co-operative

Members' Magazine Spring/Summer 2022

THE

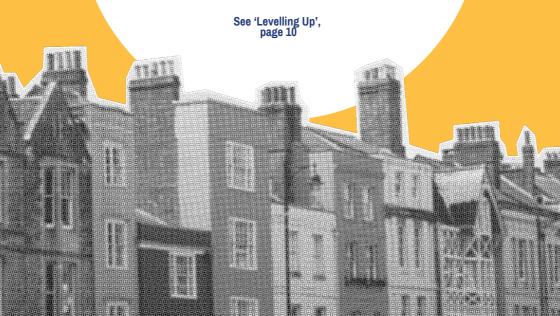


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Letter from the General Secretary



Welcome to your latest edition of The Pioneer

elcome to the latest edition of 'The Pioneer'. I start, as always, with a huge thank you to our Party's members. Without vou none of what we do would be possible.

As a Party we have had some great recent wins particularly in our campaigning on better protections for retail workers and fighting the proposed demutualisation of LV=. These campaigns are driven and lead by you.

This edition of 'The Pioneer' reflects upon our movement's knowledge and expertise in the area of bottom-up political decision making, something any Government interested in 'levelling up' should take heed of as well as our essential mission to put cooperators around decision making tables across the country.

Signs are that we will have a great showing in local elections later this year - working together on our co-operative campaigns, promoting our movement and spreading our co-operative influence is what we are all about and 2022 is going to be a big year for all of it.

All shoulders to the wheel.

Joe Fortune, General Secretary



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THE PIONEER

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Cllr John Cotton

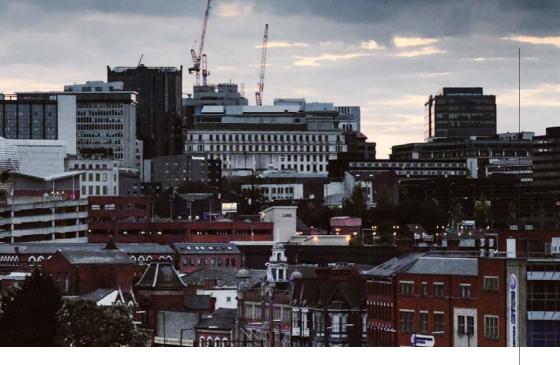
Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities, Birmingham City Council, and Councillor for Glebe Farm & Tile Cross.

ur new city slogan, 'Be Bold, Be Birmingham' reflects our aspirations for the future of our city and our determination to tackle its structural inequalities. Health inequalities are wide; over 40% of children are still growing up below the poverty line, exacerbated by a decade of Tory austerity and then the impact of the pandemic. Too many communities in our city still don't feel the full benefits of the investment coming into Birmingham and the opportunities this creates. It's our mission to put this right.

Equality is a key co-operative value and is at the heart of our mission, as a Labour council too. This means leading by example. We are upfront about our gender and race gaps, and we know we don't have diversity reflected at all levels of our organisation. As a result, having a workforce that properly

reflects our communities is a core aim, and it involves changing the culture, reviewing our recruitment practices and investing in our staff. We are also planning to launch the Birmingham Employment Charter, so other businesses can join us on that journey.

Birmingham has been working with CLES on its community wealth building strategy since 2016, to ensure that we are making the most of the collective impact of our spend. We've assembled a network of anchor institutions such as the council, hospital trust, social housing providers and universities. All of these are focused on spending more money locally, supporting local businesses and levering in additional social value for our communities. The Real Living Wage is a key part of our work, putting more money directly into people's pockets, and we have recently



announced our intentions to make Birmingham a Living Wage City. 56% of the Council's procurement spend is with businesses located in Birmingham and 79% with businesses located in the West Midlands region.

Councils have huge potential to tackle social challenges through their supply chains, and this is why Birmingham was proud to sign up to the Co-operative Party's Modern Slavery Charter. But we have gone further to ensure that we set out clear expectations of the businesses that we contract or commission with through our Business Charter for Social Responsibility. It makes sense to use our spending muscle to create opportunities to improve lives for the better. We have a default 20% social value weighting in all

the Council's bid assessments, our top 20 contractors have now delivered over 68,000 weeks of employment, over 4,500 weeks of apprenticeships and nearly 11,000 hours of voluntary activity. We've also established a Diverse Supply Chain programme, to support 75 SMEs led and owned by diverse or minority communities in being able to bid for public sector contracts. Just as we want our Council workforce to better represent the diversity of the city – our supply chains must do so too.

