



# National Members' Council Newsletter: December 2023

**Our Members' Council is made up of 100 passionate Co-op Members, colleagues, people from other co-op societies, and members chosen by Council to help diversify voices and thinking. When you join a co-op, you become a shared owner of a business that exists to meet your needs, so Council Members act as local representatives who champion your views with directors and leaders from around Co-op.**

## Council Meeting highlights

**Our Council meets four times a year, here's what's been on the agenda recently...**

Council met in May and July to welcome newly elected Council Members and Co-opted Council Members, and to focus its time and attention on progressing our Council Effectiveness Review, sharing thoughts and ideas for how we could improve and utilise Council's role within Co-op to put members' views at the heart of everything we do. Working with the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny (CfGS), Council has shaped and implemented a Ways of Working Pilot for the next 12 months, which sees a new committee structure and quarterly meeting cycle bring Council Members closer to the business, our Board and leaders, and ongoing strategy, membership and vision priorities.

In September, our pilot got underway with the first meetings of our new committees, and we brought the cycle to a close with our October Council Meeting. Over the Council weekend, Council Members hosted a Friday night session on doubling the size of the co-operative sector with leaders from Co-op Group, Co-op Party and Co-ops UK. They also met with our new CFO, Rachel Izzard, for the first time to discuss Co-op's half-year performance and put questions to her on our financial results and plans for the rest of 2023 and 2024.

Continuing the focus of putting members at the heart of everything we do, Council received an update on the future of Co-op's membership proposition and how it had evolved since they shared their views in the summer. Following the presentation, Council Members split up into breakout groups with Co-op Leaders and Board Members to discuss the latest iteration of our vision statement and provide further input. In the afternoon, Council heard from Kate Allum, Member Nominated Director, and Sinead Bell, Food Commercial Director, on progress and thinking for our 2023 Animal Welfare Members' Motion. It also met in smaller groups again to share feedback on recommendations given by CfGS in its final report.

### Meet our new Council Leadership Team!

Congratulations to Debbie Williams and Sam Webster on their election to our Vice-President roles



## Discussions with directors

To hold our Co-op Board to account on important issues for our businesses and members, Council Members ask questions as part of Directors' Forums...

3 questions were raised with Member Nominated Directors in October, in addition to breakout questions and queries on our 2023 Animal Welfare Motion progress. Key topics included:

- ✓ Colleague safety
- ✓ Co-operative growth
- ✓ Wider movement engagement



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## Catch up with our Council Committees

Council Members also meet in smaller groups throughout the year to input into plans and ask questions on areas of our Co-op Difference. Here's what they've worked on recently...

### Business Performance

This committee acts as a critical friend to ensure the success of our Co-op and that the needs of our members are at the heart of the big financial decisions we make. Its first two meetings took place in September and December, where it discussed the latest period financials, inputted into our strategy work on efficiency and growth, and met with our Property Team on its plans for 2024.

### Modern Co-operative Leadership

This committee focuses on the co-operative principle of 'Co-operation among Co-operatives' and supports Co-op with its role within the wider Co-operative Movement. Its first two meetings took place in September and November, where it continued to input into our strategy work in relation to our Co-op Difference and met with the CEO of Co-ops UK to discuss a shared approach to promoting co-ops.

### Sustainable Ethical Leadership

This committee focuses on important issues of environment, sustainability and ethical business practices in relation to Co-op's Vision and Sustainability Strategy. Its first two meetings took place in September and November, where it discussed progress and member communications on our 2023 Animal Welfare Motion, inputted into our strategy work on social value and sustainability, and heard about plans for Fairtrade 30.

### Membership

This committee is responsible for ensuring our values and principles are reflected in all aspects of our overall Membership Proposition and form the foundation of our Group Strategy. Its first two meetings took place in September and December, where it received an evaluation report on our 2023 AGM and Co-op Difference Survey, inputted into our membership strategy work, discussed the latest membership trends and targets, and provided feedback on our 2023 Join In Live events.

To help create a fairer world for young people and deliver on our 2023 AGM Motion on this, we now have a member of our Co-op Young Members' Group on each of our Council Committees.

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## Could you be a Council Member?

On 22 January, applications will open once again for our National Members' Council. We're looking for strong candidates who feel an affiliation to our values and principles, want to champion members' views and needs, and can provide strategic thoughts and ideas on big plans and decisions. Find out more about eligibility and the role [here](#).

## Thanks for joining in live with Co-op!

We'd like to say a big 'thank you' to everyone who came to one of our 2023 Join In Live events. 546 attendees put questions to our Board and leaders, heard the latest updates and helped shape the future of Co-op Membership. Find out more about the events and what Co-op Members thought in our [blog](#).



## How to play your full part...

'Join In' with regular online opportunities to shape products and plans and learn more about the Co-op you own. This month, learn all about being a [Council Member](#)!

## How we're doing things differently...



Co-operation is all about working together to achieve a common goal and make things fairer. There are lots of co-ops in the UK and around the world, and it's important that we collaborate and learn from each other. Council Members have been attending conferences and events since the beginning of the year to do just this, taking part in panels and workshops to share ideas and inspire thinking.



Take care,  
**Denise Scott-McDonald**  
President of Co-op's National Members' Council



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