



EQUITY

EQUITY RULE CHANGE REFERENDUM 2026

CLOSE OF POLL — WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER 2026 (12 NOON)

INTRODUCTORY LETTER FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Please vote by the deadline of Wednesday 2 December (12 noon)

Dear Member,

In 2022, Equity members overwhelmingly approved a new, modern rulebook for our union. It has proved robust and effective, lasting longer without amendment than any rulebook for over three decades.

However, periodic reviews of our rules are important, and now is the right time to make some limited amendments. After the Employment Rights Act 2025 modernised some laws around trades union governance; our rulebook needs to be updated to take advantage of these new rights. Critically, if the proposed amendments pass, we will be able to introduce online votes for Council, President and General Secretary elections, which previous legislation prevented Equity from undertaking.

We are also taking the opportunity to clarify some rules, ensure they are easier to understand, and address unintended gaps: like the process for a Presidential by-election. There are also some areas of union policy – such as expanding the definition of young members and how your membership works – which need to be incorporated in our rulebook. We are also updating language to ensure our policy on trans-inclusivity continues to be reflected in the composition of Equity Council through a Gender Equality seat, despite an increasingly hostile environment for trans people and those with other gender identities.

The ballot also recommends the extension of terms of office for Council from two years to four (from 2028 onwards). This is to improve inclusion of our members who have precarious working lives and caring responsibilities, and find themselves under pressure to juggle meeting attendance and training with other pressures during short terms of office. Most importantly, it is intended to reduce the 'electoral fatigue' which many members report in having at least one union-wide election a year for Council or Committees. Consequently, we hope that reducing the number of elections will improve turnout.

A full summary of the proposed changes is available in this pack.

The Council recommends that you vote YES to the proposed changes, to ensure Equity can continue to be a modern, fighting, and progressive trades union – with a rulebook fit for 2027.

In solidarity,



**Paul W Fleming
GENERAL SECRETARY**

SUMMARY OF SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES

Please vote by the deadline of Wednesday 2 December (12 noon)

You can access the current Rulebook and the proposed new Rulebook here:

<http://www.equity.org.uk/new-rules>

The union's rules govern how the union is run, empower the union to act, and set out what to expect from Equity as a member.

The Council (the union's governing body) has been reviewing the union's rules for the first time since 2022, and is ready to put forward a new Rulebook. The key aim is to enable the union to take advantage of online voting for all our elections (as a result of brand new legislation), and we are also taking the opportunity to clarify some rules, ensure they are easier to understand, and address any gaps which have become apparent over the last four years.

The rules are set by you, the members. The Council, the members you elect to govern the union, have approved the proposals being put forward, and they are recommending that members vote YES to approve the new Rulebook.

Notes:

- Where a Rule is listed below, the version provided is normally the amended version of an existing Rule. The numbering, e.g. "A1", refers to the current Rulebook, so you can see how the Rule has been amended. In some cases, the numbering will be different in the new Rulebook, due to other Rules being added or removed.
- In a small number of cases, some of the Rules listed below are described as "new". This means this is a new addition to the Rules, rather than an amended version of an existing Rule. In the case of a new addition, the reference, e.g. "New A1", matches the numbering in the new Rulebook.
- Where new Rules are introduced, or current Rules removed, subsequent Rules will be renumbered accordingly. All cross-referencing will also be updated accordingly.
- You can access the current Rulebook and the proposed new Rulebook here:
<http://www.equity.org.uk/new-rules>

The changes – section by section

B. AIMS

B1(4). to protect and promote the social and economic value of live and recorded performing arts and entertainment;

Explanation:

- B1(4) has been changed slightly to better describe the sectors we represent, matching how we talk about this in our ordinary communications.

C. POWERS

C1(9). provide benefits and services, directly or through third parties;

C1(12). collect and distribute royalties and other payments to members, former members, non-members, and to their respective nominees, directly or through a suitable third-party organisation;

New C1(18). set up and/or own a trading arm to collect and distribute royalties;

Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Explanation:

- C1(9) has been simplified, now describing the benefits and services provided by the union in general terms, rather than picking out certain ones but not others.
- C1(12) has been updated to broaden out the range of payments we collect and distribute, to better represent the full scope of our distribution service.
- New C1(18) introduces the principle that we may choose to create a separate entity to process members' royalties and secondary payments, at some point in the future. The amendment would provide flexibility for the Council to make this arrangement if appropriate.

D. MEMBERSHIP

Eligibility

D1. The Union represents members who study or work in live and recorded performing arts and entertainment.

Categories and Eligibility Criteria

D4. The Council may decide on different membership categories, fees, subscriptions, rights, benefits and eligibility criteria in accordance with the Union's membership policy, which the Council may amend from time to time.

