



It's what we do

# Council newsletter - July 2020



## Hello from Nick

As our Members' Council can't get together in Manchester yet, we've been busy exploring new ways to stay connected to our Co-op and our members. I'll be updating you soon on the latest from our Communities team but this issue is all about what's been happening around our Food business. We also caught up with some of our directors for a Q&A full of discussion on all things Co-op, so I'll be sharing the highlights from that with you too.

Summer for our Members' Council is also known as elections season. Following on from our Council Elections, we hold Senate and Vice President Elections, Co-option Elections and Committee Elections.

Congratulations to Jenny de Villiers, who is our new Vice President for Business Strategy, Performance & Development. On Senate, we welcomed back Louise Walker, Tanya Noon, John Boyle, Tricia Davies, Nick Matthews and Bev Perkins. They'll be joining Lesley Reznicek (Vice President for Co-operative Performance, Democratic Processes & Member Voice), Ruth Barrow, John Dalley, Danny Douglas, Sue Smith, David Stanbury and Debbie Williams to form our Senate team for 2020/21 - I look forward to working with you all.

From September, we'll also have our new co-optees representing members on Council. A big 'hello' to Mohamed Hameda, Lois Hill, Kennedy Sihanya and Onkardeep Singh Bhatia; it's great to have you with us and I'll see you on a video call soon. The results of our Committee Elections will be announced in August so I'll share those with you in our next newsletter.

This update 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](mailto:council@coop.co.uk)

## A Food business to be proud of: 2020 so far...

Ahead of a Q&A on Teams with Food colleagues on 30 June, we received video updates from senior leaders on our 2019 achievements and heard the latest on how we've been supporting our communities through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chief Executive of Food, Jo Whitfield, kicked things off by giving us the highlights from the last 12 months. In 2019, we reached £7.5bn in sales and achieved six years of like-for-like growth. Investing in our communities and our future, we opened and refitted stores around the UK and cut the ribbon

on our new Wellingborough Depot. Without our amazing colleagues, we wouldn't have a thriving Co-op to be proud of, so we've also been busy keeping the pressure up on our **'Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities'** campaign and improving colleague pay and wellbeing.

With a brilliant 2019 setting the scene for 2020, we got off to a great start with the launch of our exclusive plant-based range, GRO, which has been a budding success. From there, we had to very quickly adapt to a new way of working. Jo shared that she's been blown away by everyone's efforts and hard work over the last few months; from the frontline to our head office, colleagues have been going above and beyond to help those who needed us most. Through lobbying the

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government for key worker status, helping FareShare secure and distribute food, launching a coronavirus member reward fund and making sure school children have meals over the summer, we've demonstrated our difference and brought campaign, community and vision together to meet the needs of our communities.

Next up, we heard from Chris Whitfield, Chief Operating Officer of Food. To make sure our stores could feed the nation safely, we put lots of provisions in place and accelerated plans for our online offering. By installing PPE, reducing trading hours, trialling automated systems and sharing clear messages in stores, we've been able to support colleagues to look after themselves and our customers. To meet demand and help people through the crisis, we recruited 5,000 temporary colleagues who had been let go from jobs in the hospitality sector and delivered online orders to thousands of customers. Chris proudly shared that our store teams' hard work has resulted in them receiving their highest-ever customer satisfaction ratings.

At Co-op, we care about the world we share. Chief Commercial Officer, Michael Fletcher, joined the update via a pre-recorded video to tell us that his team are looking to empower colleagues and Member Pioneers to continue being local heroes as we embrace a new normal. We've already put a lot of work into tackling food poverty with FareShare and our own FoodShare programme but, going forward, we want to address the root causes of it as well. Sustainability is a big priority for us too and we're nearly there with achieving 100% recyclable own-brand packaging. We've also pledged to achieve zero waste in stores by 2022.

Working with others is what co-operation is all about and if there's one positive to the current crisis, it's that it's shown that there's real power in making great things happen together. Matt Hood, Trading Director, shared that it's because of our meaningful partnerships with suppliers that we've been able to get through the crisis successfully, recently being voted 2nd best retailer to work with. Convenience shopping has really taken off in the last few months and we're ahead of the market across the board. Ken Towle, Chief Executive of Nisa, also joined us to talk about the important role Nisa's played in Co-op's growth, making quality and value a strong local offering and allowing us to reach more people with our products.

While I wish the circumstances were better, having the opportunity to do even more to meet the needs of our communities and demonstrate what's so unique about our Co-op difference over the last few months has been amazing. I look forward to being part of keeping the momentum going.

Take care,

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



## July Directors' Forum: holding our Board to account

On 16 July, our Members' Council caught up with Allan Leighton, Steve Murrells, Hazel Blears and Sarah McCarthy-Fry 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...

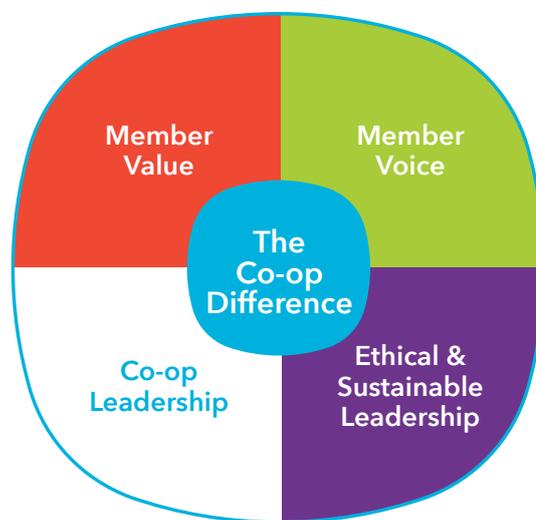
**Member Voice lens:** responsible advertising, responding to AGM motions from members, developing modules on our Co-op difference for new colleagues.

**Member Value lens:** auditors' qualification in Co-op's 2019 annual report, risk of investment for funeral plans, impact of Covid-19, Funeralcare strategy.

**Co-op Leadership lens:** ASDA equal pay case, Co-op Insurance deal with Markerstudy, LGBTQ+ inclusion as an employer, ethics of our Deliveroo partnership, risks to our reputation from the Post Office scandal.

**Ethical & Sustainable Leadership lens:** provenance on packaging of own-brand products and sustainability bond spending.

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](#).



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