

**2023
co-operative
party
annual
review**



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**co-operative
party**

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Strategic objectives

The purpose of the Party is to promote co-operative and mutual forms of economic, social and voluntary organisation, which are based on the principles of mutual ownership and democratic control, and to support political action in pursuance of the Values and Principles of the Co-operative Movement, both domestically and internationally. This Annual Review is a summary of the strategic objectives the Co-operative Party worked to achieve during 2023. Through this Annual Review, each objective will be taken in turn and looked at in detail.



Chair's report



Building on the foundations of a strong response to the pandemic period, our Party continued to go from strength to strength as we looked forward and beyond in 2023.

We saw the sustained growth of our Party, with more members, supporters, and elected representatives at all levels and in all regions and nations across the UK. Buoyed by the 1,100 candidates we stood in the local elections, we now have over 1,500 local councillors and secured historic successes in gaining co-operative councils including Medway, Plymouth, York and Stoke, as well as a new Mayor in Middlesbrough.

Alongside our representation in the Westminster, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments, this growth in our membership and representation has given us the opportunity to take our co-operative message to decision-making tables and communities across the UK, and ensure our solutions are put into action where they're needed most.

As a Party we've been active in championing them at every opportunity: on community energy, for instance, 500 Co-operative councillors wrote to the Government asking for greater support for our plan – supported by 6,000 members; on retail crime over 12,500 of our members, candidates and supporters signed a letter calling for action sent to the Home Secretary; and 6,000 more signed our petition supporting the introduction of a Community Right to Buy.

Through our parliamentary representatives, we've continued to champion our Party and movement at key moments, and on key issues. On rising energy bills, food insecurity, co-operative growth, tackling violence against retail workers, leasehold reform, fair tax, fan ownership in football and so much more, the Party has provided the ideas and leadership that we need. This includes the successful passing of the Co-operatives, Mutuals and Friendly Societies Act in Westminster which will be vital in protecting and growing our co-operative and mutual sectors.

We've continued to expand our policy work in critical areas, including working alongside the wider social economy to develop proposals on encouraging alternative business start-up; working with community partners to support recommendations on local empowerment; and undertaking a successful members' policy process on housing.

These ideas and so much more were covered in our fantastic online Annual Conference, in which the Party successfully pioneered a new hybrid approach focusing on our topic of 'Ambition for Change' and bringing

together members, supporters, and senior Labour and Co-operative Politicians from across the country.

And looking further forward, over the year that Party has seized the opportunity to develop a strong platform upon which we can truly realise this ambition at the next General Election, whenever it comes.

Party members across the UK have continued to select and support Labour and Co-operative candidates who will represent their communities and our Party at the General Election, and working alongside the Labour Party we have developed core shared ambitions that will provide the platform for them to do so.

In our commitments to double the size of the co-operative sector, tackle retail crime and violence against retail workers, back community energy under Labour's Local Power Plan, and strengthen local ownership, we have solutions to so many of the major challenges we face that we are ready to take into communities up and down the UK.

I'm appreciative of the hard work done by so many people and everyone who played their part to make this a reality in what has been another successful year for the Co-operative Party. In looking ahead to 2024, I'm thankful that this has provided us with the platform to play a pivotal role in such an important year for the country.

Jim McMahon MPOBE

Chair of the Co-operative Party

Labour and Co-operative MP and Oldham West and Royton
Shadow Minister for English Devolution and Local Government



