

COUNCIL POLICY ON CAMPAIGNING IN EQUITY ELECTIONS

The Equity Council welcomes campaigning in Equity elections as a valuable part of the union's democracy.

Members of Equity have the right to be actively involved in elections without interference from their union. This policy statement is not intended to limit or interfere in the rights of members to express their views or to campaign on issues which they believe to be of relevance to the work and activities of their union.

This policy statement is not part of the rules of the union, but sets out what the Council believes is best practice in Equity elections. Any action which breaches this policy runs the risk of giving rise to a complaint under the rules by a fellow member.

a. Use of union resources

No resources of the union may be used to support the candidacy of any member or members unless an Equity branch or national, area, specialist or equality committee has made a decision to nominate a candidate or candidates or to support the candidacy of a member or members.

If an eligible branch or committee wishes to take a decision to nominate a candidate or candidates or to support the candidacy of a member or members, any such proposal must appear on the agenda circulated in advance of the meeting and the member or members should be informed of the proposal. The decision will be made by a simple majority of those present and voting, in the same way as for other decisions, and must be recorded in the minutes. A branch or committee may report the fact of such a decision, but nothing further, through an Equity branch or committee newsletter. The fact of and reasons for the decision may be reported on the Equity website.

If a member is supported by a branch or committee in the way described above they are entitled to make that support known in any election materials they produce themselves which do not use union resources.

These are the only circumstances under which the resources of the union may be used in support of the candidature of any member or members in any Equity elections. In all other circumstances, the resources of the union may not be used.

Resources of the union include, but are not limited to:

- i union publications or official circulations,
- ii union finances or equipment, eg computers, printers, photocopiers, telephone, fax, postage or franking machines,
- iii staff resources.

The areas of the Equity website which are open to any individual member to contribute are, for the purposes of these guidelines, not deemed to be union resources.

b. Membership data

No access to the union's membership database or any other form of membership records will be afforded to any candidate, except where that member has access to membership data by way of holding office within the union.

If any member by way of holding office within the union is in possession of any membership data, for example as a result of conducting a branch or committee circulation, that information may not be used in support of the candidature of any member or group of members, other than as specified in (a) above. Unauthorised use of membership data may be a breach of the Data Protection Act.

c. Use of members' names

Other than in (a) above:

- i No member or group of members should include the name of another member as a candidate on a published list of candidates without the expressed, written consent of the member concerned.
- ii No candidate, or group of candidates, should evoke the name of another member or members in support of their candidature without the expressed, written consent of the member concerned.
- iii No publications, for example advertisements, leaflets, websites, emails or letters, should have attached to them names of candidates or, as an indication of support, the names of members unless the candidate or the members have had the opportunity of seeing and approving the content of such publications before they are issued.

d. Personal attacks

The Equity Council urges candidates and other members, both individually and collectively, to refrain from making personal attacks on another candidate or candidates. In addition to being highly undesirable, such personal attacks may also be in breach of Equity's rule on harassment (Rule 3.1.1.8) and could give rise to a complaint under the Rules by a fellow member.

e. Campaigning

The use of online resources for campaigning during Equity elections is encouraged.

These elections are governed by the Equity Rule Book, which can be downloaded from the Equity web site at www.equity.org.uk/rules/. The elections of the Equity Council and President are also governed by the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, which can be downloaded from www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/52/contents. The independent scrutineer for these elections is Popularis Ltd — www.popularis.org.