



It's what we do

September Council Newsletter

Hello from Nick



The National Members' Council was back together in Manchester on 21 September for a day of discussion and collaboration. Joining us for their first meeting as Co-optees were Elly Robinson and Carolyn Boyce and we saw the return of Sofy Crew, Zach Evans and Dion Owen too - congratulations and all the best to everyone for their time on Council.

Along with warm welcomes, we also took the time to say our heartfelt goodbyes in a moment of remembrance for a colleague who sadly passed away recently, Gerard Hill. It's so tragic that he was taken from us at such a young age. He was one of our brightest stars and spent many successful years in membership roles around Co-op and became a friend and confidante to many; he will be incredibly missed.

This update provides an overview of the highlights and key topics we covered over the weekend. 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.



Interim results with Shirine Khoury-Haq and Jon Wormald

This time, we welcomed our new Chief Finance Officer, Shirine, to her very first Council meeting to talk us through [2019's interim results](#) and business performance.

Alongside Shirine, we also welcomed our Director of Financial Control, Jon.

Starting with a walkthrough of her impressive career up to now, Shirine shared that wherever she's worked in big cities, she's always used her resources to support children and parents in struggling communities.

Therefore, when the Co-op job came up, she recognised it as an organisation with soul and it felt like a great fit for her.

From here, Shirine went straight into the big headlines from the results. While we had a dip in profits, this was largely caused by the changes in our Funeralcare business and was expected as part of our transformation for the future to tackle a tough market. This year, a significant change to financial reporting regulations was introduced around leases, which results in a reduction of net assets on our balance sheet; despite this, Shirine reassured us that everything is in line with our plans and has had no impact on cash flow or running the business.

In Food, we've now seen 22 quarters of consecutive like-for-like sales growth, which is very rare in this sector. As part of our franchise partnerships, our university stores are proving to be a great way to connect with younger customers and are offering insight we've never had before - all of which will hopefully be boosted by our new, [exclusive NUS \(National Union of Students\) deal](#) and continuing festival pop-up store success.

Shirine updated on our Insurance business too, letting us know that our underwriting sale is under way and that our exciting and innovative products are performing well.

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As part of our interim results being announced, Shirine said journalists had been extra interested in our Brexit plans and emphasised that we're doing all we can to minimise customer impact and have built a strong base of British suppliers to put us in a good position for the future.

Helping us to develop stronger communities, we've opened five new Co-op Academies and our first sixth form college, designed new structures for Member Pioneers to better connect people, and have been campaigning to protect 2000 spaces around the UK. Shirine shared that making sure our commercial success continues so we can do more good things like this is a priority for her going forward.

Overall, Shirine said that she's really keen to learn more with us and contribute to Co-op's success. I wish her all the best in her new role and can't wait to catch up with her again soon.

Directors' Forum

It's always great to open up the floor at Council meetings for questions to some of our directors. This time, some of our Committee Council Members fed in questions from Co-op Members as part of a recent Join in opportunity, which was a great way to get them involved at the heart of our business.

Representing our senior leaders, we were joined by Hazel Blears, Sir Christopher Kelly, Rahul Powar and Stevie Spring.

Questions asked were on the topics of: Co-op Academies, our 5+1 membership offer, protecting colleagues and jobs, store disposals, festival partnerships, and vaping advertising.



Friday Night Live: Council Three Year Plan

Every Friday night before a Council meeting, we run Friday Night Live. This time, we used it as an opportunity to run a workshop for Council Members, involving them in planning the Members' Council's focus and priorities for the next three years. It was a really useful way to work collaboratively and get everyone thinking about what we'd like to achieve for Co-op and our members going forward. I can't wait to see how we go from strength-to-strength together in future.

Council workshop sessions

Doing things a bit differently this meeting, we carved out some time in our usual agenda for discussion and debate on important topics. Collaborating with colleagues from around Co-op, our first session was all about 'what's next?' - how can Co-op make a real difference and have a big impact? This was a great opportunity for Council Members to be a part of shaping the business's vision for the future and making sure we leave a legacy to be proud of. At our November meeting, we'll then be joined by Co-op Chief Executive, Steve Murrells, and Co-op Board Chair, Allan Leighton, who will update us on how thoughts have developed into plans.

Next up, we got together in groups to discuss how we can encourage greater participation in our democracy, especially around voting at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and in our elections. In particular, we explored the ideas of more digital engagement and exposure, Council Members being advocates within their networks, exciting motion themes, improved colleague voting, and incentives.

We also spent some time talking over how we can improve opportunities for standing for election to the Members' Council, as it's important that we are as diverse as possible and have a good mix of people working together to make a difference for our Co-op and our members.



Nick Crofts
President of the Members' Council



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