We have achieved much in Birmingham, but our ambitions to make our city a fairer, more equal place remain as bold as ever. We will not rest until this vital work is done.

'Councils have huge potential to tackle social challenges through their supply chains, and this is why Birmingham was proud to sign up to the Co-operative Party's modern slavery charter'

TOWER HAMLETS CO-OPERATIVE COMMISSION



Rachel Blake
Deputy Mayor of Tower Hamlets &
Labour & Co-operative Councillor

n Tower Hamlets we represent many diverse communities, with sharp contrasts in the standards of living. We have a strong and proud history of community co-operation within our borough - grassroots community organisations work in partnership with the Council and with each other to support residents to thrive. Seeing the work of these organisations during the pandemic inspires us to think about what more an empowered community can do. With the local elections fast approaching, the time is right for us to evaluate what we do as a council, and how we are enabling our residents to face up to the challenges ahead.

Over the last few months, I've been co-chairing the Tower Hamlets Co-operative Commission, with the Mayor and a group of dedicated commissioners to explore the long term solutions we need to put in place. This has involved tackling head on some of the thorniest issues in local government such as care, energy and food poverty, all within the context of how

"We have a strong and proud history of community cooperation within our borough - grassroots community organisations work in partnership with the Council and with each other to support residents to thrive"

we empower communities to address these issues with

Co-operative values provide the antidote to the increasingly centralised levelling up agenda, which sees areas bidding against each other for a share of money from Whitehall. We know in Tower Hamlets just how hollow the levelling up agenda will be if it fails to recognise inequalities within local authority areas and focuses just on the gaps between local authorities. The Commission has held evidence sessions to hear from experts and explore real practical solutions from across the country. Though we have the building blocks in our borough, we have seen the opportunity to go further; whether that is creating the right environment for care co-ops to provide people-centred care or opening up our assets for community energy generation, there is a need to seek the solutions now within our community in the absence of a coherent national response.

Although Tower Hamlets is part of a wider London economy, the Commission will focus on the recovery within the Borough, including at neighbourhood level. Over the coming weeks the commission will provide recommendations that will be specific for the characteristics and challenges of Tower Hamlets. I'm hopeful about the future we can offer our residents in May, where co-operation is at the heart of what we do.

> '...whether that is creating the right environment for care coops to provide people-centred care or opening up our assets for community energy generation. there is a need to seek the solutions now within our community in the absence of a coherent national response.'

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF OUR PARTY



Jim McMahon MP Chair of the Co-operative Party and Shadow Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Secretary

ur movement is rooted in community, and we are at our best when we are leading from the front on issues which affect people's everyday lives. As the cost-of-living crisis grows, with rocketing household bills coupled with tax hikes, our country faces more people being pushed into poverty and struggling to get by. We know more than ever that the work we've led on to tackle food hunger will be critical over the coming year, but so too is the urgent need to set out a different course for Britain

The NEC and the staff team at the Co-operative Party have been putting together our strategic plans for both the year ahead and leading to the General Election. It has been fantastic to pull together our ideas. expertise and enthusiasm and get it down on paper.

'We know more than ever that the work we've led on to tackle food hunger will be critical over the coming year, but so too is the urgent need to set out a different course for Britain.'



The Party has enjoyed strong growth and success in key areas over the life of the last strategic plan. We very much aim to build on this and push our Party forward again.

Through our process we have been clear that the core objectives – in relation to promoting and defending our movement, growing, being reflective of the communities we look to serve, providing value to our individual and organisational members, and getting our cooperative voice louder and heard more – provide a clear focus and direction of travel.

On top of the national recruitment work we particularly look forward to working with

individual local and regional parties to help facilitate even more locally driven recruitment. We know that having over 1,000 elected representatives across the country is an all-time high, but we want to do more to support, train and retain them – as well as recruit more. In 2022 we can see the work has gone in to deliver on this key aim, and through the rest of the three-year plan we should see constant developments in this area.

The relationships within our co-operative movement and with our co-operative society members are not only critical but provide us with our unique role in British politics. Our work to realise a Labour and Co-operative government is well under way, and when we are grounded in our values, and the lived experience of working people ambitious to get on, we have an opportunity to transform every nation and region to finally realise its full potential.