D6. Removed. Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Applications

D8. Applicants shall be notified by the Union's membership team of whether their application has been provisionally approved and of any benefits granted as a result of the provisional approval. The Council shall decide by a majority vote whether a person whose application has been provisionally approved shall be admitted as a member.

D9. The Council may refuse to admit an applicant to membership if:

Sub-clauses within D9 are unchanged.

Refusal by Council

D10. If an applicant is refused admission to membership by the Council, the Union shall notify the applicant of the reason and the right to make representations to the Council.

Admission to Membership

D12. Once the Council has admitted an applicant to membership, membership takes effect from the date the applicant's name is entered on to the Union's register of members.

Communications to Members

D13. Written communication by the Union to a member shall be deemed as received if sent by email to the last supplied personal email address. If a member has not provided the Union with a working personal email address, written communications shall be deemed as received if sent by post to the last supplied residential address.

Members' Obligations

D14(6). provide the Union with a personal email address and a permanent residential address and notify in writing of any change of personal email or permanent residential address.

Members' Benefits and Rights

D16. Members are entitled to the benefits and rights provided for in these Rules.

D17. Members who fall more than three calendar months behind with any subscription, fine or levy cease to be members and lose all their entitlements at Rule D15 except at the discretion of the Council.

D20. Benefits and services as the Council decides from time to time may be provided to members by the Union.

Holding Royalties and Secondary Payments

- D21. The Union shall hold any royalties, secondary payments, or other money due to members, former members and non-members.
- D22. Royalties and other secondary payments shall be dealt with in accordance with the Union's Distribution Policy.
- D23. The Distribution Policy, which the Council may amend from time to time, shall be made available on the Union's website and on request.
- D24. Removed. Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Honourable Withdrawal

- D25. A member may apply for an honourable withdrawal from membership in accordance with the Union's membership policy, which the Council may amend from time to time.
- D26-D28. Removed. Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Ending Membership

- D32. Membership shall end automatically on a member:
- (1) becoming three calendar months in arrears with their subscriptions, fines, or levies; or
 - (2) failing to confirm their contact details within three months of a written request issued by the Union to the last recorded address, where no response is received within that period.

After current D32., insert:

- New D28. In exceptional circumstances, the Council may suspend an automatic termination if, at its absolute discretion, it decides that it is appropriate to do so.
- New D29. A member who ceases to be a member, for any reason, shall automatically cease to hold any office or position in the Union from the date on which their membership ends.

Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Explanation:

- D1 has been changed slightly to better describe the sectors we represent, matching how we talk about this in our ordinary communications.
- The language used around membership has changed throughout the Rulebook, but most of this change is to simplify language and processes. For example, rather than "member in benefit", a fairly outdated and confusing term, we now simply use "member". This change

alone accounts for a significant number of changes, particularly in this section, but also in every instance where “members” are referred to throughout the whole Rulebook.

- The way that we describe how to apply and be approved into membership has been clarified and made more straightforward.
- D13 has been updated in line with the fact that most Union communications now arrive via email.
- D14(6) has been updated to require members to provide the Union with a personal email address, as well as a postal address, and to notify the Union of any changes. This reflects the fact that most communications are now issued electronically. It also helps ensure that ballots, election materials and other formal communications are sent using the contact details provided by members themselves. Over 95% of members already provide a personal email address.
- D16 has been simplified, now describing the benefits and services provided by the union in general terms, rather than picking out certain benefits but not others.
- D21-23 have been updated with respect to how we talk about royalties and secondary payments. The Union’s distribution service receives and pays these out to members and non-members as a routine part of our work. The clauses that describe how notice will be given for money held have been removed from the Rulebook, and will sit within the Union’s Distribution Policy instead, to be approved by Council.
- D25 has been updated. The principles around Honourable Withdrawal (effectively a method for temporarily suspending membership) have been removed from the Rulebook, and will sit within the Union’s membership policy instead.
- New 29 has been introduced to make explicit that if an officeholder within the Union ceases to be a member, then they will also lose that office. This is already the case, but it has now been included as a Rule for absolute clarity.

E. SUBSCRIPTIONS AND OTHER PAYMENTS

Amount and Rates

- E3. The Council shall decide the amount and due date/s of the application fee and annual subscription in accordance with the Union’s membership policy which the Council may amend from time to time.
- E4. The Council may set different subscription rates in accordance with the Union’s membership policy which the Council may amend from time to time.

Fines and Levies

- E8. The Council shall determine if any levy is due.

