

Motion from Members' Council - Member Participation

As a member-owned co-op, participation is core to delivering our vision of 'Cooperating for a Fairer World'. Membership differentiates us from other businesses, supports our work in communities and drives advocacy and impact through our campaigns. We believe growing member participation is core to our success and more should be done to make it as visible, accessible and rewarding as possible.

We therefore believe our Co-op should:

- Conduct research into barriers for members participating in our Co-op to understand how to increase participation, particularly amongst under-represented groups.
- Develop a four-year plan to increase participation in our AGM and Elections to be the leading co-operative as benchmarked against other retail societies and membership organisations.
- Introduce annual targets to increase the number of times members participate in our Co-op and the number of unique members who do participate. • Increase the prominence and positioning of membership and participation within our communications, the Co-op app, stores and community activity.
- Develop our programme of Co-operative Member Education and Training to attract and enable a wider audience to participate more fully in membership.
- Report to members on progress against ambitions and targets annually through our Co-operate Report.

Supporting Information

Providing members with authentic, relevant, interesting and diverse ways to participate in the Co-op they own is essential in delivering our vision of Co-operating for a Fairer World. Our purpose is rooted in the fact that we're owned by our members and encouraging members to play an active role in their Co-op helps us achieve our cooperative ambitions.

We know not all members want to participate in the same way. We work hard to ensure the opportunities for participation appeal across a range of areas, ensuring we are inclusive of all of our membership and the ways in which they wish to engage with us. We know there is always more to do and we listen to our members and learn from them to adapt and develop our plans and approach. 2021 was a record-breaking year for participation with members engaging over 1.7million times in a breadth of activity from choosing their local community causes, joining in on our campaigns and community initiatives, learning more about our unique values and helping to design some delicious co-created new products.

Voting and elections is a key part of our member participation activity. While we know not all members wish to engage in this way, we take active steps to encourage them to do so.

With Members' Council support over a number of years, we have established a unique capacity to engage with members in their communities. The creation of 1,000 Member Pioneer roles and a further 100 Member Pioneer Co-ordinator roles has enabled us

to greatly improve opportunities for members to participate within their local communities. In 2021, for example, Pioneers hosted over 300 'Join In Live Local' activities; providing opportunities for members and the wider community to get involved in our activities, such as our campaign to recycle soft plastics in stores. Our Member Pioneers engage with c35,000 people per month. They will continue to spearhead local engagement with members this year, with a focus on promoting participation in our Co-op AGM in many communities; building local networks; taking part in Local Forums that bring together members, colleagues and the community; and acting as a key link to our Members' Council members locally.

In recent years, the Board has responded positively to Council suggestions on initiatives to increase participation in our AGM and voting. Our AGM and elections are promoted as part of our member participation offer across a wider range of Co-op channels, including through our Co-op app, on social media and in store through our Member Pioneer network and community network. We've also explored ways to incentivise voting including charity donations and Co-op Festival prize draws to encourage voting amongst younger members. Our experience is that a "tell" approach does not significantly increase participation and ensuring we have a way to engage and increase engagement with members over time is an important part of the journey of participation. We continue to evolve the AGM to be a more interactive event across face to face and virtual channels and have used data and feedback from members from under-represented groups to promote the opportunity to stand for election in diverse communities which has seen an increase in ethnic group and female candidates standing for election.