



# Information for Prospective 2024 National Members' Council Elections Candidates



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National  
Members'  
Council



# Introduction from Kate Brown, Returning Officer and Council Secretary

*As a business owned by and run for our members, we exist to create value for them. We are founded on values and principles and are deeply committed to fairness and equality. We are different.*

*Our democracy is a fundamental part of who we are and how we are run. Our National Members' Council is made up of 100 passionate members from across the UK representing the interests of more than 5 million Co-op Member-Owners, which is why we run Council Elections and ask Co-op Members to vote for their local representatives as part of our Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year. Our Council has a number of important roles set out in our constitution - or Rules - to act as the guardians of our Co-operative Values and Principles, to hold our Board to account for how our Co-op is run and to be consulted on and influence the future direction of our Co-op.*

*2024 will be an exciting time for our Co-op. Our membership is growing rapidly, and it is more important than ever that the voices and needs of our diverse membership are heard and that their interests are represented.*

*Nominations are now open for our 2024 Council Elections. Find out more about the role in this pack or contact our team at [council.elections@coop.co.uk](mailto:council.elections@coop.co.uk).*

Kate



# About our Co-op

Since 1844, the Co-operative Movement has promoted organisations with a clear social purpose and our Co-op continues that tradition. We are still guided by the same values and principles that they established back then. To find out more about how it all started, watch this [short video](#).

We set ourselves high standards for responsible retailing and service. We are also a campaigning business, speaking out on the issues that matter to our member-owners. By offering great products and services, it grows our customer base, our membership, and the positive co-operative impact and value we can bring to wider society.

As the UK's largest consumer co-operative, the Co-op Group generates in excess of £11 billion in revenue with 5 million active member-owners, 57,000 employees and a presence in every postal area in the United Kingdom.

We are a major food retailer and wholesaler operating more than 2,400 stores, the largest funerals provider in the UK, a major provider of regulated consumer legal services, particularly probate and wills, and a major provider of life planning and insurance products. Our businesses are all UK-based with a main support centre in Manchester.

As a consumer co-op, these businesses provide the fuel to power our Co-op and we're excited about our prospects to make a continued, genuine impact for our member-owners. For more information about the Co-op Group, visit <https://www.co-operative.coop/>.

As a Council Member, you'll be continuing our pioneering tradition by championing Co-operative Values and Principles and giving our member-owners a voice.

