



GUIDANCE FOR AREAS PREPARING COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Each Area is entitled to submit one motion to the General Council AGM.

Council members' motions should preferably concern strategy or policy, but it is permissible to address operational issues.

Council members' motions are one way for Areas to request that the board of trustees or other bodies take action.

The board of trustees is obliged to comply with motions passed by General Council unless it believes that compliance would not be in the best interests of Ramblers, result in a breach of the law, contract, trust or duty of care owed by Ramblers, damage the reputation of Ramblers, or result in a legal claim against the Ramblers.

Before developing and submitting a motion, Areas may find it helpful to consult other Areas or to raise matters informally with the staff team.

Preparing good motions

In general, keep the motion as short and succinct as possible to make it easy for members to understand.

Address the motion as a statement from General Council, worded as if already adopted, for example:

This General Council believes.... and therefore urges
This General Council commends... and therefore resolves

Make clear what action is being called for and who is being called upon to act. If there is more than one action point, list them clearly, for example:

This General Council calls upon the government to:
a) recognise that....
b) legislate in order to.....; and
c) spend more money on.....

Be clear to which part(s) of Great Britain the motion is applicable, noting the different legal systems and administrations in England, Scotland and Wales.

Include a short and descriptive title.

If the motion is addressed internally, then the language can be direct. General Council can, for example, "instruct" the board of trustees or Areas or Groups to take action. If the motion is addressed externally (e.g. to government(s) or to external agencies), the language should reflect

the fact that the Ramblers has no direct power. In these instances, General Council can at best “urge” or “call upon”. Motions should not call upon staff to act. This is because staff are accountable, through the chief executive, to the board of trustees, and the board is accountable to General Council.

Include background notes (up to 250 words) which should put the motion in context and clarify any possible ambiguity. Background notes should be worded in the context of the Ramblers’ values, in such a way that they do not offend or bring the organisation into disrepute. Background notes also assist the Motions Review Committee in its role of ensuring a motion is clearly worded.

The role of the Motions Review Committee

After the submission deadline, the motions are passed to the Motions Review Committee, which comprises seven members (five elected by General Council and two appointed by the board of trustees).

Its powers are set out in the standing orders: A motion can be ruled out of order if a similar one has been debated within the last two years. Similar motions from different proposers can be redrafted as a single composite motion, and the committee can tidy up poorly drafted policy motions. The committee decides on the order of debate, which is important should there be insufficient time to debate all the motions.

Once the committee has considered the motions, a list of motions and background notes is published on the website and shared with Areas; and then included in General Council AGM notice and papers.

Amendments

Any Area, affiliated national organisation or Council member can propose an amendment to a motion if they feel the wording could be improved, they wish to change the emphasis slightly, or to introduce related ideas.

An amendment should not rewrite the entire motion in such a way that it becomes effectively a different motion, as an amendment that materially changes the nature of a motion would be ruled out of order.

An amendment should be worded in such a way as to indicate precisely what change is desired, for example:

*In the nth sentence insert “xyz” after “abc” or
Delete from “abc” to “def” and insert in its place “pqr”.*

Background notes (up to 100 words) are requested to explain the purpose of the amendment.

The Motions Review Committee meets again just prior to the AGM. As with motions, the committee can combine similar amendments as composite amendments and correct poorly drafted amendments.

Appeals

Originators of motions who disagree with the decisions of the Motions Review Committee have a right of appeal. Appeals should be submitted as early as possible and should clearly state the reasons for the appeal.

There is also a right of appeal if the originator of an amendment disagrees with the committee's decision.

Special and ordinary resolutions (constitutional motions)

In addition to Council member motions, special or ordinary resolutions may be submitted. These are often referred to as constitutional motions to distinguish them from Council members' motions.

Amendments to the articles of association require a special resolution and, to take effect, must be approved by 75 per cent of the Council members voting and, in some cases, may require approval from the Charity Commission.

In most circumstances, constitutional motions are normally submitted to General Council by the board of trustees.