The Long Read





Lisa Nandy MP Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

or decades, the communities that used to power our country have only got the crumbs from the table. Too many places have been the losers in our economic settlement, many of them post-industrial and coastal towns, where good jobs have left and never been replaced. That has meant young people have had to get out to get on, moving far away from their homes and their loved ones, just to find decent opportunities.

The spending power that leaves with them causes high streets to collapse, local institutions to decay and transport networks to close down. The people left behind are aging, miles away from children and grandchildren.

Across Britain, we are proud of the places we call home but it is a pride often tinged with despair, sadness and love for the place we live. In places that once powered this country it is a feeling that is palpable on high streets, in workplaces and local pubs. That sense of contribution outweighed even pay or the conditions it gave entire places pride and purpose.

Building a new Britain must be about putting that right, creating prosperity by matching the ambition of people who want to see their rightful place in the national story restored. This mission must have at

its heart a focus on spreading opportunity, prosperity and power across the country.

In plain terms that means putting money back in people's pockets with good jobs and good wages, so that young people have choices and chances to thrive in their home towns. Every pound that goes back into the pocket of someone earning a living wage goes back out into shops and businesses, rebuilding the foundations of the local economy and allowing high streets and town centres to survive.

At its heart this is about empowering people to take control of their lives. That is why, the publication of the long-awaited Levelling Up White Paper was such a crashing disappointment. After all the hype and slogans Britain remains one of the most centralised countries of all advanced

'we must have the power to take local decisions for nurselves ending the system where we have to go cap in hand to Westminster to do what we know will work for us.'

democracies, held back by the grip a small group of Tory Ministers have over decision making across the whole of the UK.

While the Government's White Paper takes its inspiration from Jericho, the Roman Empire and Renaissance Italy, we take ours from Grimsby, Preston and Wigan where businesses, community leaders and colleges have been rebuilding Britain from the ground up.

In Preston, the Labour Council has developed its assets to build wealth in the community and keep it local. The Wigan Deal is a contract between the Council and the people that protects the things - the libraries, leisure centres and clean streets - that matter to people in return for increased volunteering. recycling rates, fostering and adoption.

In Grimsby, the regional development agency created by the last Labour Government (and abolished by the Tories) had the foresight to invest in wind energy, levering in private investment that is creating jobs and apprenticeships for Grimsby's young people.

The UK co-operative movement offers us many solutions too. A future where communities could be run by those who live and work there. We need to be putting power directly in the hands of local people. Empowering communities has always been at the heart the movement, because co-operators know that decisions are made best by those closest to them -

from workers having a say in their workplaces to fans having a stake in their football clubs.

Imagine what could be achieved with a government that could match the ambition of its people. Delivering good jobs in our home towns, so young people have choices and chances and don't have to get out to get on. Where our high streets are thriving because the local economy is thriving, with good local businesses and money in people's pockets - not just papering over the cracks.

Our towns and villages should be better connected to jobs. opportunities, and our family and our friends through good transport, digital infrastructure and affordable housing that we have too often been denied. Our town centres should be safe and welcoming instead of plagued by anti-social behaviour, with criminals being let off and victims let down.

To deliver this we must have the power to take local decisions for ourselves – ending the system where we have to go cap in hand to Westminster to do what we know will work for us. That is Labour's mission.



In Numbers

Over the past year, we have had a number of extraordinary campaigning wins - and they simply wouldn't have been possible without members like you.

Thank you for standing up for these important causes: here is just a small part of what you were able to achieve

Councils signed up to the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration

111111+

Councils passed our Modern Slavery Charter

15,371

supporters stood against the demutualisation of LV= – and won

19.6%

rise in the take up of Healthy Start vouchers since the start of our campaign 75%

of the public back our Right to Food campaign according to our latest polling

118

votes in favour of Daniel Johnson MSP's Bill to protect retail workers

EMILY

Emily Spurrell was elected Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner in 2021. She was previously a Liverpool City Councillor for Mossley Hill, and Deputy PCC for Mersevside.



What does International Women's Day mean to vou?

It's an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women whilst calling for greater action on gender equality. We live in a world designed by men, for men so the day is also about helping women design a world where they are safe to reach their potential, fighting back against gender stereotypes and calling out misogyny.

Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) was a key part of your platform when vou stood as a Labour and Co-op PCC. What did vou set out to achieve for women in Merseyside, and what progress do you feel vou've made?