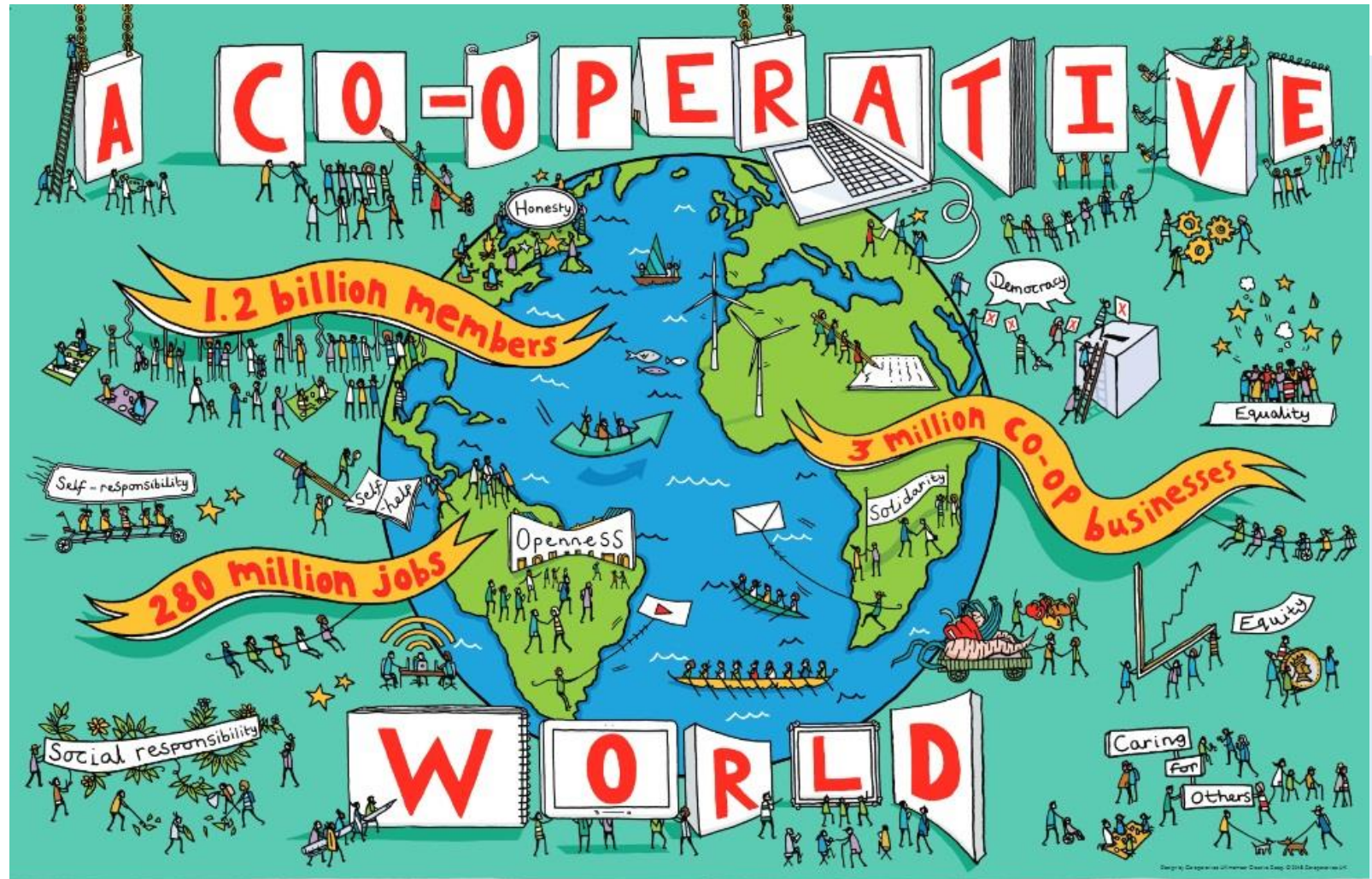


As a Co-op, we're founded on a set of values and principles describing a different, fairer and better way of doing business. These shared values are upheld by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA). We try to demonstrate our commitment to these values and principles in everything we do.

- **Self-help:** We help people to help themselves
- **Self-responsibility:** We take responsibility and answer for our actions.
- **Democracy:** We give our member-owners a say in the way we run our business.
- **Equality:** No matter how much money a member-owner invests in their share account, they have one vote.
- **Equity:** We carry out our business in a way that is fair and unbiased.
- **Solidarity:** We share interests and common purposes with our member-owners and other co-operatives.

