



National Members' Council Newsletter:

April 2024

Our Members' Council is made up of 100 passionate Co-op members, colleagues, people from other co-op societies, and members chosen by Council to help diversify voices and thinking. When you join a co-op you become a member-owner of a business that exists to meet your needs, so Council Members act as local representatives who champion your views with directors and leaders from around Co-op.

February and April Highlights

Our Council meets four times a year; here's what's been on the agenda recently...

So far in 2024, Council has met as a whole in February and April, with smaller groups of Council Members meeting in committees in between to hold to account and influence our Co-op.

In February, Council Members visited Co-op Academy Belle Vue, meeting staff and students to find out how our Academies are supporting young people and communities in a co-operative way.

Council's meeting started with an introduction to Co-op's new Chair, Debbie White. Membership was again top of Council's agenda following changes to membership following the introduction of Member Prices to replace the previous 2 plus 2 rewards scheme. Council had the opportunity to ask questions and seek assurance about how these changes benefit members and to raise members' views and concerns about economic reward.

Council Members heard from a panel of experts in the fields of democracy, participation and belonging to help shape and inform plans for the future of membership and ownership at Co-op and discussed opportunities with Directors and leaders for Co-op Membership.

Council started the drafting process for its 2024 Annual General Meeting Motions (AGM), with members' views shaping discussions.

Council also agreed its areas of focus and priorities for 2024/5, which are:

1. **Member Value at the Heart of our Co-op**
2. **Meaningful Membership and Co-operative Education, Training and Information**
3. **Being Co-op: Communicating with, Listening to, and Engaging our Member-Owners**

In April, Council Members visited Toad Lane in Rochdale where the Co-op Group began. Professor Tony Webster and economic development co-op, Stir to Action, talked about how Co-operative Values and Principles can be relevant in a new era of co-operation.

The main focus of the Council meeting was our Co-op's 2023 Annual Report and Accounts and Co-operate report with CEO Shirine Khoury- Haq, CFO Rachel Izzard and Chair of the Remuneration Committee Stevie Spring. This was followed by a long Q and A with Council Members asking questions of our Board and senior leaders about our Co-op's performance and future plans.

Council Members also took part in a session on proposals for Co-op's Membership Local Delivery Framework, which Senate Members have helped inform.

Council Members continued their role to champion member ownership and our Co-op Difference in the development of our refreshed strategy, with an update on a connected narrative and communications for our upcoming AGM and agreeing support for AGM motions.

Discussions with directors

To hold our Co-op Board to account on important issues for our businesses and members, Council Members ask questions as part of each Council Meeting...

Questions raised by Council Members in February focused on Membership, including [how we communicate, consult and engage our members, the impact of changes to member rewards and measuring success and community funding](#).

In April, we focused on our 2023 Annual Results, and key topics were:

[Theft and leakage, net debt strategy, capital investment, cost efficiency, NISA distribution, Member Prices, pensions, a framework to measure member value and culture and belonging.](#)



Catch up with our Council Committees

Council Members also meet with Directors and Leaders in smaller groups throughout the year to input into plans and ask questions on areas of our Co-op Difference. Here's what they've worked on recently...

People and Communities

This committee focuses on how our Co-op delivers social value through our work locally with communities and social issues, and our people strategy and support for colleagues. In March, the Committee focused on how our Co-op creates Social Value for our Members. The Committee also considered progress on our Co-op's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and delivering our ambitions as an inclusive employer, and to serve the needs of our diverse membership.

Modern Co-operative Leadership

This committee focuses on the co-operative principle of 'Co-operation among Co-operatives' and supports Co-op with its role within the wider Co-operative Movement. At its March meeting, it helped shape early thinking for Co-op and wider movement engagement with the 2025 UN International Year of Co-operatives.

It also fed into this year's Co-op Fortnight plans with Co-ops UK and received an update on Co-op campaigns for the next 12 months, discussing how to activate member-ownership as part of activity.

Business Performance

This committee acts as a critical friend to ensure the success of our Co-op and that the needs of our members are at the heart of the big financial decisions we make. At its February and April meetings, it focused on Co-op's 2024 budget and our Food and Funeralcare businesses with leaders, deep diving into performance and plans for the next 12 months. It also discussed our 2023 Annual Results and drafted questions on behalf of Council Members for the April Council Meeting based on key themes raised.

Sustainable Ethical Leadership

This committee focuses on important issues of environment, sustainability and ethical business practices in relation to Co-op's Vision and Sustainability Strategy.

In March, it received an update on progress for our Sustainability Strategy, looping back on its input session last year. Following the announcement to Co-op members on our 'Space to Thrive' campaign, which launched fresh chicken with improved welfare in stores on the back of a 2023 AGM Motion, the committee heard how the campaign was being communicated and how members would be informed and involved in future work in this area.

The committee also discussed which of its feedback comments had been factored into the final 2023 Co-operate Report.

Membership

This committee is responsible for ensuring our Co-operative Values and Principles are reflected in all aspects of our overall Membership Proposition and form the foundation of our Group Strategy. In March, it received an update on plans for our membership offer, including the latest statistics. Ahead of our April Council Meeting, the committee discussed proposals for our 2024 autumn member events and agreed to support the recommendation when it went to Council for approval.

As part of this, the committee received an overall update on how Ownership Value was being pulled together in a connected, consistent narrative that used all relevant touchpoints throughout the year.

2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM): Make your vote count!

On 18 May, we'll be at Co-op Live to celebrate another 12 months of Co-op. We'd love to see you there, or online if you'd prefer to join us from home. For the first time, we'll be hosting a members' discussion and getting your views on what you'd like Co-op to tackle next so that we can shape the next year together. If you spent £250 at the Co-op in 2023, make sure you vote in our elections and on our motions by Noon on 13 May.



[Get involved...](#)

[Make your vote count in our 2024 AGM...](#)

How to play your full part...

['Join In'](#) with regular online opportunities to shape products and plans and learn more about the Co-op you own.

How we're doing things differently...

Watch our 2023 AGM Motion updates all in one place, which tell you how member-owners' votes have counted in the last 12 months.

Tell us what you care about and what you'd like Co-op to tackle next so that your views are at the heart of everything we do.

AGM voting isn't the only opportunity to have your say. Find out more about all the ways members have got involved and made a difference with us in 2023.

Co-operation is all about working together to achieve a common goal and make things fairer. There are lots of co-ops in the UK and around the world, and it's important that we collaborate and learn from each other. Council Members have been attending conferences and events since the beginning of the year to do just this, taking part in panels and workshops to share ideas and inspire thinking.



Take care,
Denise Scott-McDonald

President of Co-op's National Members' Council



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