

# THE



**co-operative  
party**

Members' Magazine Autumn/Winter 2019

# PIONEER



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Secretary on building  
a fairer future  
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**‘Too many people  
are being let down  
by a broken system. That’s  
where the co-operative  
approach offers a solution’**

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page 10





## Welcome from the General Secretary

Welcome to our latest edition of 'The Pioneer'! I am taking this opportunity to introduce myself as your new General Secretary. I recently took on the role from Claire McCarthy – Claire was a fantastic colleague and General Secretary and I know we all wish her the best of luck for the future.

For my part, I have worked for the Party for a number of years and almost needless to say I am focused on our future success and growth. It is a fantastic Party to be a part of and I will work hard for it.

In troubling and challenging times for our country, I hope this edition's content demonstrates the hope, ambition and ideas we have as a Party, which I believe are desperately needed. From co-operative solutions to community safety (p. 08) to the role credit unions can play in breaking the cycle of financial exclusion

(p. 10), together we have the answers to some of the biggest issues our country faces. Whether it's the crisis in social care (p. 22) or the climate crisis (p. 24), we are leading the way with practical solutions that put communities first. Up and down the country, we're putting those ideas into practice – like the great work of the Greater Manchester Co-operative Commission (p. 06). With incredible leaders like our new chair Anna Turley MP (p. 16) and advocates like Fairtrade's Helen Dennis (p. 18), our people-powered movement is prepared to take on the challenges that lie ahead. The team and I are ready for another busy period – and I hope you are too!

Joe Fortune, General Secretary

## THE PIONEER

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# Building a fairer FUTURE



**Joe Fortune**  
General Secretary,  
Co-operative Party

Almost through no fault of our own, our society has been plunged into crisis. Austerity has ravaged our communities, climate change threatens our planet, and right-wing rhetoric has challenged the sort of country we believe ourselves to be.

**H**istorians and political scientists will argue for many years to come about how we got here. But the focus of our party must now be firmly on the future. To build a better world, we must seek inspiration from the people, projects and movements who have dared to do things differently.

It is clear that more of the same will no longer do. More of the same will not produce an economy that works in the interests of the majority of our fellow citizens. More of the same will not save our world from the climate emergency. More of the same will not create a country that is sure of itself and its values.

Doing things differently comes naturally to co-operators. From the outset, the co-operative movement has challenged the status quo. It is this experience and this willingness to be disruptors which will be so important in facing the challenges to come.

The Co-operative Party have called for radical action to grow our co-operative sector. We do not do this because we like the sound of “doubling the co-operative sector”. We do it because we know what sort of society can be created through the rigorous pursuit of co-operative values and principles. We do it because it will help build a fairer future, where power and wealth are shared.

That is why Annual Conference in Glasgow debates and discusses under the title of ‘Building a Fairer Future’. Within our Party policy process, we debate the co-operative solutions to the significant challenges

we face – including the climate emergency and the crisis of identity and power that exists in our communities, high streets and conurbations.

In addition, in Glasgow we will focus on drawing out the inspiration and energy of new and existing co-operatives. We believe their expansion and support will go a long way towards shaping a fairer future for those here now and those in the future.

Our movement and its values and principles afford the Co-operative Party a coherence that others lack. As a result, we present a unique take on a different type of society and economy. We are ready to articulate this through whatever elections or events come our way.

I am in no doubt of the strength and vitality that our movement can provide and its ability to change our country for good. It is up to each one of us to be the advocate, campaigner and activist that our movement deserves – now – and into the future. ●



## Case study

# Expanding Co-operation: Manchester



**Councillor Angeliki Stogia**

Executive Member for Environment,  
Planning & Transport and Labour &  
Co-operative Councillor for Whalley Range

**R**ochdale, 1844 – the home of 28 pioneers and an idea to change the way we do business. While the Industrial Revolution was changing industries forever, it was also pushing ordinary working people into poverty and hunger. Based on the fundamental principles of open membership and real democratic control, the Rochdale Pioneers started a co-operative – selling food at affordable prices for the local community.