### Ethical values

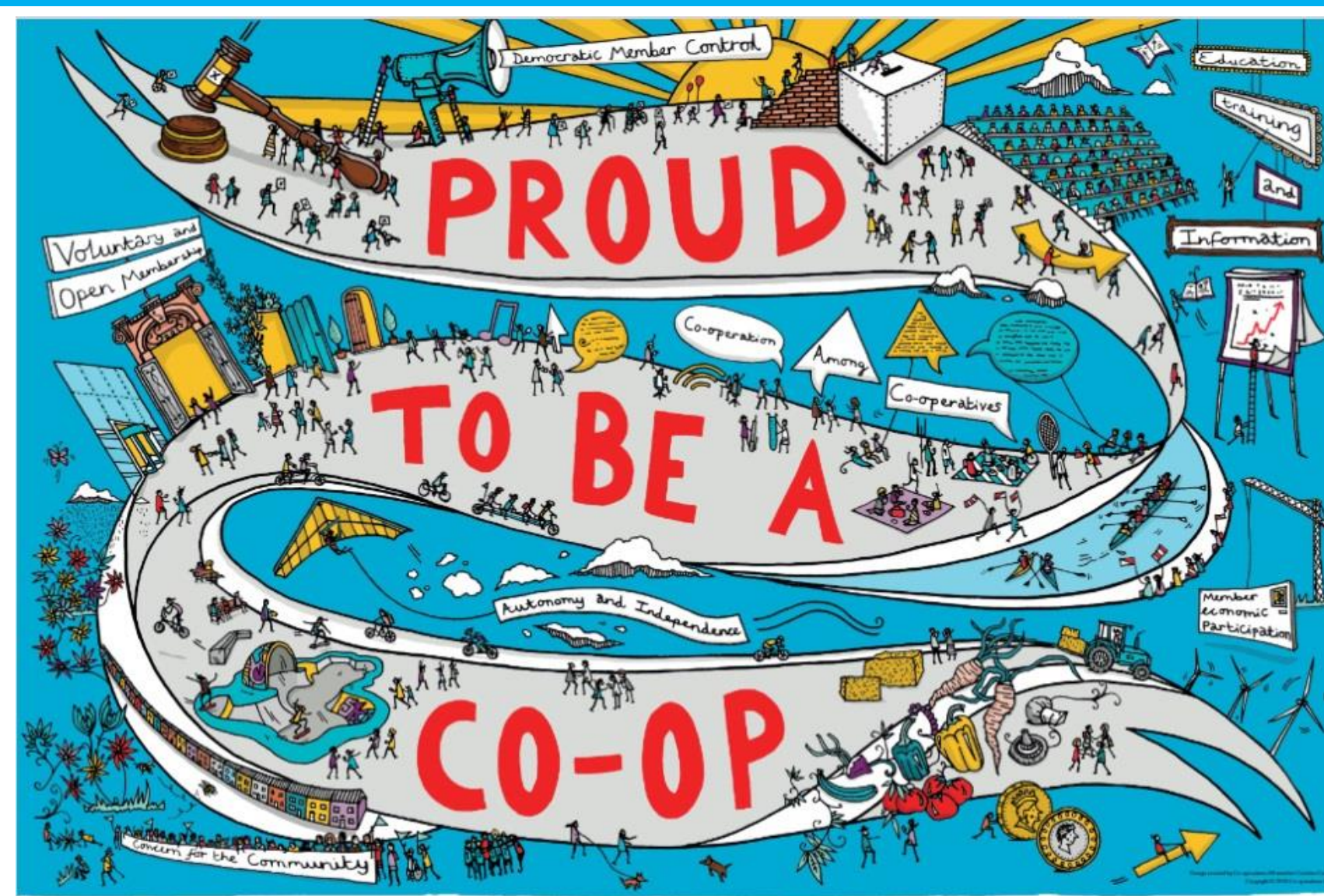
- In the tradition of our founders, Co-op Member-Owners also believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.



[www.uk.coop](http://www.uk.coop)

**CO-OPERATIVES UK**

# Our principles set out how we put our values into action



Our **voluntary and open membership**: membership is open to everyone

1. **Democratic member control**: All member-owners have an equal voice in making policies and electing representatives.
2. **Member economic participation**: All profits are controlled democratically by member-owners and for their benefit.
3. **Autonomy and independence**: Co-operatives are always independent, even when they enter into agreements with the government and other organisations.
4. **Education, training and information**: Co-operatives educate and develop their member-owners as well as their staff.
5. **Co-operation amongst co-operatives**: Co-operatives work together to strengthen the Co-operative Movement as a whole.
6. **Concern for community**: Co-operatives also work to improve and develop the community, locally and internationally.

# A business owned by and run for our members...

Co-op's governance structure is carefully constructed and is unique, based on ownership by its members.

The **Co-op Group Board** is collectively responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Co-op and safeguarding the interests of member-owners. It determines the strategy for the Co-op, which is consistent with our purpose, values and principles.

Our Co-op's **National Members' Council** is a democratically elected body of 100 member-owners. The Council represents Co-op Member-Owners, holding the Board to account for how the business performs and acting as a guardian of the Co-op's values and principles.

