



It's what we do

Issue 25

# July Council Newsletter



## Hello from Nick

The National Members' Council was back together in Manchester on 6 July, International Day of Co-operatives, for our internal festival of democracy. Every year, Council Members have the chance to stand for election to our Senate or to become a vice president.

This year, the role of Council President was also up for election and I'm delighted to say that I was re-elected for another two year term. On Senate, we saw five new Council Members securing seats and have also welcomed Lesley Reznicek to the role of Vice President for Co-operative Performance, Democratic Processes and Member Voice. Congratulations to all. I look forward to working with you and achieving change together.

This update provides an overview of the highlights and key topics we covered over the weekend. Please share it with your networks and contacts within our Society and your own. We welcome any comments and feedback, which you can send on to [council@coop.co.uk](mailto:council@coop.co.uk)

## Update from Chief Executive, Steve Murrells

Ahead of the election results being declared, we also welcomed our new Council Members to their roles with our Council induction. Steve went along to meet with them and share his congratulations, saying that it was 'great to see more and more brilliant women joining us'.

Before updating on things that were happening around the business, Steve took the time to show just how much influence Council's had over the last year around the Co-op, saying that 'when we work together, we do good things'. For example, our acquisition of Nisa started with a conversation in a Council meeting and has gone on to be a really successful partnership that's given our products huge reach.

Council have also encouraged the business to engage more with young people, and this summer will see us running pop up shops at eight festivals around the UK as we build on the success of last year's festival partnerships. As Glastonbury is famous for its high environmental and community responsibility standards, our Council Ethics and Sustainable Leadership Committee gave the business the nudge to use

our shared values to think about sustainability, resulting in us selling sandwiches in compostable packaging for the first time.

By fully urging the business to launch the Co-op's latest campaign, Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities, Council have helped address a major societal issue that has now been put firmly on the government's agenda. Already, 600 experiences of retail crime and violence have been submitted to the Home Office, new research is being carried out and investments are being made for the future.

Steve shared that things are really on a roll for the Co-op, with the business and colleagues winning award after award. In recent news, we shared that we've influenced a government scheme to fund child funeral costs - something that we've been doing for years and are very passionate about. Our work on tackling modern slavery has also helped us to secure more support for survivors.

Having Steve with us at Council is great and I'm looking forward to hearing more at his next update.



---

## Update from Head of New Channels, Martin Rogers

It was lovely to welcome former Council Member, Martin Rogers, back into the fold at our meeting.

As part of our move into wholesaling and franchising, Martin and his team have been busy working on a passion project to be proud of: our first university franchise store at Leeds University Union, which is run by students. Since opening in February, the store has boosted the use of other campus services and is our second largest food-to-go location. Based on this success in such a short time, the New Channels team will continue extending our reach and using our strengths; we're the only UK grocer franchising our master brand so that our franchise stores are indistinguishable from our other stores. This has been developed after learning from the approach of many international co-operative societies. Looking ahead, Martin shared that they'll be working with NUS to explore a national partnership and will link in with other universities to hopefully build a wider understanding of our Co-op difference.

---

## Future of Food update with Sarah Wakefield and Cathryn Higgs

Following on from the launch of our Future of Food plan a few months back, our Sustainable Sourcing and Fairtrade Manager, Sarah Wakefield, and our Head of Food Policy, Cathryn Higgs, joined us at our meeting to update on how putting the plan into action has been going.

As a plan, the Future of Food takes a systems approach in which everything's connected. In the last nine months, Cathryn shared that there has been a fundamental period of change and a lot of focus on green issues and aligning sustainability with health.

The Future of Food is set out by chapter, so the Food Policy team have been working hard on the first one, which is all about sourcing and creating with care. Their aim is to create thoughtfully designed products so people can eat better for themselves and the planet. Lots of progress has been made in sugar reduction, with 180m teaspoons removed from our bakery with no impact on taste. By 2020, the team will have eliminated hard to recycle plastics from our product ranges and are currently working with communities to increase recycling capabilities and make sure this deadline is met.

To avoid any negative impacts on people, the planet and animals when sourcing and creating with care, the team have also been linking in with global partners and suppliers to protect forests and only use sustainable soy. As the impacts of climate change are being felt now in some parts

---

of the world, Co-op is currently risk-mapping its 30 most-used ingredients to understand what changes need to be made. For the future, the team are focusing on sustainable agriculture, working with young British farmers to help them build their businesses and get the support they need.