175 years later, this proud and long co-operative tradition lives on in Greater Manchester, where the Mayor's Co-operative Commission launched earlier this year. The commission aims to build on our strong co-operative sector and provide innovative co-operative solutions to some of our greatest policy challenges. Just as the Rochdale Pioneers sought co-operative solutions to the big issues they faced of their time, so we are looking at what the co-operative answer may be to the big questions around housing,



the digital sector, transport and business development.

For example in transport, most journey are made on buses, but just five companies make up for 70% of the providers. In Greater Manchester we have seen the frustration of residents as prices go up, routes get cut, and reliability suffers. But it doesn't have to be that way: we heard examples from





Pictured: Labour & Co-operative Mayor Andy Burnham with the Greater Manchester Co-operative Commission

Jersey, Israel and Netherlands, where not-for-profit buses and co-operatives play a much bigger part. The benefits that brings include enabling people to access work and education, tackling social exclusion and loneliness, as well as connecting isolated communities. There is also the changing nature of transport, with demand-responsive services emerging, which could bring the next Uber to the world of private cars or business transport.

The co-operative model provides a way of ensuring services are rooted in communities, with a greater

share of wealth and democratic control over how they operate. That's why the last session took us to the crux of the issue: how do we in Greater Manchester create an environment where the co-operative model of business is supported to start and grow? We will develop these ideas and the commission will report back on its recommendations towards the end of the year. ●

When it comes to crime, communities up and down the UK are being let down. Violent crime is rising, we face more drug and gang-related offences than we've seen for decades and, in some communities, public trust in the police and other public institutions is being tested.

# Co-operative contribution to community safety



**Anna Birley**  
Policy Officer,  
Co-operative Party

**W**hen it comes to crime, communities up and down the UK are being let down. Violent crime is rising, we face more drug and gang-related offences than we've seen for decades and, in some communities, public trust in the police and other public institutions is being tested.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives have spent their decade in power cutting vital rehabilitation programmes and youth services, as well as reducing police funding by nearly one fifth.

But while the Government reverts to its same old failed policies, the upcoming Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections in 2020 give us an opportunity to reflect on what a co-operative alternative for community safety looks like.

It starts at the ground-level. Community policing is vital in building relationships between police and the

people they serve, particularly in communities at the highest risk of victimisation. Just 1 in 5 people say the police are 'highly visible', but community-based schemes can help restore visibility and develop trust. For example, safer neighbourhood panels allow locals to voice their own concerns and hold their neighbourhood policing teams to account. Similarly, involving local people in community-based penalties not only increases participation and engagement, but also allows initiatives and projects to be nominated for community payback – bringing the community's own priorities to the fore.

Like so many community issues, early intervention is key. Spending on youth services has fallen by over 60% over the past six years, despite





Community policing is vital in building relationships between police and the people they serve

clear evidence that mentorship schemes, school programmes and youth support services help prevent youth-based violence. Involving young people in decision-making gives them a stake and a say in the services that affect and protect them.

And while co-operation can help tackle crime, it can also help prevent it. By treating crime as a public health concern, multi-agency co-operation can identify the causes of crime and treat those causes before it affects a whole community. In Scotland, where this approach has had great success, 'justice

partners' working together to end violent crime include MSPs, local authorities, emergency services, community businesses, health boards and even dentists and beauty parlours.

These ideas, and more, are explored in the Co-operative Party's recent pamphlet, 'Safer, Stronger Communities' and we hope will be reflected in the policies and platforms of the many Labour & Co-operative candidates standing to be Police and Crime Commissioners in next year's elections. Co-operative approaches put the community and its needs at the heart, proving that when we work together, we're not just stronger – we're also safer. ●

The UK boasts one of the biggest financial sectors in the world, and it's one of our largest and most profitable export industries. But while big banking might line the pockets of those at the top, it's failing those who need it the most.

# BREAKING THE CYCLE OF FINANCIAL EXCLUSION



**Ged Killen MP**  
Rutherglen and  
Hamilton West

**A**cross the UK, 1.7 million people are excluded from banking of any kind. For people with poor credit history, often caused by years of poverty and job insecurity, accessing a bank account can be a real challenge.

Continues on page 12

And without the advice and support that should come with the most basic banking facilities, low-income households too often pay a 'poverty premium', paying much more than average for essential services like fuel, domestic bills and insurance.