The **Operating Board** runs Co-op on a day-to-day basis and is made up of 20 senior leaders from across our businesses and our support centre.



# The role of a Council Member

Our 100-strong Members' Council is elected by the member-owners it represents, ensuring their voices and interests are heard at the highest level in our Co-op. Our Council is made up of Co-op Member-Owners, Colleague Member-Owners and representatives from independent co-op societies.

As a Council Member, you will:

- Act as the guardian of the Co-op's purpose, values and principles and rules
- Work with fellow Council Members, our Board and Operating Board, Co-op Member-Owners and the wider Co-operative Movement.
- Hold the Board to account and influence strategic and operational initiatives
- Be consulted on issues that are important to our member-owners and have a significant impact on our Co-op, with the chance to shape work relating to them.
- Be required to read and understand information about how our Co-op is run and must be willing to play an active role at our Council meetings (currently four times a year) and in committee meetings by bringing ideas, asking questions and providing constructive challenge on behalf of our member-owners.
- Be required to get involved with local member-owner events and community activities, gathering feedback on local issues and sharing updates on what our Co-op is doing.





## Role-specific training

With the introduction of role-specific training, as a Council Member, you will be asked (at a minimum) to complete core training modules based on the role you hold on Council.

**This is the minimum learning requirement you are asked to complete within one year of being elected.**

Once you have completed your core role-specific training, you can further develop by completing training modules for other roles on Council as a Committee Member, Senate Member or Council Leadership Team Member.

## Pre-induction MyLearning

Before your induction, all new Council Members are asked to complete two self-led, 20-minute eLearning modules. Once your employee number has been created, Council Secretariat will be in contact to guide you on how to access MyLearning and complete these. The modules are: **'Welcome to our Members' Council'** and **'Bullying and Harassment'**. Please see below for our role-specific training modules.

### Council Member

- Values and Principles in Action
- Understanding Financial Accounts
- Nature of Strategy
- Being an Effective Council Member
- Diversity and Inclusion

### Senate Member

- Mini induction with Council Secretary
- Public Speaking or Facilitating Conversations
- Being a Co-op Leader

### Council Leadership Team Member

- Mini induction with Council Secretary
- Public Speaking or Facilitating Conversations
- Inclusive Leadership

# 2023 Council highlights



**Council Members prioritised helping our communities with the rising cost of living. With their input, we now have Member Prices on essentials and favourites and increased discounts for colleagues.**

**Thanks to Council Members, we started and increased our campaigning against retail crime and violence, which led to the creation of the first ever Retail Crime Action Plan.**

**Council Members are passionate about Co-op Member-Owners being at the heart of everything we do. We've refreshed our strategy, vision and membership offer to reflect this, feeding in your views from events, insight panels and online opportunities.**

# Is being a Council Member right for me?

**Before you complete your nomination form to stand in the 2024 Council Elections, you need to ensure that you:**

- 1. Have been a Co-op Group Member-Owner for three years or more**
- 2. Have accrued 500 trading points between January 2023 and January 2024.**

***Once elected, Council Members can serve a term of up to three years before requiring re-election.***

Our Co-op champions diversity, equality and inclusion and is committed to ensuring that Council reflects the member-owners and communities we serve across all of our businesses. Council Members have a responsibility to play a part in eliminating inequalities that exist within the Co-op and the wider world too.

You will:

- Be a regular consumer of the Co-op's products and services
- Be passionate about, and have a genuine interest in, our Co-op and our Co-operative Values and Principles.
- Be able to understand how a large consumer co-operative runs and the products and services we offer to member-owners and customers.
- Be an ambassador and positive role model for our Co-op

All of the above should be considered when acting in the best interests of the Co-op and where building consensus is needed.

## **Personal Attributes**

Below are qualities that are expected from being a Council Member in how our Co-op is run and to represent our member-owners and the business they own.