Explanation:

- E3 has been updated to say that fees will be decided in line with our membership policy.
- E4 has been updated to say that different subscription rates will also be set in line with our membership policy. We have removed the idea that the difference will principally be due to members’ earnings levels. It may still be because of members’ earnings levels, but there may be other factors as well.

- E8 has been updated to simplify the mechanism for approving a levy. Levies are a one-off payment for an extraordinary cost, and have not been used by the Union in many decades. There is no intention to introduce any levies in the near future.

F. MEMBERS' MEETINGS

- F1. The Council may call:
- (1) National Conferences;
 - (2) Regional Conferences; and
 - (3) General Meetings.

National and Regional Conferences

- F2. National and Regional Conferences shall take place once each calendar year in so far as is practicable. These are distinct from Equity Conferences and Special Conferences as outlined in Rules T and U. Rules T, U and X do not apply to National and Regional Conferences.
- F3. The Council shall decide the time and place for National and Regional Conferences and whether such meetings shall be attended in person or online (or a combination of both).
- F4. Any member aged 18 years old and above who is a member of a branch within the applicable nation or region may attend and vote at National and Regional Conferences.

General Meetings

- F7. Any member aged 18 years old and above may attend a General Meeting.

Explanation:

- We used to call the events under F1(1) and (2) "National/Regional Meetings". Under the new Rules, these will instead be described as "National/Regional Conferences". This will not change any of the other Rules around their function, but we hope it will make them appear more engaging to the ordinary member who might be interested in attending. This change has been applied to several Rules in this section, and throughout the whole Rulebook (wherever these events are referred to).
- F4 has been updated to include the age requirement (18+) for attending a democratic union meeting, conference, etc. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules. This is for safeguarding reasons; 0.3% of members are below the age of 18.

G. LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Applications

- G1. A member may apply for legal assistance from the Union in any dispute arising from their engagement.

Conditions

- G8. If legal assistance is granted to a member they shall, for the duration of the grant:
- (1) provide a full and honest disclosure of all relevant facts;
 - (2) follow the advice of the Union or its appointed solicitors; and
 - (3) keep their subscriptions current.

Explanation:

- G1 has been changed slightly. "Engagement" is broader, and clearer, than "employment". Members generally work in settings which would not technically be described as employment. "Engagement" covers the whole range of employment, freelance, fixed term contracts, etc.
- G8 has been updated to include the provision that members must keep up with their subscriptions if they are continuing to receive legal assistance from the union.

H. DEPUTIES

Appointment

- H1. In each company or production, members may elect one or more members of that company or production to act as a Deputy.
- H2. Failing such election, and with the consent of the members of the company or production, the Council may appoint Deputies from within that company or production.
- New H3. The Council may appoint a member of the Union as a Deputy for a company or production from outside that company or production.

Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

- H4. The permission at Rule H4 may be withdrawn, at any time and for any reason, by a majority vote of the members in the company or production or by the Council. If the Council notifies a Deputy of withdrawal, the member shall cease acting as a Deputy immediately.

Authority

New H6. Deputies must comply with all applicable data protection laws and with the Union’s Data Protection Policy. This includes handling personal data lawfully, securely and only for authorised purposes.

Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Explanation:

- H1-4 have been updated to expand and clarify the various routes by which a deputy may be appointed.
- New H6 has been updated to introduce the requirement for deputies to comply with our data protection policy. By making this a rule, we are ensuring the Union can share appropriate data with confidence with the activists who need it in their workplace, knowing we have a recourse to discipline a member who does not treat it with the sensitivity and discretion all members expect.

J. THE COUNCIL

Members of Council

- J2. The Council shall consist of up to 35 members, including the President.
- J3. Members of Council representing constituencies shall be drawn from the following constituencies:

Constituency	Number of Council Members
General	12
Audio Artists	1
Dance, Choreography and Movement	1
Singers	1
Stage Management	1
Theatre Designers	1
Theatre Directors	1
Variety, Circus and Entertainers	4
Deaf and Disabled Members	1
Gender Equality	1
LGBTQIA+ Members	1
Race Equality	1
Young Members	1
East and South East England (excluding London)	1

Midlands	1
North East, Yorkshire and Humberside	1
Northern Ireland	1
North West England	1
Scotland	1
South West England	1
Wales	1

