



It's what we do

Council newsletter – January/February 2021



Hello from Nick

I'd like to extend a warm welcome back to everyone. Whilst 2020 was an unexpected and challenging year, I was heartened by how we connected to one another, in true co-operative fashion, despite the most difficult of circumstances. I'm really looking forward to us moving further forward within the year ahead. As our Members' Council can't currently get together in Manchester, we've been continuing to stay connected to our Co-op and our members by way of virtual get-togethers.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our members for your support during the past year. We wouldn't be able to achieve amazing things without your input and loyalty to our Co-op. I wish you all the best for the year ahead.

This newsletter provides an overview of the highlights and key topics we covered in recent Council sessions. 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.

4 Year Plan Update

On the 25 January, Steve Murrells and Shirine Khoury-Haq joined us to share how our Vision and plan would support us to co-operate for a fairer world over the coming years.

We discussed the economic, social and environmental challenges of the past year and were also joined by colleagues from across the Co-op for workshops where Council members shared our views on the key risks and opportunities for our Co-op, colleagues and communities.

January Council Meeting

On 30 January, we had our first Council business session of the new year. It was an extremely insightful catch-up featuring further sessions on our four-year plan and ideas for 2021 AGM motions from the National Members' Council. There were a number of questions shaped for raising with directors and lots of discussion around the key themes and priorities that members identified through Join In. These views from members have gone onto shape Council motions on the topics of sustainable production and consumption, inequality and food poverty. It was a great example of democracy in action and I would like to thank everyone who got involved.

Member Pioneer Engagement

At our January Council meeting, we received a Member Pioneer engagement update from Member Pioneer Manager Sue Green and Member Pioneer Coordinator Geraldine Strohm.

Sue and Geraldine discussed how they had been working hard to recruit and develop Member Pioneers, with a particular focus on helping communities with food access and education, and how they've been collaborating with Council Members to improve how Member Pioneers connect with local representatives and Co-op Members.

Member Pioneers are proving to be real catalysts for change in our communities. Throughout the pandemic they've been extremely busy:

- Establishing local forums with colleagues, causes, Council Members, businesses, members and customers.
- Hosting digital meetings or providing updates via newsletters.
- Starting to deliver Join In Live Local events where they'll be bringing members together, capturing comments, evaluating, and implementing actions locally.

Championing co-operation

Our Council Vice-President, Lesley Reznicek, also provided an update on Co-operative Member Education, Training & Information (CMET&I). Lesley has been working with our Member Voice Committee to establish priorities and easy ways for Co-op Members to learn about what it means to be a co-op, our difference and our values and principles.

There are several key strands for activity which have since been identified and mapped into an annual communications plan for Council and members. In December 2020, we began our test and learn through Join In - asking members to take part in a quick quiz with Co-operative Heritage Trust on our work in communities since 1844. 10,000 members joined in and an amazing 70% of them felt that their knowledge

about Co-op and what we do had shifted from 'very little' to 'quite a lot'. Keep an eye on [Join In](#) for further opportunities in this area.

February Directors' Forum: holding our Board to account

On 22 February, our Members' Council held its 9th virtual session since March 2020 and caught up with Margaret Casely-Hayford, Allan Leighton, Sarah McCarthy-Fry and Steve Murrells from our Board to ask questions around our Co-op Compass lenses, which help us to review the performance of Co-op's businesses.

Here's a look at the themes and topics we covered from the questions that were asked;

Member Voice lens: support for Member Pioneers and plans over the next few years; levels of democratic participation and how we can increase voting in our AGM and Elections.

Member Value lens: key targets for our new membership proposition; Co-op Insurance and the sale of the underwriting business; how we optimise operations and plans for online and digital solutions to meet members' and customers' needs.

Co-op Leadership lens: colleague wellbeing and reward; how our Co-op is responding to Brexit; education and development for our colleagues and members; and free school meal vouchers.

Ethical & Sustainable Leadership lens: how we promote our Co-op difference; marketing our sustainability commitments; how we apply ethical standards in wholesale; and engaging with partners who share our values.

If you'd like to get in touch with your local Council Members with ideas, thoughts or questions on how our Co-op does business, please email us any time using our [constituency email addresses](#).

Nick Crofts
President of the Members' Council



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