

CONSTITUTION OF THE INSTITUTE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

(updated to AGM 2003)

1. **NAME**

The name of the Institute shall be 'The Institute of Consumer Affairs' referred hereinafter as 'The Institute'.

2. **OBJECTS**

The objectives of The Institute are: -

- (a) To promote and protect the interests of consumers through campaigning, lobbying and consultation with other relevant bodies and individuals.
- (b) To promote good practice in consumer protection provision by encouraging appropriate levels of advice, representation, information, education and enforcement services which reflect the needs of all consumers.
- (c) To influence consumer affairs policy generally, to consider and carry out research on any matter related to the field and including to represent the interests of those consumers facing disadvantage.
- (d) To promote the training and development of members, those starting their career in consumer protection and others in consumer affairs through a programme of training courses provided by the Institute itself or in co-operation with other bodies.
- (e) To ensure and protect the professional status of its members.

3. **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of the Institute is open to anyone who:

- (a) is working as a specialist consumer adviser, OR
- (b) is involved in the management of a consumer advice service at any level, OR
- (c) is working in the field of consumer education or information, OR
- (d) is working in the field of enforcement of consumer affairs related legislation, OR
- (e) works in another consumer organisation whose aims and objects are acceptable to the Executive, OR
- (f) has satisfactorily completed the Institute's Basic Advice Course, OR
- (g) has demonstrated support for consumer affairs and continues to support the aims and objectives of the Institute and has proved acceptable to the Executive.

4. **Applications**

- (a) Applications for membership must be submitted on the appropriate form and be accompanied by the current annual subscription.
- (b) Subscriptions for all categories of membership will be set at the Annual General Meeting.
- (c) The Executive shall have discretion to vary the new membership subscription for specific recruitment campaigns.

5. The decision to accept an applicant who fulfils any of the above criteria shall be the Executive's.

6. **AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP**

- (a) Affiliate membership of The Institute is open to those organisations who satisfy the Executive that their aims and objectives are in line with those of The Institute.
- (b) When applying for affiliation the organisation shall sign a declaration indicating support of the aims of The Institute.
- (c) The affiliated member shall receive a copy of all Institute publications on the same terms as members.
- (d) Affiliate members may attend meetings of the Institute including the AGM and may speak at such meetings at the discretion of the chair of the meeting. Affiliate members may not vote at any meeting nor hold office within The Institute.

7. **SUSPENSION**

The National Executive may suspend any member considered to have acted in a manner likely to have been prejudicial to the objects and/or status of The Institute. Such suspension shall be operative until the next Annual General Meeting of the membership, which shall then determine the lifting of the suspension or expulsion of the member.

8. **HONORARY MEMBERSHIP**

Any member of The Institute may make a nomination for Honorary Membership, these will be considered by the National Executive.

9. Those eligible for nomination are:-

- (a) Those who have made a significant achievement in consumer affairs or given support to The Institute's activities.
- (b) Former members of the Institute for whom, by reasons of change of employment or retirement, ordinary membership is no longer appropriate and who have contributed significantly to The Institute's development.
- (c) Acceptance of the nominee must be ratified at the Annual General Meeting.

10. The total number of honorary members will not exceed 10 at any one time.

11. **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

- (a) The management of The Institute shall be conducted by the National Executive, hereinafter referred to as 'The Executive', subject to any decisions made by the Annual Meeting or Special Meeting of The Institute.
- (b) The Executive shall consist of the following officers:-Chair Vice Chair (Information) Vice Chair (Development) Secretary Treasurer Membership Secretary Training Officer Publications Officer Public Relations Officer Two Officers without portfolio, one representative from any branch set up under clause 17, and a Regional Liaison Officer for each of the following regions: Scotland; Wales; Northern Ireland; North West, North East; Yorkshire; West Midlands; East Midlands; East of England; London; South East and the South West where the region is not represented on the Executive by a branch representative.