Eligibility

- J4. Members of Council representing the constituencies at Rule J3 shall be elected every four years by a full Union vote.
- J5. All candidates for election shall be members aged 18 years old and above at the date on which nominations close and nominated by five other members.
- J7. Candidates representing a geographical area shall be a member of a branch within that area at the date on which nominations close and have worked in one of the areas of work at Rule D1.
- J8. Candidates representing a professional area shall have worked in that professional area.
- J9-13. Remove the words “and have worked in one of the areas of work at Rule D1”.
- J11. Candidates for the seat representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual + members shall self-define as LGBTQIA+.
- J12. Candidates for the gender equality seat shall self-define as women or belong to any group who face discrimination based on sex or gender.
- J13. Candidates for the seat representing young members shall be 31 years old or below at the date on which the Council election results are announced.
- J14. All candidates for Council seats, other than the Deaf and Disabled Members, Gender Equality, LGBTQIA+ Members, Race Equality, Young Members and General seats, shall be required to meet an earnings threshold for the three years prior to the closing date for nominations as decided by the Council from time to time.
- J15. Any of the candidates at J3 may be required to meet an earnings threshold, work requirement or other relevant qualification as decided by the Council from time to time.
- J16. At least three of the nominators of all candidates for Council seats, other than the General seats, shall be similarly qualified.

- J19(3). are elected representatives of democratic or co-operative performing companies;
or

Council Elections

- J20. At least three months prior to the date on which nominations open, the Council shall publish the timetable setting out:
- (1) the dates between which nominations must be received by the General Secretary;
 - (2) the method(s) by which nominations must be made;
 - (3) the date when voting materials will first be sent or otherwise made accessible to members entitled to vote;
 - (4) the method(s) by which votes must be returned;
 - (5) the date by which votes must be returned; and
 - (6) the date upon which the results will be announced.
- J21. Removed. Renumber subsequent points accordingly.
- J22. All members aged 16 years old and above at the date on which nominations close shall be entitled to vote.
- J23. Members may vote for one candidate for each constituency seat listed at Rule J3.
- J25. At an election held in accordance with Rule M5, the 12 candidates who receive the most votes for the 12 General seats shall be elected, unless the President takes up the 12th seat in accordance with that Rule, in which case the 11 candidates who receive the most votes shall be elected.
- J27. All candidates may submit an election address of no more than 150 words. The election addresses shall be included with the voting materials. The Council may decide whether photographs and other material not in words may be included in the election address from time to time.
- J28. Votes that do not comply with the instructions accompanying the voting materials and as stated in these Rules shall be disqualified.
- J29. Votes returned after the deadline at Rule J20(5) shall be disqualified.

Term of Office and Meetings

- J30. The Council's term of office shall be the period from the date of the first Council meeting immediately after the Council election to the date of the first Council meeting immediately after the next Council election four years later.

- J33. If a Council seat becomes vacant for any reason (other than a vacancy in the office of President), the Council shall hold a by-election to fill the vacancy as soon as practicable unless the vacancy falls in the final 12 months of the Council's term, being the period beginning three years after the first Council meeting of that term, in which case the seat shall remain vacant for the remainder of the term. Any vacancy in the office of President shall be dealt with in accordance with Rule M12.

Council Powers

- J39. The Council may appoint solicitors to act for the Union, its office holders or staff if it considers it appropriate and may initiate legal action if it considers it is necessary.

Explanation:

- The names of three Council seats in J3 have been amended: Dance, Choreography and Movement; Gender Equality and LGBTQIA+ Members.
- In J4 and J30, the term length for Council has been increased from two years to four years. The current Council will complete its two-year term in 2028. The new Council elected in 2028 will then serve until 2032. Relatedly, the time period within which a by-election would be required has been updated in J33.
- J5 has been updated to include the age requirement (18+) for standing for election. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules. This is for safeguarding reasons; 0.3% of members are below the age of 18.
- J9-15 have been updated to remove earnings requirements from candidates for the equalities seats on Council, and to introduce earnings requirements for candidates for the geographical seats on Council. This is to match the existing position with our equalities and national committees.
- In J11 - 12, the definitions of the LGBTQIA+ and Gender Equality seats have been updated in line with the respective name changes.
- In J16, the word "proposers" has been replaced with "nominators", for clarity.
- In J20 and various other places, the language around how ballots are conducted has been updated to allow for digital balloting methods to be used. This is due to a change in the law which came in August 2026.
- J22 has been updated to include the age requirement (16+) for voting in elections. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules.

K. TRUSTEES

Appointment

- K2. A Trustee shall remain in office until death, resignation, disqualification or removal by the Council (or by the Disciplinary Committee under Rule S9(4)).