As well as hitting the most financially vulnerable, financial exclusion is also a huge issue for rural areas, where accessing a local bank is often physically impossible. In rural Scotland, one in seven communities live over half an hour away from their nearest ATM. But with high street banks closing hundreds of branches, even the closest banking facility may not be guaranteed



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to stay. And with so many banking services moving online, the 3.8 million households without internet access, many in rural communities, will continue to miss out. Is it any surprise that over 30% of the population report one or more signs of clear financial distress?

This is why I've been campaigning to improve access to cash, both in my constituency and across the UK. My Parliamentary Bill would ban ATM charges and establish a statutory right to free access to cash. No one should have to pay to access their own money,

and yet with so many free ATMs being replaced by those with charges, this has increasingly become the norm. As with so many other services, there's also a significant postcode lottery when it comes to banking, meaning that those living in the poorest communities are most likely to be charged – an inequality in desperate need of addressing.

But while improving access to banking and cash would

**‘While generations have been plagued by financial exclusion and insecurity, credit unions can also tackle these issues before they even arise’**

be a great step in the right direction, the banking sector itself is in desperate need of reform. Whether it's a poor credit history or geographical distance from mainstream banks, too many people are being let down by a broken system. That's where the co-operative approach offers a solution.

Credit unions offer a real and effective alternative to the high street banking that is failing so many. Unlike big banks, controlled by hugely wealthy stakeholders with profit as priority, credit unions are owned by their members and act with their interests in mind. Any profits made are either redistributed to members or reinvested to continue providing vital financial services. And as well as serving members, credit unions are also local and in tune with the needs and nuances of an individual community.

While generations have been plagued by financial exclusion and insecurity, credit unions can also tackle these issues before they even arise. Just 41% of UK households say they actively put away money, and as household debt hits a new peak this year, encouraging healthy financial behaviour is more important than ever. Saving for the future is vital in ensuring long-term financial security and

providing a safety net for uncertainty, and this education should start at a young age. For example, when Glasgow City Council was Labour/Co-operative led, the Council developed a plan to open credit union accounts for all pupils in their first year at secondary school, with £10 deposited per pupil as a starter fund to teach children about the importance of saving.

In Parliament, I'm looking forward to continuing the fight against unfair ATM charges and the closing of the few banks we have left. But the co-operative movement has so much more to offer in building financial resilience, providing a much-needed alternative to big banks, and building a banking sector that works for everyone. ●



# Co-operatives unleashed

With big wins for our campaigns, great election results and a growing membership, it's been a busy few months for the Co-operative Party. Here's a look back at what we've achieved together and the challenges we're facing.

472

**Labour and Co-operative  
Council candidates**

May's local election in England saw us nearly double the number of candidates compared to when these seats were last contested in 2015.

41%

**of Co-operative Councillors  
are women**

We're working hard to have Councillors that represent our communities, and we're leading the way – with only 36% of councillors as a whole being women.

815

**Labour and Co-operative  
Councillors across Britain**

That's almost doubled in three years and we are represented on more councils than ever before – just under 200 councils across England, Scotland and Wales.

22%

**of Co-operative Councillors  
are under 40**

Our councillors are more than twice as likely to be young with just 10% of UK councillors aged under 40.

# 136,000

victims of modern slavery  
in the UK in 2016

A ten-fold increase in just three years as the government fails to get to grips with the scourge of Modern Day Slavery.

# 20 million

people covered by our  
modern slavery charter

Almost 100 councils have adopted our charter to help stamp out modern day slavery in supply chains and improve support for those rescued.

# 500,000

people used food banks  
in the UK last year

And more than 8 million people have trouble putting food on the table in the 6th richest country in the world.

# 1 million

people in the UK live  
in food deserts

That why we've launched our Food Justice campaign to raise the profile of food poverty and the lack of access to good quality food.

# 235,000

people in the UK work  
for co-operatives in 2019

And a further 13.7 million of us are members, making us the largest social movement in the country.

# £37.7 billion

is the value of co-operative  
to the British economy

The Co-operative Party has ambitious plans to double the sector and build a fairer economy where wealth and power are shared.

# the conversation

## ANNA TURLEY MP



**You recently became Chair of the Co-operative Party NEC. Can you tell us a bit more about this role and why it's important to you?**

It is a really great honour to serve our party as its Chair and I'm grateful to have been selected by my colleagues on the National Executive Committee to take up the leadership of our party. This is an exciting and important time and I'm determined to play my part to help deliver the future success and growth of our party and our movement.

