



It's what we do

Council newsletter – November/December 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. In November, we virtually 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 topics we addressed with you in this newsletter.

In December, Council Members got together on Zoom to discuss important Council business. Bringing 2020 to a close, we also received an update on our Co-op's campaigning work and the steps we're taking to become anti-racist in all that we do. A big Council welcome to Emma Howard as well, who joined us at the end of the year as an Independent Society Member from East of England Co-op.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our members for all your support in 2020, 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

Championing co-operation

In the August/September newsletter, I shared that Council was progressing a monitoring policy with the Board following our Co-op's announcement that it was reviewing its funding for core co-operative organisations and looking to establish new ways for the movement to collaborate and thrive. To discuss what this policy could look like, Council held a session on 5 December so we could break into groups and share our ideas. We had some great conversations and will be continuing our discussions in 2021 to shape a policy that helps the movement stay relevant and work sustainably.

In the second half of our meeting, we then went on to look at 2021's seat allocation in our constituencies for the upcoming Council Elections, which is calculated based on how many members we have in each region and how much they spend in our stores. We also discussed new eligibility requirements for Co-opted Council Members.

Campaigns and commitments

On 8 December, Council caught up with Chief People Officer, Helen Webb; Campaigns & Public Affairs Director, Paul Gerrard, and People Director for Organisational Effectiveness, Claire Camara.

First up, we received an update on our Co-op's *Safer Colleagues, Safer Communities* campaign from Paul. Since Council approved it in 2018, the campaign has made lots of amazing progress and has changed the UK's perceptions of retail crime, with 82% of people thinking that stronger laws should be in place to protect shop workers. Unfortunately, the number of violent incidents has been on the rise over the last four years, with physical attacks up 400% and verbal attacks up 2000% - a shocking issue that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated in recent months.

While we wait for the government to recognise that legislation is needed, our Co-op has been busy doing what we can to keep our frontline colleagues safe. Across our stores, we're investing £70m in new equipment and systems, including a trial of body cams. Over 6,000 colleagues, members and Council Members took part in the Co-op's biggest ever letter writing campaign to share their experiences of retail crime and call on the government to take action. Building on this, our CEO, Steve Murrells, met with 19 other retail CEOs and four retail associations in September to sign a letter to the prime minister. Working with Alex Norris MP, we've also continued to lobby government and have put a bill before the House of Commons twice to make it clear that violence and abuse shouldn't be part of the job.

We know that most people don't turn to crime unless they're desperate, so we've been looking at how we can address the root causes of crime as well. In partnership with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation, we'll be addressing inequalities in communities and giving young people access to what they need to achieve their full potential. We're also the only business taking part in the Damilola Taylor Trust's Hope 2020 campaign, which aims to shine a light on the positive contributions of younger generations.

With people from across multiple sectors working hard to tackle this issue that touches so many parts of our society, we're hopeful that 2021 is the year we see a new law come into effect for our shop workers.

Building on Paul's update, Helen highlighted the importance of breaking down barriers in our communities as part of *Safer Colleagues*, *Safer Communities*. Through operational investment, community action and political campaigning, our Co-op is well-placed to fight injustices and create a fairer world. As we announced our anti-racism manifesto last September, Steve Murrells made it clear that one of our priorities for our vision was eliminating racial inequalities.

Joining us for the first time, Claire gave us an update on our Co-op's diversity journey, which started in earnest 2 years ago. We want to have inclusive practices in place for everyone, so we've been designing and building foundations that will help us benefit and represent all colleagues and members.

For example, we've improved our data collection and have made *Endless Inclusion* a core part of our strategy, with all managers receiving inclusive leadership training and equal opportunities becoming available across our colleague life cycle. We now have 150 diversity champions in our Co-op and have launched a cultural calendar to help us understand and celebrate what makes us different. With our BAME Working Party taking on a leading role, we

developed our commitments to racial equality and inclusion in collaboration with suppliers, products and services teams and colleagues to make sure our approach is embedded in everything we do.

Outside of the Co-op, Claire shared that we're bringing other businesses together to tackle inequalities and have been helping students in our academies fulfil their education and career ambitions.

Council is fully supportive of what our Co-op wants to achieve and is proud of the leading stance we're taking. Through our Diversity & Inclusion Working Group, we were able to help shape our Co-op's commitments and are keen to do everything we can to represent the communities we serve and support, including improving our own diversity.

November Directors' Forum: holding our Board to account

On 11 November, our Members' Council held its 8th virtual session since March and caught up with Margaret Casely-Hayford, Paul Chandler, Shirine-Khoury Haq and Steve Murrells from our Board to ask questions around our Co-op Compass lenses, which help us to review the performance of our Co-op's businesses.

Here's a look at the themes and topics we covered from the 13 questions that were asked...

Member Voice lens: marketing and promotion of Co-op Funeralcare; the management support structure for the Member Pioneer Model; examples of how Council has influenced the Board.

Member Value lens: sales of stores to NISA; the strategy for the Co-op's Honest Value range; regulatory compliance and colleague training on compliance and risk in the business; the sale of Co-op Insurance; the recent closure of Co-op Funeralcare branches and the impact this will have; the process for appointing an auditor.

Co-op Leadership lens: continuing to play a supportive and active role in the co-operative movement; collaborating with other retailers, police services and local authorities to tackle retail crime.

Ethical & Sustainable Leadership lens: strategy for petrol forecourt locations in light of the government's electric vehicles announcement.

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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