

## **Motion 10**

### **Council Motion – Empowering member-owners to start, choose, understand and grow co-operatives.**

- We ask the Board to work with other co-operatives in the light of the government's intention to double the size of the co-operative sector by working closely with organisations we fund such as Co-ops UK, the Co-operative Party and the Plunkett Foundation to support their efforts to promote co-operative business models. With this support, we want to empower member owners and people across the UK to understand Co-ops and know where to go for advice, support, training and information about setting up and running successful co-operative businesses.
- In addition, we ask the Board to prioritise and target co-operatives, including new co-operatives, where possible to put their products on our shelves and help develop their businesses via The Apiary.
- We further ask the Board to build on the success of Owned By You, Right By You by introducing a new ownership hub on our app and website - one place for member-owners to find out more about the Co-op they own, the value our members create together and how they can take part.

The United Nations has declared 2025 the International Year of Co-operatives. Here in the UK the new Government, with the largest cohort of Co-op Party MPs ever elected, has announced their intention to double the Co-operative and Mutual Sector. These things together mean that co-operatives and co-operation are being talked about more than ever before, and our Co-op should take advantage of that to raise awareness of the Co-op Difference amongst our member-owners.

We would like to see our Co-op working closely with our sister organisations such as Co-ops UK and the Co-operative Party to promote co-operation as a way of living and doing business and to promote grassroots co-operative development within the UK in line with Principle 6. We would also like to see our Co-op empower member-owners with the tools and information they need to get the most out of their ownership of Co-op.

### **Board Response:**

The Board welcomes this motion as an opportunity to build on the momentum generated by the Government's pledge to double the size of the Co-operative Movement and by the focus provided by the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives.

We are proud to be, by far, the largest financial supporter of Co-operative Movement bodies such as Co-operatives UK and the Co-operative Party, who do so much to promote the cause of co-operative development using the resources we provide. We are already collaborating with a number of independent co-operative societies to support the Plunkett Foundation's work to develop new co-operatives, and we are

keen to explore other partnership opportunities where we might work together with others who share similar ambitions, for example through our leading role in the recently formed Mutual and Co-operative Business Council. We were delighted to see that our Co-op's procurement team were awarded the "Buy Social Market Builder of the Year" by Social Enterprise UK. Our Apiary programme provides the opportunity for small producers to partner with us to develop their products and sell in our stores and we agree that there are further opportunities to develop co-operatives and social enterprises as part of our supply chain.

Our membership proposition places Ownership Value at its heart, exemplified by the hugely impactful "Owned by You, Right by You" campaign. We offer education and training opportunities for our members through our Join In activities and our local teams of Member Activators and there is much more that we want to do with the wider Co-operative Movement to engage and share what it means to be a co-op and why co-ops are a better way of doing business. This will become a real focus during Co-operatives Fortnight this summer, when along with Co-operatives UK, our Co-op will be hosting the International Co-operative Alliance General Assembly in Manchester, which we hope will provide a further boost to the growing interest in our co-operative model.

Growing co-operatives is vitally important to spreading the principles of co-operating, which is a fairer, more dignified and more sustainable way of doing business. We will work hard with our partners in the movement to showcase our values and principles, informing our members about where they can find information on starting and contributing to co-operatives.

We agree there is more to do to ensure our growing membership base fully understand all aspects of member value and the Co-operative Movement that our members are part of and to make it as easy as possible for our members to access the information they want about being an owner of their Co-op and about co-ops. We will support further innovation, working with the National Members' Council and our members more widely to develop our thinking further.

The Board recommends supporting this motion.