

You said, we did

Update on our 2021
AGM motions



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Member

Update on our 2021 AGM motions

Here's an update on the motions you voted for last year. More details on these motions and other initiatives are on our website: www.co-operative.coop

Motion 5 – Board Motion – Supporting a Modern and Inclusive Co-operative Movement

Over the past year, we have seen the power of co-operation in action. People have come together in support of their community and of one another. And our Co-op – and co-operatives – have never felt more relevant and needed. Our Co-op should work with, and support, others so our shared co-operative movement is inclusive, welcoming and modern – supporting existing co-operatives as well as bringing others from all communities and backgrounds towards us and providing services they value. The co-operative movement must build on the strong foundations of the past while adapting and changing to continue to be relevant for the future. Our Co-op should play its part, along with others, in providing resources to seize the opportunity we have today. The Co-op should work with others in the movement, including those represented by Co-operatives UK and the International Co-operative Alliance, to fulfil these ambitions and to help achieve our vision of *Co-operating for a Fairer World*.

UPDATE:

Our Co-op continues to provide substantial financial backing for the wider co-operative movement, which in 2021 totalled over £1.6m. This funding underpins the movement's infrastructure bodies such as Co-operatives UK, enabling them to promote and advance the interests of the sector with even greater vigour. The Board has been pleased to support Rose Marley, who took up her role as CEO of Co-operatives UK at the beginning of last year, as she works with her Board, members and colleagues to further reinvigorate our Movement, to make it truly inclusive reaching new audiences in the process and developing new capabilities fit for a digital and modern age.

Rose and her team have been engaging closely with peers from the Co-operative College, Co-operative Press and Co-operative Heritage Trust to foster a "new era" of co-operation between these bodies, further exploring ways they might work together, exploit synergies and develop joint propositions in the interests of us all. We have supported this work by providing access to expertise to help shape thinking from within our organisation and also our wider supplier base, and we look forward to further innovation and collaboration in the year ahead.

Along with others from across the Movement, the Co-op played an active role in Co-operative Fortnight 2021, promoting the theme #JoinACoop in our stores, through our social media channels and by our Member Pioneers. Throughout the year, our Member Pioneers have sought to develop co-operative relationships at a local community level, aided considerably by the growing number of co-ops and community interest companies supported via our Local Community Fund – indeed, in 2021, almost £848k was paid to 293 such groups through our Local Community Fund.

Our community missions draw heavily on the wider movement for inspiration. For example, our Access to Food mission is seeking to go beyond the growing dependency culture which has seen Food Banks become the mainstay of many communities – rather, with our partners, Hubbub, we are developing a Community Fridge Network of 500 community fridges which draw on a culture of self help and self responsibility rather than charity to address the scourge of food poverty. We are also exploring other ways the issue might be tackled, supporting the work of the Plunkett Foundation in developing community food co-ops, as well as trailing small scale food

purchasing co-ops, such as an initiative in Preston in partnership with Co-operatives UK and the local authority based on the Co-operation Town model launched successfully in North London.

Part of the Board's ambition is to help develop new forms of co-operation and support emerging sectors. One example of this is in digital technology where we met the cost of the move by a number of Greater Manchester-based co-ops and social enterprises to Co-operative UK's Head Office, Holyoake House, from their previous home which was closing. These tech enterprises are supported on an on-going basis through the Co-op Foundation's Luminare programme, which earlier this year announced that a £50k grant had been made to support eight of the organisations in the next phase of their development.

Sometimes our efforts to reach new audiences requires us to return to our roots. We were pleased to work alongside the Rochdale Council, Co-operative College, Co-operative Heritage Trust and one of the country's most innovative housing co-ops, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, to develop the Culture Co-op project, securing a £1m Arts Council grant to promote a co-operative renaissance in the area, using art and culture as the driving force across a hugely ethnically diverse community.