It is an absolutely priority and a core focus of my Police and Crime Plan. I am appointing a VAWG lead with plans for a summit on tackling VAWG and have secured funding to address VAWG, tackling perpetrator behaviour and providing victim support. I'm also reviewing victim support services delivery so victims get the right support time with improvements planned in months ahead. I've increased the scrutiny of police response - ensuring women are believed when reporting crimes and monitoring efforts so investigations are carried out and responses are given quickly, working with criminal justice partners to examine how we can change the system to make it easier for victims. I continue to run my Domestic Abuse Workplace Scheme – working with employers to have policies and procedures for employees who disclose abuse so they are given the right support. We're also launching our campaign to tackle street harassment on public transport focusing on what constitutes a crime, how to report incidents and send a clear message that violence won't be tolerated.

Women's safety has been in the news a lot the past 12 months, do you think anything has changed nationally? What still needs to be done?

After the murder of Sarah Everard, there was an outpouring of grief from women about their experiences of sexual violence and abuse. Greater awareness about VAWG is happening for example the House of Lords making misogyny a hate crime and Government recognising domestic abuse and sexual assault under the definition of serious violence. However we don't see the same outcry in the media about those who die behind closed doors by their abuser. Recent revelations at the Met Police demonstrate how entrenched misogynistic attitudes

are. Fundamental system-wide change is needed with funding and a statutory framework with an evidence-based strategy for addressing the behaviour of perpetrators to stop crimes from happening alongside investment around relationships in schools. A radical improvement of criminal justice outcome rates for survivors of VAWG is essential so everyone gets the right response. A consultation has recently being carried out on the Victims' Bill and the creation of a long overdue Victims' Law could lead to a change in the system.

This interview goes through the letterboxes of all our members and supporters. What would you ask them to do to help to campaign for and achieve gender equality?

For the women, the most important message I can give is speak out. Whether it's signing a petition, sharing a campaign. writing to your MP or even running for election. Your voice is so important, and we need to make sure women and girls are represented throughout society. For men, I would say to use the spaces you have to amplify women's voices, support better representation of women in society and reflect on your behaviours to make women feel safer.

ABIGAIL MARSHALL

Cllr Abigail Marshall Katung represents Little London, Woodhouse and the City Centre on Leeds City Council, is Chair of the Adults, Health and Lifestyle Scrutiny Committee and is a member of the Co-operative Party NEC



Tell us a little about vourself?

I moved to Leeds from Nigeria over twenty years ago to study for a master's degree in Politics & International Studies. I then managed my own medical recruitment business for fourteen years before taking the leap into full-time politics. I am extremely honoured to now serve as

a Labour & Co-operative Councillor in a ward which was my first home in Leeds. The co-operative ethos empowers me to support and trust local communities in devolving power and resources. I believe people can achieve this and be selfreliant. Being a member of the Co-op Party National Executive

Committee has been a privilege and I love being on the policy committee as it truly shows our tradition of co-operation in action with our member-led policy process that shapes the ideas we take to the different levels of Government.

Not many people will know I'm an athlete and **England Athletics Coach!**

You are the Food Champion for Leeds, how did vou establish this role?

This role was established following the Co-op Party's Food Justice campaign in 2020, as the pandemic brought the issue of food justice to the fore. I took the lead and wrote to Baroness Judith Blake, who was then Council leader, about the campaign and she asked me to be the Food Champion - which I gladly accepted. If you don't ask, then you don't get to change things!

What have you managed to achieve as Food Champion

On a local level, we know that areas which have a food champion and a food partnership are more able to effectively respond to local food issues. In Leeds we haven't wasted any time. Leeds currently holds the 'Sustainable Food Places' Bronze award and is working towards the silver and gold awards. I co-chair our board to oversee our strategy alongside Gareth Batty, CEO of FareShare Yorkshire. We are also the first city in the UK to launch our Carbon Neutral food pledge commitment to buy and serve more food produced in Yorkshire, end the purchase

'The co-operative ethos empowers me to support and trust local communities in devolving power and resources. I believe people can achieve this and be self-reliant.

of air freighted goods, and halve the average carbon footprint of meals by 2030. I also facilitated the first multicultural food hub in the city at the beginning of the pandemic ensuring we respond to our diverse constituents in fighting food poverty.

What is the biggest change vou would like to see on the issue of food justice?

I would love to see the Right to Food being enshrined in law. People should not have to make the decision between eating and heating. The Government needs to put a stop to food hunger in the country and ensure we all have access to affordable and nutritious food.

