballot, where each qualifying Member organisation shall have one vote.
31. Full, Regimental, and Non-Profit CIC Members are entitled to nominate an authorised representative to attend and vote at General Meetings. Associate Members may send an authorised representative to attend but have no voting rights. Affiliate Members have no attendance or voting rights.

CHANGES TO REGULATIONS

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