Rochdale, of course, is the birthplace of the modern co-operative movement and, as one of three founder members, the Co-op continues to support the work on the Co-op Heritage Trust, in cash and in-kind. Additionally, CHT have commenced a research project, delving into recently donated archive material to track the origins of our vision, Co-operating for a Fairer World. 2021 also marked the 250th Anniversary of the birth of Robert Owen – a founding inspiration of our Movement – and we have continued in our support for the Robert Owen Museum in Newtown in Mid-Wales, where Owen was born, and the New Lanark World Heritage Site in Scotland – an industrial village built by Owen which offered decent homes, fair wages and a free education system for workers and their families.

Moving further afield, we have joined forces with others from our Movement in response to the impact of the pandemic overseas. In particular, the awful effect of the Delta variant in India galvanised a Movement-wide response, co-ordinated by Co-operatives UK, which saw £102k raised in support of SEWA, a women's co-operative which provides immediate relief for those in need as well as longer term co-operative development. This effort was co-ordinated by the newly formed movement-wide International Working Group, funding for which has now been secured by unlocking resources provided by the Co-op and others for international work which has laid dormant for many years. All this is underpinned by the Co-op's support for the International Co-operative

Alliance, where we contribute £68k, 71% of the UK's subscription which is routed via Co-operatives UK.

We continue to provide core funding to the Woodcraft Folk, who promote the values of co-operation and sustainability to young people aged 5-21 years throughout the UK. Many local groups apply for support via our Local Community Fund and we were pleased to provide over £22k to ten groups in 2021 – indeed, since the start of the scheme, over 60 groups have shared more than £225k with the support of our members. The Woodcraft Folk has also been working with our Co-op Academies in West Yorkshire, in partnership with our salad supplier, Keelings. The Green Influencers Scheme promotes environmental social action and involved pupils leading local campaigns including greening school playgrounds, lobbying the local council on climate change commitments and tackling traffic congestion near to school premises.

Also in Bradford, Co-op Academy Southfield – a secondary school for children with moderate and profound special needs – has established a partnership with the Co-operative College, through their AdVenture initiative. The project involves the young people learning about co-op values and principles and establishing their own co-operative, in readiness for work placements in the business.

Diversity and inclusion was also a cornerstone of our relationship with Social Enterprise UK, where we supported the Award for Building Diversity, Inclusion and Equity, which this year was received by Commons Law, a specialist law firm organised as a social enterprise providing high quality legal services for vulnerable people. Alongside this, the Co-op supported SEUK's "26 for COP 26" campaign which showcased the impact that co-ops and social enterprises are having on the climate change agenda. We also supported their Social Enterprise Futures activities, where Steve Murrells gave a keynote presentation as part of a month of digital activities promoting the sector.

In summary, the wider co-operative movement provides inspiration for our vision of Co-operating for a Fairer World and we are grateful for the many ways we work in partnership locally, nationally and internationally with those from across the Movement.

Motion 6 – Members’ Council – Sustainable Production and Consumption

The need to take urgent action to avoid the devastating impact of climate change remains a top priority for Co-op Members. What we do now will be judged by future generations and we must all make changes to build a sustainable future and fulfil our Co-op’s pioneering ambition of *Co-operating for a Fairer World*.

Food consumption and production are amongst the biggest drivers of climate change contributing around 25% to global Green House Gas emissions, and the leading cause of the decline of nature. As a substantial consumer co-operative with extensive global supply chains, our Co-op and Co-op Members must lead the way in making change.

This AGM welcomes the many climate change actions our Co-op has taken to date including our Future of Food 2030 strategy, the introduction of rigorous science-based targets to reduce direct and indirect Green House Gas emissions and the launch of our fantastic ‘Gro’ plant-based product range.