Duties

- K6. The Council may, by written resolution, authorise any two Trustees to execute deeds and other documents relating to Union property on behalf of all Trustees.
- New K7. The Council may, by written resolution, also authorise the General Secretary or the Honorary Treasurer (each a "Designated Officer") to execute deeds and other documents relating to Union property in the name and on behalf of all Trustees.
- New K8. Any document or deed executed in accordance with an authorisation given under Rules K6 and K7 shall be valid and binding on all Trustees and on the Union, and shall take effect as if executed by all Trustees.
- New K9. A certificate signed by the General Secretary of the Union (or such other officer as the Council may nominate) confirming that an authorisation under this Rule K is in force, and identifying the individuals or Designated Officer authorised, shall be conclusive in favour of any third party relying upon it.
- New K10. The Council may revoke or amend any authorisation under this Rule K at any time by written resolution, but such revocation or amendment shall not affect the validity of any deed or document previously executed under an existing authorisation.

Explanation:

- K2 has been updated to clarify the ways in which Trustees may leave office.
- In K6-K10, we have introduced provisions allowing the Trustees to delegate some of their duties (either to two of their own number, or to a "Designated Officer"). This is primarily with respect to executing deeds and documents. Our current wording has caused delays and other difficulties when entering into leases for premises around the UK, as it has been found to be unclear and restrictive by property lawyers acting for those from whom we lease offices. The power can only be exercised where authorised by Council resolution.

M. PRESIDENT

Note: As well as some alterations to the substance of this Rule, some of the sections of Rule M have been re-ordered. It is therefore more straightforward to include the new version of Rule M in full, as follows:

Term

- M1. The President shall be elected every four years by a full vote of the Union at the same time that the Council is elected.
- M2. Unless re-elected, the President's term of office shall be four years, starting from the date of the first Council meeting immediately after the President's election, and ending on the date of the first Council meeting immediately after the next President's election four years later.

Candidates

- M3. Candidates for President shall be aged 18 years old and above and have been members for four continuous years at the date on which nominations close, and nominated by at least 50 other members using the Union's nomination form.
- M4. Members who have been employed by the Union in the five years prior to the closing date for nominations are not eligible to stand for election.

Ordinary Elections

- M5. At an ordinary election of the President held at the same time as Council elections:
- (1) candidates for President shall also stand for one Council seat specified in Rule J3;
 - (2) if a candidate is successful in both elections, they shall sit on the Council as President and councillor for that seat;
 - (3) if a candidate is successful in the election for President only, they shall sit on the Council as President and councillor for one of the 12 General seats (automatically taking the 12th place).
- M6. The timetable for the election of the President shall be the same as the timetable for the Council elections and Rule J20 shall apply.
- M7. All members aged 16 years old and above at the date on which nominations close shall be entitled to vote.
- M8. Each member aged 16 years old and above shall have one vote. The candidate who receives the most votes for President shall be elected.
- M9. All candidates may submit an election address of no more than 250 words. The election addresses shall be included with the voting materials. The Council may decide whether photographs and other material not in words may be included in the election address from time to time.
- M10. Votes that do not comply with the instructions accompanying the voting materials and as stated in these Rules shall be disqualified.
- M11. Votes returned after the deadline at Rule J20(5) shall be disqualified.

By-Elections

- M12. If the office of President becomes vacant for any reason, subject to statutory requirements, the Council shall hold a by-election to fill the vacancy as soon as practicable unless the vacancy falls in the final 12 months of the Council's term, being the period beginning three years after the first Council meeting of that term, in which case the seat shall remain vacant for the remainder of the term.

- M13. Where an election for President is held under Rule M12:
- (1) candidates shall not be required to stand for a Council seat;
 - (2) any member elected as President who is not already a member of Council shall, upon election, become a member of Council for the remainder of the term, notwithstanding Rule J2;
 - (3) where the person elected as President is already a member of Council, they shall sit on the Council as President and councillor for their existing seat;
 - (4) Rule M5 shall not apply to an election held under Rule M12.

Duties

- M14. The President may chair all meetings and conferences when present.
- M15. In respect of Council meetings and Equity/Special Conferences, if a vote is tied, the President (or Vice-President or Honorary Treasurer if presiding in place of the President) shall have the casting vote in addition to their vote as councillor.
- M16. The President shall carry out their duties in accordance with these Rules, the policies of the Union and the directions given by the Council.
- M17. The President shall represent the Union where appropriate and perform such other duties as decided by the Council from time to time.
- M18. The President may delegate their duties to one or other of the Vice-Presidents or to the Honorary Treasurer.