> Sign up to the Candidate Development Programme at: www.partv.coop/ candidate-development





Tony McMullan NEC Observer, Northern Ireland Co-operative Party

he UK Government has begun to publish Healthy Start uptake data for Northern Ireland. Uptake of this important benefit is considerably lower than it was before the pandemic, and concerningly has fallen in recent months.

Shockingly, just 52% of those eligible are claiming this important benefit. The bottom line is that nearly 8,000 people in Northern Ireland are missing out on a benefit which helps pay for milk and fruit and vegetables to help ensure that their youngsters get the nutrition they need in their early years.

It's an issue which the co-operative movement and the Co-operative Party has been highlighting for some time, but the lack of published data in Northern Ireland has limited our ability to act.

Now, for the first time, people in Northern Ireland can see the uptake of Healthy Start in their area and lobby their representatives, asking them to raise the profile of this important benefit by using the food justice website.

> Join the campaign at: www.foodjusticefinder. com/healthystart/





Eunis Jassemi Labour & Co-operative Party Candidate

have seen the positive impact of Co-operative Councils in communities right across Scotland. I joined the Co-operative Party because I believe in its core principles; the distribution of wealth, handing powers to communities and supporting co-operatives and other democratic owned businesses. In the next five years, these principles will be even more important than ever as we seek to rebuild Scotland post-Covid 19.

Glasgow, under Labour, led the way on being an outward and cooperative council. The introduction of the Co-operative Development Unit, which helped to support many co-operatives and social enterprises around Glasgow is a prime example. It is initiatives like this I want to see increased in my home city and which I want to be a part of.

I'm campaigning hard because I want to join fellow Co-operative colleagues to continue to shape the city, from transport to planning, I want to support and develop community-owned co-operatives because if they succeed then Glasgow succeeds. •

'I want to support and develop communityowned co-operatives because if they succeed then Glasgow succeeds'





Huw Lewis Political & Membership Officer (Wales), Co-operative Party

his Mav sees a set of local elections that have huge implications for all our communities, as well as an opportunity to send this calamitous Tory government a message they won't easily forget.

These elections will see a record number of Welsh Labour council candidates standing with Welsh Cooperative Party support and training opportunities - at least 50 Welsh co-operators will be working hard on the doorsteps.

Just as importantly, they'll be campaigning with ideas. Our '12 ideas' document showcases practical policy ideas with co-operative values at their heart. These are ideas that are

achievable, even in the tough funding environment imposed by the last 12 years of Tory cutbacks. The '12 ideas' are an ideal source of inspiration for local manifestos. You can find them in our online publications and if you would like a hard copy, please get in touch.

Good campaigning everyone! •

"These elections will see a record number of Welsh Labour council candidates standing with Welsh **Co-operative Party** support and training opportunities"





James Butler Campaigns Officer, Co-operative Party

The Huddersfield and Colne Valley Co-op Party branch has been actively campaigning to highlight the plight of their town centre which, despite ambitious regeneration plans by the Labour Council, has been hit by a double whammy of reduced footfall from the pandemic and the longer-term challenges of an unfair tax system and business rates that favour online businesses at the expense of traditional bricks and mortar retail.

The branch kicked off their activity with a meeting with council representatives that established the need for more support for their pioneering town centre regeneration blueprint. In particular, the council agreed that we need more

transparency about who owns our town centre.

In the weeks following the meeting, the branch carried out a survey that laid bare the number of vacant units in the town centre, organised a petition for the Government to provide more funding for regeneration projects to the local community, and held an outward-facing public Zoom call with Labour & Co-operative MP Barry Sheerman to discuss the challenges and opportunities of regeneration.

In parallel to this activity, the branch took forward a motion to the Constituency Labour Party to ask the council to write to the Government regarding the unfair taxes and rates retailers face, to demand more clarity on 'levelling up' funding and request support for cooperative solutions. Branch Chair Hugh Goulbourne said, 'We have been delighted by the positive public reaction to our campaign and the interest and support of the Labour Party locally. I am really thankful for all of the work of our Secretary and others and look forward to working with the Council to move things forward for Huddersfield'. •





Anna Birley
Policy Officer,
Co-operative Party

ur policy platform sets the agenda for our Party and its representatives, and puts forward our to-do list for Parliament. This year, the policy consultation will focus on two areas – health and international development.