This AGM calls on our Co-op to:

- Educate, encourage and enable members and customers to choose healthy and affordable, sustainable diets and make collective co-operative impact through their individual consumption, in line with the UN Sustainable Development goal for Responsible Consumption and Production.
- Minimise the carbon impact of Co-op products by reducing meat, dairy and other carbon intensive ingredients and set out a clear strategy and targets to achieve this.
- Recognising that different production methods for meat, dairy and other foods have different climate and environmental footprints, support our suppliers to employ more sustainable methods of production.
- Provide clearer information to members and customers on the carbon impact of products to help them make informed choices by investing in trialling a climate-footprint label for Co-op products, developing digital ways of supporting consumer behaviour changes and providing rewards and offers for sustainable choices through our membership proposition and app.
- Explore visible solutions that demonstrate our commitments, such as: green distribution and delivery methods, electric vehicle charging points and bicycle racks in store car parks, and trialling zero waste packaging solutions and direct refillable self-dispensing methods that support a more circular economy.
- Promote sustainable energy consumption through Co-op Power to our partners, community causes and other businesses and co-operative organisations.
- And, become a leading voice on tackling climate change by campaigning and engaging government, leaders, the wider co-operative movement, other organisations and members to act collectively and co-operatively to make the systemic changes needed to build a sustainable future.

UPDATE:

Taking action for a fairer planet is core to our Co-op’s vision of co-operating for a fairer world, and we’ve long recognised the scale of the climate crisis that we’re facing. Central to our plans to tackle the climate crisis is the recognition that we will not achieve our targets without co-operating with others – our suppliers, our members and customers.

We proudly unveiled our ambitious [Ten-point Climate Plan](#) in May 2021. This plan acts as our blueprint for becoming a Net Zero business by 2040 – ten years ahead of the Government’s own ambition. As a part of that journey, we announced that we will be the first

supermarket to sell fully carbon neutral own-brand food and drink by 2025, and that our operations (stores, offices, funeral homes, logistics) have been carbon neutral since April 2021.

We are looking at opportunities to reduce the carbon impact of our products, including from meat, dairy and soy, and ways to provide customers and members with information to help them make lower carbon choices. We are also using our voice to champion climate resilience for our Fairtrade farmers and lobby government for change.

- In 2021 Co-op joined [WWF's Retailers' Commitment for Nature](#), committing to play our part in supporting [WWF's ambition](#) to halve the environmental impact of UK shopping baskets by 2030.

Our plant-based brand GRO has grown significantly, and at the end of 2021 the range comprised 49 products, including two new plant-based milks, with a further nine new lines added in January 2022. This year GRO won the Own-Label Range of the Year in the Grocer Gold Awards and the Q Awards. In May 2021, we permanently [reduced the price](#) of our GRO range to match the price of our meat and dairy-based counterparts, making plant-based choices more affordable.

As part of our Future of Food commitments, we continue to work with partners to inspire healthy, sustainable behaviour change in communities. In 2021, we ran a campaign to highlight healthier choices by calling out the nutritional benefits of products, and supported the [Veg Power campaign](#) and the [Peas Please](#) campaign.

- In 2021 we supported suppliers to achieve our target of 100% recyclable food packaging, by actions such as removing all black and dark coloured plastics, using single material trays that are more compatible with recycling facilities, and replacing polystyrene with materials that are collected at kerbside. We encourage suppliers to use recycled content in our packaging and in 2021 the average recycled content in our plastic

packaging was 33%. We continue to work towards our plastic reduction target of 15% by the end of 2022.

We also trialled refillable packaging for branded home and personal care products in two stores – one store allowed customers to refill in store, and another allowed customers to bring empty packaging back to store to be returned for refill by the supplier.

- We continued to campaign and engage others in the fight to tackle climate change. The 26th UN Climate Change conference, COP26, brought global leaders together in Glasgow to address the climate crisis. To start a conversation about how citizens can impact climate change at a community level, six flagship Co-op stores were rebranded as Co-op26, with all Co-op food stores and funeral care homes having the same in-store messaging. The campaign in partnership with [‘Count us In’](#) aimed to encourage one billion citizens to take practical steps in their own lives to reduce carbon pollution. Co-op also supported the Great Big Green Week, with over 500 citizens signing the declaration for a cleaner, greener world, addressed directly to the Prime Minister ahead of COP-26.

Motion 7 – Members’ Council – Inequality and Food Poverty

This AGM recognises the response of our Co-op to the COVID-19 pandemic and the outstanding work of our colleagues, members and Member Pioneers to support communities.