12. **Elections**

- (a) The Executive shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of The Institute.
- (b) With the exception of the posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, which cannot be held by the same individual, an Executive post which remains unfilled by the Annual General Meeting can be assigned by the Executive to an elected Executive officer or co-optee notwithstanding that s/he already hold a post on the Executive.
- (c) Nominations for election to the Executive shall be in writing and supported by one other paid up member of The Institute.
- (d) Candidates for election shall be in full paid-up membership of The Institute and shall give their written consent to their nomination. Nominations must be received by the Secretary 14 days before the Annual General Meeting.
- (e) In the event of no nominations being received in advance for any post nominations can be accepted at the AGM at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting.
- (f) Contested posts for election shall be determined by ballot at the Annual General Meeting.
- (g) A quorum for Executive meetings shall be the Chair or Vice-Chair plus three other officers. All Executive posts are honorary and the duties shall be as customary in voluntary organisations.
- (h) Any member may attend a meeting of the Executive, but may only speak at such meetings at the discretion of the Chair.

13. **CO-OPTION**

The Executive shall have power to co-opt up to four additional members without voting rights who are considered to have some special contribution to make to their deliberations. A co-option may be terminated by the Executive at any time.

14. **VOTING RIGHTS**

Only members whose subscriptions are up to date and whose membership is not suspended will be allowed to vote at any meeting of The Institute. Honorary Members do not have voting rights.

15. **ANNUAL AND GENERAL MEETINGS**

- (a) The Annual General Meeting of The Institute shall be held within a three month period beginning September 1st. Notification of the Annual General Meeting must be circulated to the membership 28 days in advance.
- (b) The meeting shall consider reports from the individual officers, the financial statement, set the annual membership subscription, elect officers to the Executive and the appropriate committees, consider notices of motions and any other items determined by the Executive.
- (c) Members shall submit to the Secretary notice of motions in writing at least 14 days prior to the meeting and these will be circulated 7 days in advance of the meeting together with the Annual Report. Other motions may be accepted at the Chair's discretion. All motions except those proposed by the Executive must be supported by one other member.
- (d) A quorum for any meeting of the Institute shall be 10% of the paid up membership plus four elected officers, one of whom must be the Chair or Vice-Chair.

- (e) A General Meeting of The Institute can be convened by the Executive at any time or within 28 days of a request by 15 members. Notice of such a meeting will be sent to all members 14 days before the date for the meeting. The business conducted at the meeting shall include only the matters specified by the Executive or stated in the request by the members.
- (f) Any member unable to attend the Annual General Meeting or a General Meeting may appoint a proxy to vote on his or her behalf at the meeting. Notice of the appointment shall be sent to the Secretary one clear day before the meeting. No member may hold a proxy vote for more than two absent members.
- (g) Any motion or other business put to a vote at meetings will be deemed to be carried on a simple majority. In the event of a split decision the Chair will have the casting vote. Decisions to amend the constitution must be carried by two thirds of the votes cast at the meeting.
- (h) Minutes of the Annual General Meeting will be circulated to all the members within 56 days of the meeting.
- (i) The Business Plan for the following year must be submitted to the Annual General Meeting

16. **COMMITTEES**

- (a) In order to assist in the operation of The Institute's affairs, there will exist at least two sub-committees, which will report to the Executive via their respective Executive Committee members.
- (b) Training Committee. It shall be the role of this committee to organise all training undertaken on the Institute's behalf.
- (c) Publications Committee. It shall be the role of this Committee to co-ordinate the production of all written material.
- (d) The Executive may authorise the creation of any other committee it deems appropriate to the affairs of the Institute. Such committees will report to the Executive via a representative appointed by the subcommittee. Such representatives shall be considered co-opted members.

17. **BRANCHES**

A branch of The Institute may be set up by any 10 or more members with the consent of the Executive or by the Annual or Special Meeting. The branch shall be operated in a manner laid down by Rules, which must be submitted for approval by the Executive.

18. **DISSOLUTION**

- (a) The Institute may be dissolved by resolution of Annual or General Meeting, in which case any funds or property remaining after settlement of all outstanding financial obligations may be disposed of as instructed by a clear majority of the paid-up members present.
- (b) If two attempts to convene such a meeting should be abortive because of a lack of quorum, the Executive or the remaining officers may dissolve the Institute, and after meeting all outstanding financial obligations donate the remaining assets to any organisation with similar objects or to some registered charity.