- Integrity and self-responsibility and act in the best interests of Co-op at all times.
- Co-operative and collaborative
- Sound judgement
- A willingness to ask questions
- Challenge constructively and assertively and seek support and advice if needed.
- Strong communication skills
- Organised and well-prepared for meetings and other activities.
- Ability to prioritise and use strategic thinking
- A commitment to equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion.
- Influential and diplomatic with experience of making a positive impact.

# Being a Council Member

We expect Council Members to commit an average of 2 days per month, or 24 days a year, to their role.

This includes time to prepare for meetings and keep up to date by reading papers, newsletters and articles, attending training or meetings, and getting out and about in the area they represent to meet colleagues in the business and Co-op Member-Owners. Council currently meets 4 times a year. Many Council Members join the meeting in person in Manchester, but there is an option to join remotely online.

Each Council Member is also expected to sit on a Council Committee. Committees currently meet 4 to 6 times a year online for 2 hours. There are also increased remuneration opportunities to stand for election to a role on Senate, which co-ordinates Council's activities, and our Council Leadership Team.

As a UK wide body, Council uses digital and remote channels for information sharing and communication. This includes use of a designated Council Member email account, conference calls, online meetings and a secure information area for accessing key documents. The Council also encourages engagement with member-owners via social media. To be able to fully participate, you'll need to be computer literate with the ability and commitment to participate digitally.

All new Council Members are buddied up with an experienced Council Member to help you through your first year. Colleagues from Council Secretariat will also be buddies for new Council Members to help with process and navigating the business. New Council Members will also be required to stay connected with what's happening in their local communities and will be buddied with Member Pioneer Co-ordinators from their areas to fulfil this role.

## Rewards and Benefits

Being a Council Member is a hugely rewarding experience that is ideal for networking and CV-building, as well as seeing how you can make a difference to the lives of member-owners and communities through Co-op's work. You'll be right at the heart of our Co-op, representing our member-owners and working with our Board and senior leaders as part of a successful co-operative business.

All Council Members receive detailed information and training and development on core skills and knowledge.

From January 2024, the remuneration for this position is £3,000 per year, plus a 30% discount on Co-op own-brand products.

# What happens after I apply?

## PERSONAL INFORMATION & SCREENING

Due to the high standards of integrity we set for our Council Members who represent our Co-op and the levels of confidential and commercial information that Council Members may access, prospective candidates are required to provide personal information including your previous addresses, nationality and any details of criminal, civil proceedings or disciplinary actions.

All candidates are screened via a third-party partner and the personal information that you provide is used to assist with this screening process.

Candidates will be subject to any or all of the following checks:

- Credit check
- Media check
- Identity verification
- Verification of any professional qualifications or memberships claimed.
- Directorship check

## FURTHER INFORMATION REQUESTS TO SUPPORT YOUR NOMINATION

The Council Secretary is entitled to request further information from, or concerning, any candidate if not fully satisfied through the self-nomination form and initial screening results that all eligibility requirements have been met. Further information may include (but is not limited to) interview of a candidate and third-party references and data.

If the Council Secretary is not satisfied that the eligibility requirements have been met as at the date on which the ballot is determined, he/she is entitled to determine that the candidate shall not go forward on to the ballot or proceed in the Council Elections process. The candidate will be informed of the decision and given reasons in writing. All information supplied by candidates will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Co-op will use the services of a trusted third-party to support the screening process.

# Election timetable - useful dates for all candidates

**Canvassing rules apply to all candidates, and you should refer to the [Canvassing Code of Conduct](#) before the AGM voting packs land.**

*Note: All Council Members, including newly elected, will be expected to attend our AGM on 18 May 2024.*

<b>Council Elections nominations open</b>	22 January 2024
<b>Council Elections nominations close</b>	Midday 23 February
<b>Candidate screening to be completed</b>	COP 22 March
<b>AGM voting packs land</b>	On or around 15-17 April
<b>AGM voting closes</b>	Midday 13 May
<b>Results</b>	Approx. by 14 May
<b>AGM in Manchester</b>	Saturday 18 May
<b>Council Member Induction and Council Meeting</b>	Thursday 4 July - Saturday 6 July