Improving the health and wellbeing of every community is one of the most important things for any government to do. Our healthcare policy consultation looks at how we can apply our co-operative values to ensure the NHS is protected, to make sure communities are listened to, and to tackle health inequalities.

We are also running a Health and Social Care Commission in Wales, to help shape the future of community health hubs and a foundational economy health plan.

International development speaks to the cooperative movement's internationalism. Whether it's Fairtrade chocolate or supporting co-operatives to tackle poverty in the Global South, we know that our values and principles apply far beyond our own borders.

In the tradition of co-operation, our policy development process is member-led and this is your opportunity to shape the ideas we'll take to all levels of government. Members are invited to share their views and ideas through our consultation, running until 19th June 2022.

Welsh Health & Social Care Commission party.coop/health-wales

Share your views party.coop/policy/2022





Shanika Mahendran National Youth Committee, Co-operative Party

'm really excited to become the newest member of the Co-op Party's National Youth Committee, and am particularly looking forward to having the opportunity to encourage and support more young people to stand for elected office.

Across the country, there's a whole generation of young cooperators like myself eager to apply our Party's principles and values to the issues that matter most to us. To me, co-operative politics is not only about helping people, but also about empowering communities to drive change themselves. That's why I'm so excited to be a Labour & Co-operative council candidate in the community I've grown up in Milton Keynes, and why I want to

see more young Co-op Party members stand, too.

As young co-operators, we know that our activism is key – whether it's tackling the climate crisis and protecting the planet for future generations, or fixing the housing crisis. And we also know that co-operation holds the answer to so many of these issues. I'm excited that young members like me are bringing their energy and enthusiasm to go out and push for change. •

To opt-in to any of the Networks, please visit party.coop/equalities



Issy Oozerally **Events Officer**

ver the upcoming year, we have a wide range of events both online and in person for members to take part in. Our programme means we're able to bring members together to discuss our policies and campaigns. listen to speakers from across the movement and share ideas.

Here are some of our upcoming events - you can find out about all our events at www.partv.coop/ events

Annual Conference

After two years of being unable to have an in-person conference, we're delighted to invite you to our Annual Conference which this year will be held on the weekend of 8-9th October in Leeds. There'll be keynote addresses, fringe meetings, networking events and much more. It will be a great chance to get together with co-operators from around the

country after so long apart. There will also be online events on the days either side of the conference for all members to participate in.

Co-operation Live

Our regular online Co-operation Live sessions are a chance to hear from interesting speakers, learn something new and find out how communities are organising in response to the pandemic.

There will be conferences in every region and nation this year, where you'll hear from Co-operative Party elected representatives, campaigners and members, as well as having your say on our Policy Process:

- Regional & National Conferences Spring 2022, a mix of online and in person events
- · Co-operative Party Local Government Conference, June in London
- Co-operative Party AGM, June online

Find out more at party.coop/events



Let's make things better together

Our Member Pioneers are the sparks that make great things happen in their community. You don't need experience or qualifications to become a Member Pioneer - just community spirit.

As a Member Pioneer you'll connect Co-op members, colleagues and local causes to make a difference where you live. You'll help us build stronger communities by offering fair access to food, mental wellbeing support and access to education and employment for young people.

If you care about your community, want to make things fairer and create positive change where you can, we'd love to hear from you.

Become a Member Pioneer

Find out more and apply at communityspirit.co.uk



WE BELIEVE IN A SOCIETY WHERE WEALTH AND POWER ARE SHARED.

Our Party is powered and funded by members like you. Your regular contributions help us fight elections, win campaigns, and be a louder voice for our movement.

We've had some incredible wins over the past year on issues like bee health, tax justice, ending violence against shopworkers, food poverty, stopping demutualisations and more – but these wins were only possible with your support.

We can't stop there: we need to keep holding this Government to account, support our local communities, and continue to champion our movement.

Can you chip in an extra donation to help us build a fairer future?

SOLIDARITY RATE

£5.25 per month

- * Help us make a difference and scale up our work
- * Free pin to say thanks

100 CLUB RATE

£8.33 per month

- Help us make a difference and scale up our work
- * Free pin to say thanks
- Free gift from our Shop
- Free tickets to our events

1917 CLUB RATE

£19.17 per month

- Help us make a difference and scale up our work
- * Free pin to say thanks
- * Free gift from our Shop
- * Free tickets to our events
- * Free copies of publications
 - Named in our Annual Report

To support our work visit party.coop/increase