Explanation:

- In M1-2, the term length for President has been increased from two years to four years (in line with the same decision for Council). The current President will complete their two-year term in 2028. The new President elected in 2028 will then serve until 2032. Relatedly, the time period within which a by-election would be required has been updated at M12, meaning that if only a quarter of the term (or less) remains vacant, as at present, a by-election need not be held.
- M3 has been updated to include the age requirement (18+) for standing for election. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules. This is for safeguarding reasons; 0.3% of members are below the age of 18.
- M7 has been updated to include the age requirement (16+) for voting in elections. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules.
- In M9-11 and various other places, the language around how ballots are conducted has been updated to allow for digital balloting methods to be used, following a change in the law in August 2026 which allows unions to use electronic balloting for all elections if their rulebook permits.
- The process for presidential by-elections, as seen in M12-13, has been amended significantly. This is to clarify that any member (providing they are otherwise qualified)

should be able to stand for the office of President in the event of a vacancy. At present it is unclear whether a candidate for President in the event of a by-election should be a serving councillor, or only a member eligible to stand for the Council seat which the immediate past President has vacated.

N. VICE-PRESIDENTS

Elections

N2. Unless re-elected, the Vice-Presidents' term of office shall be four years.

Duties

N4. Either of the Vice-Presidents shall chair Council meetings and Equity/Special Conferences in the President's absence.

Explanation:

- In N2, the term length for Vice-Presidents has been increased from two years to four years (in line with the same decision for Council). The current Vice-Presidents will complete their two-year term in 2028. The new Vice-Presidents elected in 2028 will then serve until 2032.

O. HONORARY TREASURER

Elections

O2. Unless re-elected, the Honorary Treasurer's term of office shall be four years.

Duties

O5(1). Removed. Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

O5(6). chair Council meetings and Equity/Special Conferences in the absence of the President and the Vice-Presidents;

Explanation:

- In O2, the term length for Honorary Treasurer has been increased from two years to four years (in line with the same decision for Council). The current Honorary Treasurer will complete their two-year term in 2028. The new Honorary Treasurer elected in 2028 will then serve until 2032.
- O5(1), which covered the requirement for the Honorary Treasurer to present the annual accounts to Equity Conference, has been removed. For some time, the accounts have been approved by Council, and then made available to the membership as a whole; their presentation at conference is superficial and creates ambiguity around the process.

P. GENERAL SECRETARY

Eligibility

- P3. Any member who has been a member for not less than five continuous years, at the date on which nominations close, may stand for election if nominated by at least 50 other members using the Union's nomination form.

Elections

- P10. At least three months prior to the date on which nominations open, the Council shall publish the timetable setting out:
- (1) the dates between which nominations must be received;
 - (2) the method(s) by which nominations must be made;
 - (3) the date when the voting materials will first be sent or otherwise made accessible to members entitled to vote;
 - (4) the method(s) by which votes must be returned;
 - (5) the date by which votes must be returned; and
 - (6) the date upon which the result will be announced.
- P11. Any member aged 16 years old and above at the date on which nominations close shall be entitled to vote.
- P12. The voting materials shall contain a list of the nominated candidates and up to 50 of their individual nominators and the Council Nominee. Nominated candidates may select the names of the individual nominators to be included, if more than 50. The Council's Nominee may also be nominated by individual members in accordance with Rule P3 (including individual councillors) whose names shall also be included with the voting materials.
- P14. All candidates may submit an election address of no more than 250 words. The election addresses shall be included with the voting materials. The Council may decide whether photographs and other material not in words may be included in the election address from time to time.
- P15. Votes that do not comply with the instructions accompanying the voting materials and with these Rules shall be disqualified.
- P16. Votes returned after the deadline at Rule P10(5) shall be disqualified.

Duties

- P20. The General Secretary shall attend the meetings of the Council and Equity/ Special Conferences but shall not have a vote.

P22(3). managing all offices of the Union, including the engagement and management of staff;

Explanation:

- In P10 and various other places, the language around how ballots are conducted has been updated to allow for digital balloting methods to be used following a change in the law in August 2026 which allows unions to use electronic balloting for all elections if their rulebook permits.
- P11 has been updated to include the age requirement (16+) for voting in elections. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules.
- In P22(3), some of the language around the General Secretary and Council's roles differ in relation to engaging and managing staff has been amended. This is for clarity and not a material change.

R. INDEPENDENT SCRUTINEER

Role

R3(2). prepare and distribute the voting materials;

R3(3). examine and count the votes;

R3(6). deal with the security, storage, and secure destruction of the votes.

Explanation:

- In R3, the language around how ballots are conducted has been updated to allow for digital balloting methods to be used following a change in the law in August 2026 which allows unions to use electronic balloting for all elections if their rulebook permits.

S. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Appeals

S13. The Appeals Committee shall hear the appeal in accordance with the Union's Appeals Committee Procedure, which the Council shall make or amend from time to time.

S14. The Appeals Committee may uphold, partially uphold, or dismiss the decision of the Disciplinary Committee.