The Chair works alongside the General Secretary and the Chair of the group of Co-operative MPs in Parliament to set the direction of our Party and its campaigning priorities. I look forward to working with co-operators, party members, elected representatives, the wider movement and our great staff team to help ensure that co-operation continues to thrive and our values and principles are heard at decision-making tables across the UK.

**We talk a lot about the ‘co-operative approach’. How do our values and principles help shape your approach to politics as a Co-operative MP?**

To me, co-operative values are about harnessing the talents and maximising the potential of everyone, and that’s the approach I’ve taken to politics. It’s about making sure everyone’s voice is heard, that organisations and public services are accountable to the people they serve, and that power and wealth are shared by the many and not hoarded at the top by the few. I often see how co-operative values and principles can provide solutions to the problems I see around us, from helping the people who come to my advice surgeries, to community activists campaigning for a new skate park, to the work force at British Steel fighting for their industry, to the kinship carers raising child relatives. I never lose sight of the people and how we can empower them.

**The last few years have seen a seismic shift in British politics. What do you think will be the biggest opportunities for the Co-operative Party in the coming months and years?**

Over the past 50 years, we have swapped the strong society for the virtual one. People are lonely and disconnected from one another. Social media can bring people together, but it can also drive them apart. Buying online is convenient and fun, but it removes all social interaction. People sign up to virtual communities, but the fabric of local communities is fraying, with many local groups struggling to retain members. The result is a feeling of powerlessness. People feel that decisions taken about them are taken without them, so it’s not a coincidence that the slogan that took hold in the referendum was ‘take back control’. The Right have taken advantage and their divisive politics is on the rise, but I believe the Co-operative Party has better solutions. If you consider any of the problems that beset our country, it is hard to think of one to which a co-operative is not an important part of the answer.

**Finally, what’s your favourite co-operative and why?**

That’s a really tough question because there are so many amazing co-operatives, small and large, working in so many different fields. I really came to realise the potential for co-operative solutions when I set up the co-op Councils Network back in 2011 and saw how local government is really driving the Co-operative agenda. From a co-operative affordable housing scheme in Bristol to a social prescribing scheme in Oldham harnessing the power of community resources to improve health and welfare, there are some great initiatives, led by Co-operative councillors, that are improving lives and communities. ♦

**‘To me, co-operative values are about harnessing the talents and maximising the potential of everyone’**

## HELEN DENNIS



**Can you tell us about Fairtrade Foundation's She Deserves campaign and what it's aiming to do?**

We're focusing on the chocolate supply chain, and the poverty incomes that cocoa farmers in West Africa receive. The UK chocolate industry is worth £4bn each year, and yet the average farmer earns less than 75p a day. It's clear there's more that the industry and governments can do to deliver fair trade and fair prices. For our government, this is about UK Aid, global leadership and regulation.

**What does a 'living income' mean in practice?**

A 'living income' is closely related to the now-familiar concept of 'living wages' but applies in a small-holder context where farmers do not work for an employer. It estimates what a person and their family need as a minimum to lead a dignified life, accounting for basic needs like housing, nutritious food, water, education, and healthcare. Studies estimate this to be £1.86 a day in Côte D'Ivoire and £1.60 a day in Ghana. This is of course still incredibly low, but it's a starting point.



## **Why is the situation often even worse for women?**

Structural issues often get in the way – accessing finance, and land ownership rules can be obstacles for women. That's why Fairtrade set up the Women's School of Leadership aimed at empowering women and increasing their leadership in co-operatives.

## **Why chocolate?**

The UK is a nation of chocolate lovers! We each eat 8.4kg of chocolate on average every year – more than any other European country.

## **How do co-operatives empower workers in cocoa-producing countries?**

By coming together in a co-operative, farmers can seek better terms on which to sell and trade their cocoa. If traded on 'Fairtrade' terms, there will also be a guaranteed minimum price and an additional 'premium' which co-operative members manage for themselves, democratically deciding how they want to invest that extra money.

