TSSA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELECTIONS

Introduction

Honesty, fairness and equity underpin the integrity of our union elections. In terms of how TSSA elections will be run it is important that candidates and their supporters understand and accept our code of conduct.

Candidates and their supporters, together with officers and staff who facilitate the elections have a responsibility for upholding these practices. The cornerstones of fair elections are integrity, impartiality, transparency and incorruptibility. All candidates are therefore expected to read and adhere to this Code.

Our union values the concept of competitive democratic elections. The election process is intended not only to fulfil our constitutional requirements but also to empower and encourage members to participate in the process.

Campaigning should allow candidates to put their views to members with a minimum of restriction, and in a fair, respectful and honest manner.

This Code applies to candidates and other 'active' supporters and all of our members (an 'active' supporter being anyone who, either verbally or in writing, attempts to influence the vote of a TSSA member).

The objectives of the Code are to:

- Ensure that campaigning by candidates is carried out in an honest, fair and respectful way.
- Protect the standing and reputation of candidates, members, officers and employees.
- Protect the standing and reputation of TSSA within the trade union and labour movement and across those workplaces where we organise members.

Terms of Code

All TSSA members are expected to abide by the following conditions:

1. Act in good faith and with integrity and honesty. All communications, written, electronic or oral should be courteous, truthful and respectful and avoid:

    a) attacks on candidates' characters and abilities which are irrelevant to the election and/or could bring them into disrepute.

    b) spreading rumours which could adversely reflect on the reputation of individual TSSA members or of the union.

2. Respect the right of candidates to campaign for election and not interfere with their campaigning.

3. Avoid criticism of candidates that has no bearing on their candidature or professional activities or that is based on unverified allegations. Comments should be confined to issues, policies, and past record, and should respect the right of others to hold their own opinions.

4. Avoid comment on the private life of candidates that is unrelated to their professional activities.

5. Avoid criticism of TSSA members who are not candidates in the election.

6. Not comment on or abuse any other candidates for reasons of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religious beliefs or age.

7. Not misrepresent, nor mislead voters as to a candidate's qualifications, position, authority or experience.

8. Not offer or imply any inducement – in relation to a candidature, or possible election.

9. Avoid making commitments which are beyond the powers of the position being contested.

10. Think carefully about their use of logos, photos etc as part of their campaigns to ensure that they do not breach someone else's copyright.

11. Make all relevant information easily accessible to all members within the constituency.

Campaign Period

Before an election is held, there is a formal campaigning period which shall begin on the date of the call for nominations for the position to be contested. The formal campaigning period will close on the day immediately before the date that the ballot shall close.

Where there are calls for expressions of interest this will be an opportunity for members to do exactly that and not an extension to the formal campaigning period. Members should avoid campaigning outside of the formal campaigning period.

Conflicts Of Interest

Standing for election is like standing for public office, it is all about serving the people you seek to elect you. As a prospective TSSA representative you should have their best interests at heart. Conflicts of interest are difficult to define but candidates must consider whether any existing roles, ties or circumstances would mean that they could not act impartially or would be perceived as not being impartial due to other personal interests.

Conflicts of interest should not preclude a candidate from running in an election, however, the conflict must be disclosed and should not be exploited to give the candidate an unfair advantage within the election campaign period.

Complaints

Complaints received by the Executive Committee for alleged breaches of this Code will be referred to an investigation committee appointed to investigate the complaint(s) and to make recommendations for the Executive Committee to consider. Complaints involving members of TSSA's paid staff should be directed to the General Secretary who will ensure that they are processed accordingly using the procedures in place for staff matters.

It is the right and duty of all our members to see that this Code is observed, in spirit as well as letter, and where appropriate to bring to the attention of the Executive Committee / General Secretary any behaviour which they consider to be contrary to the Code.

Vexatious Complaints

Elections can be a stressful time for everyone involved especially candidates. Complaints are taken incredibly seriously as they question the integrity of our electoral processes, and the Executive Committee is under a duty to ensure that all complaints raised regarding elections processes are investigated. Fake complaints create both undue upset and waste time.

Falsely accusing others of election breaches knowing this not to be true is considered unethical and will result in disciplinary procedures being taken against those involved.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to discourage fair and truthful comment and debate.