New S15. The Appeals Committee may choose to confirm or vary the penalty of the Disciplinary Committee but may not increase the penalty imposed by the Disciplinary Committee.

Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

Explanation:

- In S13, the name of the procedure has been updated.
- In S14, it has been clarified that the Appeals Committee has the option of “partially” upholding a decision of the Disciplinary Committee, and the provision that it may confirm or lessen (but not increase) the penalty imposed has been split into a separate Rule, New S15.

T. EQUITY CONFERENCE

Purpose

T3. Equity Conference shall receive the Council’s Annual Report.

Representatives

T4. The number of branch Representatives (aged 18 years old and above) shall be:

Branch Membership Number	Representatives
0 – 999	2
1,000 – 1,999	3
2,000 – 2,999	4
3,000 – 3,999	5
4,000 +	6 (plus one additional Representative for every complete increase of 1,000 members)

New T5. The number of committee Representatives (aged 18 years old and above) shall be:

Committee	Representatives
Industrial	3
Equalities	3
National	2
Industrially-allied	3

Renumber subsequent points accordingly.

T7. The Representatives are entitled to speak, move or second motions, and vote. Each Representative has a single vote.

Union Members

- T13. Any member may attend Equity Conference at their own expense subject to venue capacity and to giving at least 28 days' notice to the General Secretary or the staff member authorised to act as their delegate for these purposes. They shall not be entitled to speak or vote.

Motions

- T18. Each of the industrial committees and each of the industrially-allied committees may submit one motion for debate.
- T19. Any of the branches and national committees may propose a motion/s at the annual National or Regional Conferences of members in their nation or region of:
- Sub-clauses within T19 are unchanged.
- T20. Each of the National and Regional Conferences at Rule T20 shall then decide on one motion to be submitted for debate, except that each of the East and South East England and London meetings may decide on two motions for submission.
- T23. The Council may submit motions and amendments for debate on behalf of itself. No word length restriction shall apply to such motions and amendments. The Council may also submit motions for any committee not represented at Equity Conference. Rule T22 shall apply to motions submitted for committees. Amendments are in the name of the Council and shall be moved and seconded by councillors in attendance at the conference.
- T24. All motions must reach the General Secretary by the deadline set by the Council.

Explanation:

- T3, which covered the requirement for the annual accounts to be presented to Equity Conference, has been removed. For some time, the accounts have been approved by Council, and then made available to the membership as a whole; their presentation at conference is superficial, and creates ambiguity around the process.
- T4, setting out how many representatives each branch can send to conference, has not been changed in substance, but it has been set out in a different format (as a table), for clarity.
- New T5 has been updated to include the age requirement (18+) for standing for election as a representative. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules. This is for safeguarding reasons; 0.3% of members are below the age of 18.
- Under T5 and elsewhere, we have introduced the concept of an "industrially-allied committee", to sit alongside our existing categories of industrial, equalities and national committees. This is intended to include committees which may not fit perfectly into one of the existing categories - for example, our International Solidarity Committee or Student Deputies Committee.
- In T7, T23 and T24, the language has been changed covering amendments to conference motions. This is to clarify that only Council can submit amendments, as is already the case.

V. RULES OF DEBATE

Application

- V1(1). Equity and Special Conferences;
- V1(5). National and Regional Conferences, and General Meetings.

Speakers

- V4. At an Equity/Special Conference, the Chair's ruling (on any point) shall be binding unless challenged by at least 10 members entitled to vote. In all other meetings, at least two members entitled to vote shall raise the challenge. All members entitled to vote shall then immediately vote on whether to uphold the Chair's ruling.

Motions

- V11. The vote/s on any amendment/s shall take place before any vote on the original motion. If the amendment/s is/are carried, the amended motion shall be put to the meeting as the substantive motion.

Explanation:

- In V1, the new language around "National and Regional Conferences" has been included, and in V4 (and elsewhere throughout the Rulebook), the distinction between these events and an Equity or Special Conference has been clarified.
- V11, which covers how amendments are voted upon, has been clarified but not substantively changed.

W. APPEALS COMMITTEE

Election

- W1. The Union shall have an Appeals Committee made up of five members (not being staff or members of the Council).
- W4. All candidates shall be members aged 18 years old and above at the date on which nominations close and nominated by two other members. Nominations shall be made using the Union's nomination form. Any member aged 16 years old and above at the date on which nominations close shall be entitled to vote.

Term

- W6. The term of the Appeals Committee shall be for four years commencing from the date on which the result of the election is announced.

W7. If a seat becomes vacant (for any reason) before the term ends, the remaining members shall choose another member (not being staff or a member of the Council) to fill it. The Council may instead, in its absolute discretion, decide to fill any such vacancy by a by-election conducted in accordance with such arrangements as it determines.