It's clear to see that a lot is being done to understand our total impact on our planet - an important issue that affects everyone. The Co-op can and should have a role to play in addressing these challenges, and Sarah and Cathryn have assured us that we are doing so by focusing our efforts on areas where we can make the most difference and drive change. I'm looking forward to hearing more about our progress on the Future of Food as the team move through the plan.



---

## Update on responsible advertising with Campaigns and Public Affairs Director, Paul Gerrard

As a co-op and a business that cares about doing the right thing, the topic of responsible advertising has long been on our radar.

Co-op Members have previously voted for a Motion at the 2018 AGM promoted by the Stop Funding Hate campaign, which asks brands to pull adverts from the Sun, Daily Mail and Daily Express newspapers. We absolutely don't agree with or back the hate campaigns pushed by these publications and we've chosen to take a different, more co-operative approach to addressing the issue - one where we work with journalists to build a strong relationship and influence better, fairer reporting that changes the conversation and educates readers on important topics.

Paul reassured Council that wherever we're present, our values and principles are clear; since 2017, the Co-op has had a responsible advertising policy in place to make sure that any content we share reflects who we are and what we do. As a result, we've been able to highlight issues like modern slavery and loneliness with readers who wouldn't otherwise know about them. It is welcome news that there has been a clear decline in the number of racist and anti-immigrant front page stories, as well as fewer examples of hate in UK newspapers.



---

## Update on Member Pioneers with Rebecca Birkbeck, Fay Bowden and Russell Gill

At this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM), we relaunched our Member Pioneer programme with the ambition to have a Member Pioneer in every community by the end of 2020. To support them, we'll also have 120 Member Pioneer co-ordinators and 10 regional managers.

Joined by Rebecca Birkbeck, Director of Community and Shared Value, Fay Bowden, National Member Pioneer Manager, and Russell Gill, Head of Co-operative Partnerships and Local Engagement, at our meeting, they

shared that they're currently running a big recruitment drive to meet their goal.

As part of relaunching the programme, the team have set out clear expectations for Member Pioneer activity going forward; as part of their role, they'll be encouraging local fund applications, running forums, organising local clean ups and raising awareness of the Co-op and what it does. To keep the programme on track, their impact and the difference they make will be measured regularly.

---

## Senate update

Following our July Senate meeting and Senate Surgery with Council Members, we heard a quick update from senior Senate Member, John Dalley, on the things Senate is discussing and working on. These are: co-options, utilising skills, member education, training and information, Join in, our effectiveness review, funeral plans, Member Pioneers, and AGM participation.

---

## Directors' Forum

It's always great to open up the floor at Council meetings for questions to some of our directors.

In July, we were joined by Sir Christopher Kelly, Lord Victor Adebawale, Paul Chandler and Margaret Casely-Hayford CBE. We also welcomed our newly-elected Member Nominated Director, Sarah McCarthy Fry, to her first Council meeting and I'm looking forward to working with her to represent members at all levels of our Co-op.

Questions asked were on the topics of: member participation, wholesaling, equitable access, a partnership to support ex-offenders, store openings, Member Pioneers, and the CMA enquiry into the UK funerals market.





## Friday Night Live: Co-op Academies

Every Friday night before a Council meeting, we run Friday Night Live – an opportunity to network and meet with colleagues from around our Co-op and the wider movement.

This time, we were joined by outgoing Director of Co-op Academies Trust, Frank Norris MBE, and his successor, Chris Tomlinson, to hear all about what's been happening with Co-op Academies Trust and their plans for the future. Frank has achieved some incredible things over the last few years that wouldn't have been possible without him, and he'll be greatly missed, but our academies look to be in safe hands with Chris and I wish him all the best in his new role.



## And finally... thank you for your long service!

Celebrating 10 years as elected members of the Co-op (alongside myself!) this July were Alan Sandham, Tricia Davies, Marlene Corbey, Margaret Silcock, Louise Walker, Janson Woodall and Barbara Vaterlaws. Thank you all for your long service and dedication to Council and the Co-op.



**Nick Crofts**  
President of the Members' Council



Keep up to date with us using  
**#CoopNMC** on twitter