This has demonstrated the power of co-operation with over £500,000 raised by members through Co-op Members Coronavirus Fund, the launch of the Community Partnerships Fund, £1.5m worth of food donated to FareShare, free school meal vouchers provided for Co-op Academy students who need them and our support for Marcus Rashford’s End Child Food Poverty campaign and much more.

The pandemic has brought into stark focus the inequalities and injustices across our society with the impact of the pandemic, recession and food poverty being felt most by young people and BAME communities.

176 years ago, our Co-op was founded to address the social inequalities and injustices of the time and provide fair access to food and opportunity for all, establishing our internationally recognised Co-operative Values and Principles.

Continued overleaf

This AGM calls on our Co-op to build on the work of the last year and our founding values and principles to:

- Empower people through education and employment opportunities, ensuring fair availability and access to food for all and solutions which enable food equity, self-help and self-responsibility and demonstrate the value of collective co-operative solutions.
- Campaign and advocate for change, to tackle the inequality we see today and challenge Government to address these issues and their root causes to enable social mobility and equal opportunity throughout our society.

UPDATE:

The Members' Council approved in May a campaign by the Co-op on Tackling Inequality, Supporting Aspiration and Driving Social Mobility. In 2021, the campaign has focused our activity on work to support opportunities for young people, driving forward the apprenticeships agenda and addressing issues of access to food.

There has been an increased need for emergency food support throughout the pandemic, which has continued during 2021. Between August 2021 and January 2022, 5.7m adults and 2.5m children faced food insecurity. As the pandemic began we acted fast, with our Food Share programme growing by 60% from 2020 to 2021 and donating 5,774 tonnes of edible food. We also supported FareShare to distribute c.5 million meals through depot distribution, ambient stock donation via a Defra grant, fundraising and donations. We also pledged £1m in support of Music Feeds, an online concert providing 2.5m meals. Our action on this issue led to the Co-op being awarded a Grocer Gold Business Initiative of the Year award in October 2021.

The surge of response to need was required but it is not a long-term solution which is why we launched our Access to Food mission. Our mission is focused on supporting initiatives to help people move up the food ladder and access food in a more sustainable way. Schemes such as community cafés, community fridges and allotments already focus on removing the dependency on food banks and putting power back into the hands of communities.

The Local Community Fund has supported locally led sustainable food projects, with 13% of this year's projects identified as having Access to Food at the heart of their work. In 2021 we partnered with Hubbub to double the size of the UK's Hubbub Community Fridge network (to 200). The fridges offer far more than just food- they bring people together to build skills, improve mental wellbeing and increase their resilience. By 2023 Co-op members will have helped to grow the network to 500 community fridges. The project sat front and centre in the 2021 Christmas advertising campaign, reaching 18 million people to raise awareness.

In 2021, we launched our ground-breaking Apprenticeship Levy Match scheme through which smaller employers could pledge their unspent levy funds to a fund from which SME business could draw

down funding to create new apprenticeships starts in under-represented communities. We have already seen 34 Employers pledge £10m to the fund which in turn will support the creation of around 1,000 new apprenticeships.

Alongside this, we have continued to promote the Apprenticeship programme supporting the All Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships, hosting the Apprenticeships Minister at Angel Square and, all the while, advocating for reform of the Apprenticeship Levy to enable businesses to take on even more apprentices.

In all of this, we have put forward our own apprentices as the spokespeople for how effective and powerful apprenticeships can be in driving social mobility and in a way that allows individuals to stay in the communities they live in rather than having to leave to prosper. In an age of levelling-up, the Co-op is championing social mobility which in turn, supports individuals, businesses and communities so that those communities are enriched not hollowed out by an exodus of individuals forced to get out to get on.

Our Ghosted Generation research published in September 2021 raised the issues facing young people as a result of the COVID19 pandemic. We listened to the voices of 5,000 young people aged 10-25 and brought the findings together in a short report. It highlighted the impact of Covid on the lives of young people across the UK and identified the 'Hope Deficit' in young people, from diverse backgrounds, with 60% of young people feeling their generation will be permanently disadvantaged by the pandemic.