Explanation:

- W4 has been updated to include the age requirement (18+) for standing for election. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules. This is for safeguarding reasons; 0.3% of members are below the age of 18.
- W4 has been updated to include the age requirement (16+) for voting in elections. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules.
- In W6, the term length for the Appeals Committee has been increased from two years to four years. The current committee will complete its two-year term in 2028. The new committee elected in 2028 will then serve until 2032.
- In the event of a vacancy, we have added to W7 that as well as co-option, it would also be possible for the vacancy to be filled via a by-election.

X. CONFERENCE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Election

X1. The Union shall have a Conference Business Committee made up of five members (not being staff or members of the Council) and four members of the Council.

X4. The candidates at Rule X2 shall be members aged 18 years old and above at the date on which nominations close and nominated by two other members. Nominations shall be made using the Union's nomination form. Any member aged 16 years old and above at the date on which nominations close shall be entitled to vote.

Term

X7. The term of the Conference Business Committee shall be for four years commencing from the date the result of the election is announced.

X8. If a seat occupied by a Council member becomes vacant (for any reason) before the term ends, the remaining Council members shall choose another councillor to fill it. If a seat occupied by a non-Council member becomes vacant (for any reason), the remaining non-Council members shall choose another member (who is not a councillor) to fill the vacancy. The Council may instead, in its absolute discretion, decide to fill any such vacancy by a by-election conducted in accordance with such arrangements as it determines.

Explanation:

- X4 has been updated to include the age requirement (18+) for standing for election. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules. This is for safeguarding reasons; 0.3% of members are below the age of 18.
- X4 has been updated to include the age requirement (16+) for voting in elections. This is already Council policy, but we are formalising it under the Rules.
- In X7, the term length for the Conference Business Committee has been increased from two years to four years. The current committee will complete its two-year term in 2028. The new committee elected in 2028 will then serve until 2032.
- In the event of a vacancy, we have added to X8 that as well as co-option, it would also be possible for the vacancy to be filled via a by-election.

Z. RULE CHANGES

Copies of these Rules

- Z1. Removed. Renumber subsequent points accordingly.
- Z2. A copy of the most recent edition of these Rules shall be available to members on the Union's website and on request.
- Z7. All rule changes shall come into effect on the date decided by the Council, which shall be notified to members in the motion or referendum ballot materials.

Explanation:

- The changes to Z1-2 are to clarify that it is not necessary to provide every member with a physical, paper copy of the Rulebook. Instead, the Rulebook will be made available to all members on our website and on request (as is the case already) in physical or electronic form.

AA. DISSOLUTION OF THE UNION

- AA1(1). passed by a two-thirds majority at Equity Conference or a Special Conference; and

Explanation:

- AA1(1) has not been changed in substance, but the language has been amended for clarity.

i. WHEN DID THESE RULES TAKE EFFECT?

These Rules came into effect on 1 January 2027 ("the Effective Date").

The changes to Rules D20-22 shall take effect on the Effective Date. Any Rule D notice sent prior to the Effective Date shall remain valid and enforceable, and shall continue to operate in accordance with the Rules in force at the time it was sent, until its expiry two years after the date of sending.

Although renamed as “Conferences”, National and Regional Conferences at Rule F remain meetings of members with the same status, powers and limitations as applied before the Effective Date, and are not Conferences for the purposes of Rules T, U or X.

Changes to the Rules concerned with the Union’s elections apply from the Effective Date. For the avoidance of any doubt, such changes, including but not limited to those concerned with a candidate’s eligibility and term length, do not have retrospective effect. In other words, they do not apply to any election or to any candidate in an election that took place before the Effective Date.

Vacancies in the office of President, or on the Council, arising on or after the Effective Date shall be filled in accordance with these Rules, notwithstanding that the office-holder concerned was elected before the Effective Date.

For the avoidance of doubt, where any such vacancy arises in respect of a President or Council member elected before the Effective Date, the person elected to fill the vacancy shall serve only until the expiry of the term for which their predecessor was elected.

Explanation:

- This section sits at the back of the Rulebook, and explains when the new Rules will come into effect.
- If approved by this referendum, the new Rulebook as a whole will take effect from 1 January 2027. Unless stated otherwise, all new Rules will take effect from that date, and the previous Rulebook (December 2022) will no longer be in effect.
- However, there are a small number of exceptions to this, or qualifications as to what exactly this will mean, as set out in the text above.
- As these notes become redundant over time, they will be removed from the back of the Rulebook, and all the new Rules will be in effect without any exception or qualification.

Please vote by the deadline of Wednesday 2 December (12 noon)

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