Meet our representatives

House of Commons



Alex Norris MP



Alex Sobel MP



Anneliese Dodds MP



Barry Sheerman MP



Chris Evans MP



Christina Rees MP



Florence Eshalomi MP



Gareth Thomas MP



James Murray MP



Jim McMahon MP



Jonathan Ashworth MP



Jonathan Reynolds MP



Kate Osamor MP



Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP



Lucy Powell MP



Luke Pollard MP



Sir Mark Hendrick MP



Dame Meg Hillier MP



Rachael Maskell MP



Seema Malhotra MP



Simon Lightwood MP



Stella Creasy MP



Stephen Doughty MP



Steve Reed MP



Preet Kaur Gill MP

House of Lords



Baroness Smith



Baroness Wilcox



Baroness Hayter



Lord Touhig



Lord Foulkes



Baroness Thornton



Baroness Royall



Lord Knight



Lord Monks



Lord Tomlinson



Lord Hain



Lord Hunt



Lord Kennedy



Lord Bassam



Lord McAvoy



Lord Coaker



Scottish Parliament



Anas Sarwar MSP



Claire Baker MSP



Colin Smyth MSP



Daniel Johnson MSP



Monica Lennon MSP



Neil Bibby MSP



Paul O'Kane MSP



Paul Sweeney MSP



Pauline McNeill MSP



Rhoda Grant MSP



Sarah Boyack MSP

Senedd Cymru



Alun Davies MS



Carolyn Thomas MS



Dawn Bowden MS



Huw Irranca-Davies MS



Jeremy Miles MS



John Griffiths MS



Joyce Watson MS



Lee Waters MS



Lynne Neagle MS



Michael Hedges MS



Mick Antoniw MS



Rebecca Evans MS



Rhianon Passmore MS



Sarah Murphy MS



Vaughan Gething MS



Vikki Howells MS

Police & Crime Commissioners



Alan Billings



Alun Michael



Andy Dunbobbin



Emily Spurrell



Jeff Cuthbert



Joy Allen



Kim McGuinness

Metro Mayors and Directly-Elected Mayors



Tracy Brabin



Andy Burnham



Oliver Coppard



Dr Nik Johnson



Damien Egan



Rokhsana Fiaz



Support election of co-operators at all levels of government



2023 was a good year for the Party in relation to this strategic objective. Strong local government, metro mayor candidates and police and crime commissioner candidate recruitment and support was supplemented by a busy year in the realm of Westminster selections as well.

In June, the Labour and Co-operative candidate in the Wakefield by-election, Simon Lightwood, was successfully elected taking our overall representation to 26 MPs and increasing it specifically in Yorkshire and Humber following the previously reduction in this area as a result of the West Yorkshire Mayoral election.

On a similar note, we also continued to develop our Co-operative Party Parliamentary Panel which provided tailored support and training to potential co-operative candidates ahead of Westminster selections for the General Election.

Following this support and the opening of Labour's selection processes across the country, we engaged with local members and parties to undertake both official and unofficial nominations. By the end of the year, we had successfully supported 13 official Labour and Co-operative candidates and undertaken nearly 40 unofficial nominations, giving us an excellent opportunity to support the election of the next generation of co-operators and increase the size and influence of the Co-operative Party in Westminster at the next election.

Local Government elections

In line with the Party's strategic plan and year plan 2023 securing the election of Co-operative Party candidates in the Local Elections was to be an important aspect of the Party's work within this strategic objective.

May 2023 saw a large set of council elections in unitary and district councils, as well as some Mayoral elections. The Party stood a record number of candidates, over 1000, with many individual councils standing record numbers of co-operative candidates such as the 38 in Derby City Council and Medway Council, and 22 in Hertsmere Borough Council and York City Council. Overall 80% of councils in England had a co-operative candidate with 29 council areas having over 10 Labour & Co-operative candidates. Retention of Labour & Co-operative Councillors was high as a result of targeted work with 224 candidates standing for re-election as Labour and Co-operative.

The final results saw the Party pass the 1,500 Councillor mark, up from 1,200. The Party also gained a number of Co-op council leaders who went on to take part in our successful Local Government Conference in Manchester.

Labour & Co-op Councillor demographics

45%

identified as women

25%

identified as BAME

20%

as having a disability

15%

identified as LGBTQ+



Regional Labour & Co-op Councillor numbers

1403

England

168

South East

147

East Midlands

76

South West

137

East of England

108

West Midlands

359

London

96

**Yorkshire &
the Humber**

92

**North East &
N Cumbria**

72

Scotland

218

North West

46

Wales

Clearly standing over 1000 candidates is a significant logistical undertaking for the Party with the corresponding certificates, campaign packs and campaign days but the Party performed well in this endeavour. Soon after the elections in 2023 the Party also began its work to build its candidate cohort for 2024. This work entails individual meetings, training sessions, appearances at Group meetings and work with Local Parties.

Local Candidate Development Programme

A successful feature of the Party's work in securing the election of co-operators at all levels has been the Local Candidate Development Programme – in 2023 this was no exception. The Development Programme covers a range of areas including; practical campaign training, sessions on the co-operative movement, informal drop-ins and digital support. Like in previous years through 2023 it runs through the very start of the year and then following the Local Elections that year it begins again in the third quarter and aids the candidate build for the following year. Through 2023 there were a range of sessions which were solely for candidates and others open to sitting elected representatives.

Through 2023 the Party delivered two full rounds of basic training sessions 1-4, July 2023, October 2023, 1 x 4-part package of training sessions from Labour Local Government Campaigns Co-operative, and sessions on Labour Connects, Digital, Equalities session, support for those with caring responsibilities, Candidates' Coffee Mornings and a session with the Party Chair. This amounted to 21 council candidate training sessions in total through the year. 2023 also saw the Party hold candidate sessions for those members within our equalities networks as well.



