



# MAKE YOUR VOICE COUNT

National Members' Council Elections  
South East



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# Amber Vincent-Prior

Co-op Group businesses traded with in last 12 months

Food

## 1. What do you regard as the most important priority for Co-op in 2025?

Maintaining commercial success against aggressive competitors during this cost-of-living crisis is challenging so we need to operate as efficiently as possible, while giving members and customers more reasons to use our services. We need to use our core strengths as a member-led, responsible business to provide pricing and availability of ethically sourced products and services that members and customers want.

## 2. How do you demonstrate a commitment to Co-op Values and Principles?

On the Members' Council, I championed the 'Co-op Difference', focusing on ethical decision-making, sustainability and member-ownership. Online communications have grown our membership numbers, and many more members now have their say in how our business is run. I have regularly highlighted on the Council that we need to do more to communicate with members who are not able to use online services, by providing more information in stores and funeral homes, plus consulting more communities at local events (e.g. helping on a Co-op table at Community Kettle, Cosham, Portsmouth and helping on a Co-op stall at the 'Spring into Summer' show on a village green in Haywards Heath for Big Green Week).

## 3. How will you add value to the Members' Council and what skills and experience would you use to do this?

In my adult life, I have always advocated being ethical. I studied ethics at Winchester University and have a BA (Hons) in Theology, Religion and Ethics. I worked 35 years for the Inland Revenue as a manager, doing technical work and examining accounts. Then, I was a director of the Southern Co-op for 13 years, was vice-chair for about half that time, served on audit, remuneration and governance sub-committees. In the last 3 years, I have attended over a dozen days of training courses to refresh my knowledge. Customer service insights from my careers have given me the skill to question anything.



## Ruth Edmonds

Co-op Group businesses traded with in last 12 months

Food

### 1. What do you regard as the most important priority for Co-op in 2025?

Providing all members the best value for money possible while maintaining healthy and productive suppliers. Maintaining win-wins for my fellow members, with a strong focus on helping our members feel part of this community. My suggestion would be that the aggression towards shop workers within the Co-op Group could be addressed through increased membership awareness and participation. A code of conduct for members, which includes exclusion if you are caught shoplifting or being abusive to staff, I feel could be a way to make members feel that membership of Co-op is different to being part of another retail loyalty programme.

### 2. How do you demonstrate a commitment to Co-op Values and Principles?

I challenge the 1st principle, that membership should be open to everyone, with reference to how members act within stores and staff in my previous answer. That said, regardless of background you can join the Co-op, but you recognise that this is not just a loyalty scheme. I would like to support more membership interaction by giving members the capacity to make suggestions outside of standard membership surveys etc. This would be supportive of the principles of democratic member control and economic participation. It would also enhance the commitment to the local community. Part of supporting membership can be the offering of educational or training courses to members and finding out what would be useful to them.

### 3. How will you add value to the Members' Council and what skills and experience would you use to do this?

I have a number of suggestions and ideas that I think would work well within the Co-op Group. I work in healthcare provision and consistently work in a collaborative environment to achieve common goals. Part of that is recognising that what we do in the healthcare setting is a small fraction of what is required for people and communities to be thriving and healthy. My job involves complex communication to enable people to understand what exactly they are signing up for when they consent to surgery. I communicate with other specialities, some of whom have pre-fixed ideas of my intentions before I start, which can hinder that exchange.

I wonder if we could look at ways in which smaller entrepreneur members could work with the Co-op on a local basis, not just a large corporate basis. Allow individual stores autonomy within the framework of the wider corporate leadership. I wonder if we could offer initiatives to help people save for big events like Christmas, with rounding up/save the change to help spread costs.



# Carmen Appich

Co-op Group businesses traded with in last 12 months

Food and Insurance

## 1. What do you regard as the most important priority for Co-op in 2025?

In my opinion, the most important priority for the Co-op is to ensure the business overall remains viable, while adhering to our core principles. The plan to roll out 75 additional stores and franchises is a great initiative, as is ensuring that the founding co-operators' ideas of fair pricing for everyday goods are continued and expanded where possible. In that way, we will be able to retain and expand our member base. At the same time, our work in, and links with, the community should be strengthened. Despite my public engagement and knowledge of many people in my city, I have found it quite difficult to work with local Co-op shops as I have no idea who to approach. We could work much more closely with our local authority infrastructure and community organisations, and as a Council Member, I would seek to do just that.