Alongside this, our partnership with the Youth Endowment Fund and the #iwill Fund has created the £5.2m Peer Action Collective which aims to give young people the chance to make their communities safer and fairer places to live. Together, we are building a ground-breaking network of peer researchers, who'll find out about young people's experiences. We will then support them to take what they learn and turn it into action. From campaigning to improve local mental health services, setting up a youth centre or supporting young people into employment - we are creating opportunities for young people to make their community a safer, fairer place.

Motion 8 – ISMs – Co-operative Sustainable Solutions

This Meeting believes that co-operatives and co-operation should lie at the heart of solutions to improve the sustainability of our planet. We are rightly proud of the leadership position The Co-operative Group has taken in this field as we look to achieve lasting change for the benefit of our members, colleagues and customers, and for the communities we support here in the UK and across the world.

To build on this momentum we should harness the wealth of knowledge, passion and talent on sustainability issues that exists across the co-operative movement. Therefore, we call on the Board to work in partnership with our independent society members and the wider movement to create sustainable solutions that deliver change in a way that is demonstrably co-operative and collaborative.

UPDATE:

As we said in our response to this motion last year, in Spring 2021, we announced our industry leading sustainability commitments. These did include a commitment to work in partnership with all parties including government, suppliers and even competitors to reduce the carbon associated with the manufacture and sale of food.

Since this motion was passed, we have had active discussions with our largest Independent Society Members and shared our plans and ideas on where we could work together to drive this critical agenda forward. These have included engaging in society forums on the opportunities around the Soft Plastics

scheme; collaborating with societies to enable them to order recycling bins, launching in over 500 society sites. We have also worked with societies on logistical challenges and shared our insight on performance and further opportunities.

Our plans in this area are very ambitious and not all of them will be relevant to Independent Societies. Indeed, we have given Societies the opportunity sign up to our Climate Change Plan, however, they have all declined. It is of course up to each Independent Society to progress their own plans in this area and take an independent decision on areas on which they wish to collaborate.

Motion 9 – ISMs – Funding for Co-op Press and Co-op College

At last year's AGM almost 98% of votes were cast in support of our Motion calling on The Co-operative Group to support the wider co-operative movement. Six weeks later we were surprised and disappointed when the Co-op Group announced changes to the funding of the Co-op College and Co-op Press which disregarded the will of their members by reducing that support.

Whilst welcoming the subsequent confirmation of 2021 funding for the Co-op Press, this AGM calls upon the Co-op Group to restore the funding to these organisations and truly play its part in maintaining our co-operative heritage, promoting Co-operative education and supporting a strong, independent and co-operative press, in line with Co-operative Values and Principles. As the largest society this is very important, as is respect for the democratic process.

UPDATE:

The response provided to this motion in 2021, outlined the substantial support provided by the Co-op which helps sustain the wider movement's institutions – over £1.6m in 2021.

As the motion states, in 2021 the Co-op maintained its support for Co-op Press and also played a supportive role in encouraging further collaboration between the Movement's infrastructure bodies, not least in the field

of communications. It has been pleasing to see the steps taken by Co-op News to improve their digital output, diversify their income streams and explore new ways of working with co-operative partners. The Board is keen to encourage further innovation of this nature, with a Movement-wide news and communications service fit for a modern digital age and has a broad appeal to both those already involved in co-operatives and helping to bring others to the movement to enhance diversity and representations from communities across the UK and beyond.

In respect of the Co-op College, the Co-op is a subscribing member and remains keen to develop and deliver co-op education programmes in partnership with the College. As well as the example of joint working previously cited with our Co-op Academies, it is good to see the College working with Co-operatives UK and our Members' Council on the CMETI initiative, designed to promote member education, training and information to a wider audience. The College has also been working on a similar programme targeted at colleagues from our Co-op Academies and it remains our intention to extend similar learning opportunities to our Member Pioneers.

The Board also welcomes the launch of a more sustainable operating model for the College, developed by the trustees and new management team. We hope that this will now stem the unsustainable losses which have blighted the development of co-operative education in recent times.

Co-operative Group Limited

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