

South East Regional Executive Committee, 23 February 2021

This was a special meeting called to discuss rules for the new south-east regional executive committee (REC) and regional conference. The framework is laid down in the 2020 rulebook following the party democracy review, but regions are allowed some flexibility subject to approval by the NEC.

The proposals before us were as below.

- the model rules specify two CLP representatives for every ten constituencies or part thereof, so with 84 constituencies the south-east has 18, including at least 50% women, elected by CLP delegates to the regional conference. The regional director clarified that even if the parliamentary boundary review increases the number of constituencies to 91, we can stay at 18.
- trade union representatives making up one-third of the voting membership, including at least 50% women, elected by trade union delegates to the regional conference
- one representative each for women, BAME, LGBT+, disabled and young members, elected by the appropriate regional committee if active, otherwise by delegates to regional conference through an electoral college (50% CLP delegates, 50% trade union delegates). The Young Labour representative must be a woman at least every other term
- one Co-operative Party representative, a woman at least every other term
- two councillors, elected by Labour councillors, including at least one woman
- one MP, elected by MPs, a woman at least every other term
- one socialist societies representative, elected by socialist society delegates to regional conference

In addition the following can attend without voting rights:

- the regional director
- a representative of police and crime commissioners in the region (if any)
- national policy forum members representing the region (five elected directly through OMOV, two elected at the regional conference)
- members of the constituency section of the NEC who are resident in the region
- the chair of the regional conference arrangements committee (RCAC) when elected

Our current ad hoc structure, with a steering group of eight officers including officers for CLPs, trade unions and equalities will disappear. I always thought we spent too long on something which was only ever going to be temporary. Instead the chair and two vice-chairs will be elected directly at the regional conference. They will include at least one woman, at least one CLP representative, and at least one trade union representative.

The plan is to elect the new REC at a regional conference in November 2021. This would be co-ordinated by an interim RCAC elected by the current REC, until the new RCAC is elected in November. Members had been invited to submit amendments by 48 hours before the meeting.

Constituency representation

The first area of discussion was the allocation of CLP representatives to new county groupings. Two options were suggested, shown in Appendix 1, the first with seats roughly proportional to size, the second with two per county, both topped up with region-wide seats to reach the total of 18.

An amendment to treat East Sussex and West Sussex as separate counties, in line with national and party administrative arrangements, was agreed nem con. For both options each would be allocated two seats.

This made Option 1 slightly simpler, but there were still complexities around women's quotas which always get messy with odd numbers. I therefore supported Option 2 as modified for Sussex, with a straightforward two representatives per county, and that was carried by 12 votes to ten with two abstentions. The CLP representation would therefore be:

REC allocation of CLP Places

Sub Region/County	Allocated CLP Seats
Hampshire and IOW	2
Kent	2
East Sussex	2
West Sussex	2
Surrey	2
Berkshire	2
Buckinghamshire	2
Oxfordshire	2
Total	16

Two representatives to be elected region-wide

I have been honoured to represent Buckinghamshire as well as Oxfordshire for many years, but I know how much they will appreciate their own local representatives, and hope they can co-operate with Milton Keynes – which will be included with Buckinghamshire – in achieving this.

Co-operative Party

Co-op representatives argued strongly that they should retain their current two places, in view of their status as a sister party, distinct from trade unions and affiliated socialist societies, and their contribution in terms of finance and other resources.

Some members demanded that the Co-op should elect their representatives through one-member-one-vote, which I considered an inappropriate intervention. Each section has its own procedures: trade union representatives are not elected by individual union members, and CLP representatives are elected in votes weighted by constituency membership with no guarantee that individual members are involved.

The committee eventually supported their proposal, though NEC approval is not guaranteed. If accepted, the number of trade union representatives would increase from 14 to 15, to maintain their proportion at one-third of the voting membership. The two possibilities are shown in Appendix 2. In either case more than 50 people will be entitled to attend and speak at REC meetings, exceeding the capacity of many rooms, and it will be challenging to manage business efficiently. Even the NEC only has 39 members.

Funding

The regional affiliation fees were set at £100 per CLP, with trade unions, socialist societies and the Co-op Party paying £100 per 1,000 members or part thereof. This is at the lower end of the range across all regions, but I am still concerned at the impact of flat-rate charges when CLPs keep so little of the income from membership subscriptions, and I will be taking up the general issues through the NEC.

Standing Orders?

The meeting took a bizarre turn here. The draft included standing orders based on the standing orders for annual conference. These still referred to annual rather than regional conference in places, included references back for parts of documents which do not feature at regional conference, and generally applied to an event running over several days rather than a weekend. I wrote to the regional director proposing that we take them out and adapt our own. Due to a misunderstanding this was not circulated 48 hours before the meeting and certain members argued aggressively against considering it at all. Technically they were correct, and if ruled out of order I was willing to let them cope with contradictions when they arose in November, but I resented suspicions that I was trying to get rid of motions or otherwise undermine democracy through underhand means.

After all the shouting the REC agreed unanimously to drop the standing orders as circulated and to set up a working group to draft our own version in time for approval by the full REC in June / July. This meeting will also elect an interim regional CAC to oversee the regional conference in November.

Ann Black, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire CLPs, 24 February 2021

Appendix 1

REC Allocation of CLP Places (Option 1)

Sub Region/County	Total CLPs	Allocated CLP Seats
Hampshire and IOW	19	3
Kent	17	3
Sussex	16	3
Surrey	11	2
Berkshire	8	2
Buckinghamshire	7	2
Oxfordshire	6	2
Total	84	17

One representative to be elected region-wide

Women's Representation

Sub/County	Allocated Seats	Women's Representation
Hampshire and IOW	3	2 AWS/1 Open alternating every 3 years to 1 AWS/2 Open
Kent	3	2 AWS/1 Open alternating every 3 years to be 1 AWS/2 Open
Sussex	3	1 AWS/2 Open alternating every 3 years to be 2 AWS/1 Open
Surrey	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Berkshire	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Buckinghamshire	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Oxfordshire	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Region Wide	1	Open

REC allocation of CLP Places (Option 2)

Sub Region/County	Allocated CLP Seats
Hampshire and IOW	2
Kent	2
Sussex	2
Surrey	2
Berkshire	2
Buckinghamshire	2
Oxfordshire	2
Total	14

Four representatives to be elected region-wide

Women's Representation

Sub/County	Allocated Seats	Women's Representation
Hampshire and IOW	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Kent	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Sussex	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Surrey	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Berkshire	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Buckinghamshire	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Oxfordshire	2	1 AWS/1 Open
Region wide	4	1 AWS/1 Open

Appendix 2

Proposed membership of the Regional Executive Committee (if Co-op Party allowed two places)

Region	Total CLP seats	Equalities seats	Co-op Party	Socialist Societies	Councillors / MPs	Trades Unions	Total voting members
South East	18	5	2	1	3	15	44

Total voting members	Total non-voting members	Total
44	9 + NEC Reps from the Region	53 + NEC Reps from the Region

Proposed membership of the Regional Executive Committee (if Co-op Party only allowed one place)

Region	Total CLP seats	Equalities seats	Co-op Party	Socialist Societies	Councillors / MPs	Trades Unions	Total voting members
South East	18	5	1	1	3	14	42

Total voting members	Total non-voting members	Total
42	9 + NEC Reps from the Region	51 + NEC Reps from the Region