## 2. How do you demonstrate a commitment to Co-op Values and Principles?

I demonstrate my commitment to Co-operative Values and Principles by actions and experience:

When I was a city councillor, I was bringing forward motions around co-operative policies including community wealth building, fair trade, fair tax and modern slavery, and asking follow-up questions about securing implementation. In my role as Chair of the local Co-operative Party branch, I try to stimulate debate and engagement of members and encourage them to participate actively in their local societies. I have also agreed to serve on the South East Regional Party Council as Interim Chair.

As Chair of my local Fairtrade Group, I ensure we maintain strong links with the council, and we set up a few events each year to keep our accreditation as a Fairtrade City going. Our link to local Co-op shops could be much improved – but we work with a few of the local shops and our local food co-operative here in Brighton and Hove.

I have also helped to set up a local care co-operative and secured seed money to develop this from the ground up, using my experience as a councillor and contacts made as an investor member in another care co-op.

As finance manager in my local credit union, I ensured that the organisation grew and remained financially viable by actively promoting it to local councils, grant funders and others, and by introducing more modern financial systems and processes.

## 3. How will you add value to the Members' Council and what skills and experience would you use to do this?

I can add value to the Members' Council by adding my substantial skills and

experience. I have worked across most areas of finance including audit and standards. I can write and speak well, learnt in my councillor role, and am happy to advocate for and present to local communities. I am active in my local community and could take on a liaison role to strengthen links between the Co-op Group and Party, societies and the voluntary/community sector and councils. Finally, I am a member of one of the local energy services co-ops and am keen to help with some link up work to put solar panels onto rooves of our buildings here in the South East.



# Dilys Barratt

Co-op Group businesses traded with in last 12 months

Food

## 1. What do you regard as the most important priority for Co-op in 2025?

Our biggest challenge is to look after our members during the cost of living crisis; to continue to find new ways of offering value to our member-owners while championing British producers and looking after farmers and suppliers.

## 2. How do you demonstrate a commitment to Co-op Values and Principles?

The Co-op's ethics, values and principles are what drew me to standing for the National Members' Council 6 years ago, and I'm pleased to say I've witnessed some really encouraging changes over those years that demonstrate those principles.

For example, as a Council, we were largely responsible for the introduction of the campaign: Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities. You may not be aware of the whole campaign - but you will be aware of all the 'noise' there's been in the media around shoplifting. And I'm proud that Council's initial concerns around keeping colleagues safe when they go into work has resulted in many new safety measures in store such as locked cabinets, body cams, easy reporting but also in promises from the police to attend more frequently and changes in Parliament to prosecute people who steal less than £200 worth of goods. So that's an example of real change in line with our principles that we've achieved.

Also, as part of holding the Board to account, we've encouraged them to go further along the road of animal welfare and have been pleased to see the introduction of more space for chickens.

I personally like to raise issues around areas like sustainability, the planet, being fair and equitable to others.

You may have noticed our advertisements featuring the tag line: Owned by You, Right by You. This is yet another result of our pushing the Board to promote the fact that the Co-op doesn't have shareholders. Instead, the Co-op is owned by all of us members. Anyone can become a member for one pound and vote at our AGM. Profits don't go back to wealthy shareholders, they stay within the community as we canvass our members on local causes they'd like to support and then donate to them every year. And our members play a part in our democracy.

## 3. How will you add value to the Members' Council and what skills and experience would you use to do this?

I attend member events locally and listen to members within my community. My background as a journalist and counsellor enables me - I hope - to be a good listener

and that's perhaps my main skill in this role. We encourage open and honest discussion in Council meetings which has served us well up to now. I encourage as many others as I can to join in and be part of our democracy.

But there's more work to be done. So please vote for me so that I can continue on with this work for another three years.



## Carl West

Co-op Group businesses traded with in last 12 months

Food

### 1. What do you regard as the most important priority for Co-op in 2025?

Deliver value for money to all Co-op Members, customers and suppliers. In an environment of a cost-of-living crisis, lower disposable income and general hardship, Co-op should inspire, deliver value, minimise waste and stay true to its values.

