

Half Year Meeting – October 2024

Campaigns Fund - proposed closure - explanatory note

The Campaigns Fund was set up in 2014 following approval by members at the AGM held that year. It had two key aims:

1. to provide a formal funding avenue to support campaigning activities of organisations with values close to the Society's
2. to facilitate a broadening of the Society's political support.

In relation to this second point, it is noted that prior to 2014 the Society's political spend had been directed solely to the Co-operative Party. It was felt that given the wide appeal of co-operative values across the political spectrum, it made sense to allow such spend to be directed not just to the Co-operative Party but to other political parties looking to pursue a co-operative agenda – the introduction of the Fund could help achieve this.

Each year since 2014, members have approved a distribution into the Fund – for at least the last five years this has been at £60k. Most of this money has been paid to the Co-op Party, leaving around c. £12k - £15k a year for funding the campaigns of other organisations.

It has to be said that the Fund has struggled to gain traction. Despite periodic efforts to promote/refresh the Fund, somewhat disappointingly over the last 10 years, the Fund (i) has never received an application from another political party other than the Co-operative Party, (ii) has had a much smaller number of applications than hoped for, a number of which have been repeat applications, and (iii) other than the regular applications from the Co-operative Party, has found that the applications received, while for worthy causes, have largely lacked a co-operative edge.

Given the above, and as it is now in its tenth year, the Board has undertaken a review of the Fund. The conclusion it reached was that it was better to propose the closure of the Fund to members rather than try a further refresh. Hence, the agenda item seeking approval to close the Fund.

For the avoidance of doubt, the Board is clear that going forward the Society should continue to support the Co-operative Party given the great work it does in promoting co-operation in political

circles. That being so, if members agree to the closure of the Fund, at future AGMs the Board will ask members to approve a distribution directly to the Co-operative Party, as was practice prior to the inception of the Fund.

The Fund currently has c. £9,530 available to spend. If the closure of the Fund is approved, the Co-operative Party will be asked to submit proposals on ways it could use this amount. However, it will also be open for other organisations to submit applications as well.

There will be the opportunity for questions on the proposal to close the Fund at the meeting. But interested members are welcome to contact the Secretary beforehand with queries - edward.parker@midcounties.coop.