## **Both Brexit and the climate emergency present real challenges to international trade and development. How do you think consumers and the Fairtrade movement can respond?**

There is a lot of uncertainty and we are concerned that additional costs could get passed onto producers, who already have the least power. In a very challenging commercial context, companies need to know that consumers still value and want to buy Fairtrade!

Farmers in the global South are also on the frontline of the climate emergency, but have very few resources to adapt. We want to make sure that their voices are heard in global debates and that they get support to address challenges like deforestation and extreme weather events.

## **What can our members do to support the campaign and the Fairtrade movement more widely?**

This year we are celebrating 25 years of the Fairtrade mark! We'd encourage everyone to shout about why Fairtrade matters more than ever – there will be events and conferences up and down the UK. Members can also sign the She Deserves petition and write to their MPs encouraging them to raise the campaign with Government Ministers. ●



# Northern Ireland: a new Co-operative Agenda for a shared future



**Tony McMullan**  
Chair, Co-operative Party  
Northern Ireland

**W**ith the turmoil of Brexit and a changing world of work, now more than ever Northern Ireland needs a new co-operative vision for a shared future to tackle the failures of the past. We have the UK's highest rate of economic inactivity, the smallest higher education sector, and are the most likely to suffer the greatest damage from Brexit.

The absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive just makes this worse.

That's why the Northern Ireland Co-operative Party launched our 'Co-operative Agenda' – a radical call for change to build a society where wealth and power are shared through an expansion of co-operation. The policy platform is the first

of its kind and sets out how the challenges facing Northern Ireland necessitate a broad strategic commitment to increased co-operation across the economy and society as a whole.

With ambitious plans to grow the local co-operative movement across a host of sectors, it was launched at our Co-operatives Unleashed Conference attended by co-operators from across Northern Ireland, with a keynote address from Jim McMahon MP.

We are clear that the only way to build a shared future is to put co-operation at its heart. That's why we've called for any future Northern Ireland Executive to create a Co-operative Commission and ensure the Minister for the Economy has a specific remit to expand the co-operative economy.

The Northern Ireland Co-operative Party might be small, but we have big ideas and big ambitions for our country. ●

**'The only way  
to build a shared  
future is to put  
co-operation at  
its heart'**

# Scotland: how housing co-ops are creating change



**Richard McCready**  
Political Officer, Scottish  
Co-operative Party

In the Scottish Parliament, our MSPs continue to champion the co-operative model and call on the Scottish Government to take positive action to support co-ops.

As Convener of the Cross Party Group on Co-operatives, James Kelly MSP commissioned a report into housing co-ops in Scotland along with Co-ops UK. That report, 'Shared Space', set out the case for more support for housing co-ops in Scotland.

Johann Lamont MSP then secured a debate on the report in the Scottish Parliament. Johann said, 'I am immensely proud of the work of housing co-ops in Scotland, I've seen it at first hand in Rosehall Housing Co-op and West Whitlawburn Housing Co-op. These co-ops have shown

how to create change not just in the kind of housing that is available, but in how it is planned and maintained, and in how communities are then sustained. Housing co-ops understand that housing is not just bricks and mortar but about communities and the broader environment.'

Scottish Co-op MSPs will be meeting the Cabinet Secretary for Communities & Local Government in the near future and demanding that she turn her warm words about housing co-ops into solid commitments to support the co-op sector. ●

**'That report, Shared Space, set out the case for more support for housing co-ops in Scotland'**



# Wales: why Cartrefi Cymru is leading the way on social care co-ops



**Caitlin Prowle**  
Youth Officer,  
Co-operative Party

**F**ollowing nearly a decade of austerity, social care is in crisis. While demand for care has increased, we've seen a decline in provision, thanks to underfunding, spending cuts and postcode lotteries.

But in Wales, an innovative co-operative model of social care is finding solutions to the crisis and building stronger communities. Cartrefi Cymru became a multi-stakeholder co-operative in 2016, and now offers care to people

with disabilities up and down Wales. It offers open membership to service users, employees and community supporters, all of whom come together to make democratic decisions in the best interests of the community.

In an age where much of the social care sector is used for private sector profit, Cartrefi Cymru believes in working together towards a common good, on behalf of a whole community rather than a select set of stakeholders.