Sustainability, equality, diversity and support should be recognised and promoted. Convenience shopping should serve its community. Co-ops can be a community hub and therefore should show leadership in a better society.

### 2. How do you demonstrate a commitment to Co-op Values and Principles?

I have, from school, been involved in leadership and teams. From my earliest memories, I have stood up for people with no voice. Whilst I have always been competitive, I have also empowered people around me to do better than me. I have managed teams large and small, and every time my staff have left, they have gone onto bigger and better things. I do not ask people around me to do anything I would not do myself. I put myself forward to help, communicate honestly and explore better ways to solve a problem. During my time at a previous company, there were big changes in the business to be made and as a result, I put myself forward to sit on the works council so that I could help minimise the impact of change, give a voice to other employees and hold management accountable. I was later elevated to the steering committee. I have worked with people across many nationalities, languages, borders, genders, races and functions. Empowerment of others is what gets me out of bed. I have three mantras: Learn, Challenge and Be People Facing. Lastly, whenever a planned decision or change is made, I always ask "why".

### 3. How will you add value to the Members' Council and what skills and experience would you use to do this?

I am a highly motivated and dynamic team leader, and I love problem solving. I enjoy new challenges and routinely welcome the opportunity to gain new knowledge and experiences both at work and in my personal life. I lead by example, and I empower those around me. I have worked in retail, supply chain, public sector, market research and in associations.

I am a regular user of 3 local Co-op stores. I volunteered for 4 years at a local estate property management company. I run my own business and have learned what is a priority and what is not. I spent 3 years setting up and managing a customer success team, which is still running today.

As I said before, I am a father of five, and they all have Co-op cards now, so my involvement with Co-op would be to help them and all the people I can.





# Laura Manston

Co-op Group businesses traded with in last 12 months

Food

## 1. What do you regard as the most important priority for Co-op in 2025?

Co-op's most important priority for 2025 is growth. With 75 new stores planned for this year and a further 80 major refurbishments, Co-op is looking to bolster its convenience retail presence and maintain a comprehensive network that ensures accessibility for its members. Co-op is also planning to increase its quick commerce market to over 30% by focusing on both its own web platform and with its partners including Just Eat, Uber Eats and Deliveroo. Along with growth in terms of stores and of quick commerce, there is also a target for membership growth to 8 million members by 2030. In addition to positively impacting the bottom line, these growth targets will make Co-op more sustainable in our volatile world and resistant to political events, global conflict and the effects of climate change.

## 2. How do you demonstrate a commitment to Co-op Values and Principles?

I take pride in my collaborative and inclusive approach to work and always strive for openness and transparency in communications. I'm currently looking at setting up an Arts Co-op in my village to provide our creative community with a workspace and gallery. Inclusion of young people is especially important to me. I serve on the Children and Young People's Board at the Local Government Association, on the board of my local pre-school, and I volunteer in my local primary school. I am committed to supporting my community and do so on a daily basis in my role as a district councillor. I often run polls and surveys to gather insight into public opinion and I recently called for public consultation during my district council's budget-setting process.

## 3. How will you add value to the Members' Council and what skills and experience would you use to do this?

I am a creative and resourceful person and enjoy finding solutions to challenges. This is a skill I use at every opportunity, so I often leave Members' Council meetings with a long list of ideas to follow up. For example, I recently made suggestions including a Council Members' alumni group and an AGM Motion regarding store and product accessibility. Throughout my career in website development, and as a councillor, communication has always been key to my roles, and I am skilled at taking complex subject matter and making it accessible to a wide audience. This is one of the key skills I bring to Council so that I can make recommendations that will resonate with our members. The Co-op National Members' Council (NMC) is similar to a district council in many ways, so I use my experience on the district council in my approach to the NMC in terms of planning for meetings, constructing effective questions, and reaching consensus when there are differing opinions. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time on NMC so far and very much hope to have the opportunity to continue serving Co-op Members in this way. If you

would like to ask me any questions, please email me at [lauramanston@yahoo.com](mailto:lauramanston@yahoo.com) and I will get back to you promptly.



# THANKS FOR MAKING YOUR VOICE COUNT

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