So while too many people suffer under failing privatisation and crumbling social care, the co-operative model in Wales offers an example of a stronger and fairer sector. ●

**'In Wales, an innovative co-operative model of social care is finding solutions to the crisis and building stronger communities'**

# Food Justice Campaign



**James Butler**  
Campaigns Officer,  
Co-operative Party

**O**ver half a million people relied on food banks last year, a damning indictment on our dysfunctional economy, our fractured society, and our broken housing market. Ultimately, what is needed is a transformative Labour and Co-operative Government, which can push through radical changes to our economy and society and an eradication of poverty.

In the meantime, the Co-operative Party is working with its representatives and encouraging national governments to make change: at Westminster, we're arguing for incorporating Sustainable Development Goal 2 (zero hunger by 2030) into UK law; in Scotland, a "right

to food" in Scots law; and in Wales, pressing for Government to measure food insecurity.

We're also encouraging councils and communities to adopt measures that we know make a difference now. Thanks to our campaign, a growing number of councils have a lead member for food poverty, are developing a food plan, and are working with communities to support the array of initiatives such as community kitchens, community shops, food banks, Incredible Edibles, and holiday hunger schemes. Yet there is still more to do. You can help be part of the campaign by ensuring that food insecurity is discussed in your local party and branch meetings, by raising the issue of food poverty with your local councillor, and by sharing our Food Justice campaign on social media. ●

**'Over half a million people relied on food banks last year, a damning indictment on our dysfunctional economy, our fractured society, and our broken housing market'**



# It's time to declare a CLIMATE EMERGENCY



**Cllr Denise Scott-MacDonald**  
Labour & Co-operative Councillor, Greenwich

**'Most of  
our carbon  
emissions  
come from  
our buildings,  
with transport  
following close  
behind'**

In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sent a warning shot; saying the world had only 12 years left to prevent a climate catastrophe. A wave of climate activism followed that called on councils to declare a climate emergency. Bristol Council was first to make the declaration in November 2018, and Greenwich did so in June of this year.

Local residents have asked what does it mean? First, it means we want to do more! We've had a climate change strategy since 2016, called The Greener Greenwich Strategy. To date, it has informed our



planning and regeneration, transport policy, biodiversity schemes and more. Now we aim to review it and update it.

Second, reducing carbon emissions: in Greenwich we've agreed to be carbon neutral by 2030. Most of our carbon emissions come from our buildings, with transport following close behind. It's time to accelerate work in this

area. We've also agreed to be free of single-use plastics by 2020 and lobby national government.

And third, it's also an opportunity to reinforce and incorporate co-operative principles like supporting renewable energy, tackling inequality, reviewing procurement practices and more.

The result: over 100 councils so far have declared a climate emergency. ●



**Making the  
most of your  
membership**



# Help us reach higher

We're powered by the support of thousands of members like you, and the fees you pay us.

Your support means we can stand more Co-operative Party candidates, be a louder voice for co-operative politics, and lead campaigns to fight the big issues facing our community.

We have ambitious plans for a fairer country – can you help us aim higher by increasing your membership fee?

- **Higher Rate: £5 per month or £60 per year**  
Switch to our higher rate for an additional £2 per month and receive a free limited-edition Co-operative Party pin.

- **100 Club: £8.33 per month or £100 per year**

Join our 100 Club and receive a free ticket to all our conferences and events and get a free Co-operative Party mug or Fairtrade bag.

- **1917 Club: £19.17 per month or £230 per year**

Join our 1917 Club and receive regular updates from the General Secretary and be acknowledged in our Annual Report. You'll also receive copies of all our publications, tickets to our events and a free Co-operative Party mug or Fairtrade bag. ●

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WE ARE A  
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OWNED COOP

# It's rewarding to work for your own community.

Member Pioneers are people who love and understand their local area. If you're energetic, sociable and organised, you have the potential to change people's lives for the better. This job is all about listening to what people need and connecting them with each other to pursue common goals. You don't need experience; just community spirit.

You'll chair meetings with people who know and trust you to fight their corner.

And you'll build relationships with businesses, charities and other individuals who can transform ideas into realities. Like developing creative spaces to inspire our children. Finding ways to improve physical and mental health. And educating adults so they can gain more fulfilling careers.

Are you well-known in your community? Your personality can lend itself to a greater purpose. It's not just a job. It's what we do.



It's what we do

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