Westminster Selections

Our preparations for the General Election continued with the recruitment of further parliamentary candidates.

Building on the work started in 2022, we continued to develop our Co-operative Party Parliamentary Panel to facilitate candidate selections for the next General Election. This included further training and tailored support for potential candidates on a range of issues, including personal development and support focused specifically on the Co-operative Party and wider co-operative movement. In 2023, the Party also hosted an in-person event for Co-operative Party PPCs in Westminster attended by a wide range of Co-operative Party frontbench Parliamentarians.

The Party continued to play an important and active role in the Labour Party's candidate selection process, undertaking a range of both official and supportive (unofficial) nominations through our members. By the end of the year, the Co-operative Party had successfully supported 19 official Labour and Co-operative candidates, and undertaken over 70 unofficial nominations, giving the Party and members opportunity to have their say in increasing the size of our representation in Westminster. In 2023, new official Co-operative Party PPCs included:

Official Party candidates were subsequently supported with further training, Co-operative Party resources, campaign days, briefings and other resources that will support their election as co-operators.

Kirsty McNeill
Midlothian

Chris Vince
Harlow

Douglas Alexander
East Lothian

Jackie Jones
Ceredigion Preseli

Anna Turley
Redcar

Kirsteen Sullivan
Bathgate and
Linlithgow

Through 2023 it was good to see the Party's Official Candidates attain a much higher profile within the Party's communication channels as a result of their involvement in Party campaigns, store visits, recruitment pushes and local campaigning.

Police & Crime Commissioner selections in 2023

David Allen
Cumbria

Alistair Watson
Staffordshire

Matt Storey
Cleveland

Stanka Adamcova
Wiltshire

Nicolle Ndiweni
Derbyshire

Phillipa Thompson
Dyfed-Powys

Rory Palmer
Leicestershire

Jane Mudd
Gwent

Susan Dungworth
Northumbria

Emma Wools
South Wales

Gary Godden
Nottinghamshire

Metro Mayor selections in 2023

Andy Burnham
Greater Manchester

Kim McGuinness
North East

Oliver Coppard
South Yorkshire

Claire Ward
East Midlands

Tracy Brabin
West Yorkshire

David Skaith
York & North Yorkshire

Chris McEwan
Tees Valley

Richard Parker
West Midlands



**Be leaders of
co-operative
solutions; seeking
their delivery locally,
regionally and
nationally in every
sector of society
and the economy**



Through the year the Party sought to focus its work in this strategic objective on four main areas. These focusses included:

**Co-operative Growth:
Double the size of the
co-operative sector**

**Community Renewable
Energy expansion**

**Local Ownership: high streets
and community assets.**

**Retail crime and violence
against retail workers**

Whilst further details of work in relation to these four focusses can be seen below in this report through 2023 worked to achieve:

Co-operative Growth –
Labour Party National Policy Commitment for the double the size of the sector policy.

Community Renewable Energy Expansion –
secured the largest ever commitment to the Community Energy Sector through the landing of the Local Power Plan within the Labour Party’s Energy Mission. This commitment would see GB Energy’s main mission to help deliver a million new owners of energy across the country and the sector to generate 8 gigawatts of community owned renewable energy.

Local Ownership –
secured a policy commitment that a new Westminster Labour Government would introduce a new ‘Community Right to Buy’ and strengthen localism powers to help grow the amount of local community ownership across England.

Retail crime –
secured a new Labour Party policy to introduce a new standalone offence of violence and abuse against retail workers and to withdraw the £200 investigation limit on offences.



Policy partnership work

Through the year and in line with our strategic plan the Party also sought to develop new policy publications and develop new partnerships in the area of policy development. This work through the year included:

‘Rebuilding Policing and Criminal Justice’ publication which the Party worked with the co-operative movement, retail societies and its Police and Crime Commissioners on. This publication was designed to be used ahead of and post elections 2024.

‘Co-operative Rural Commission Report’.

This publication saw the Party appoint Commissioners from experts in rural policy, the co-operative movement and political representatives. Following a call for evidence, events, commissioner sessions and drafting the report was launched in Westminster by the Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Party would like to take this opportunity to thank the Commissioners for their work in this report.

‘A Labour Vision for Community Power’.

This report was a joint piece with ‘New Local’ and a number of Labour & Co-operative Local Government leaders. The Party hosted the launch of this publication online.

‘Scotland’s Green Energy Future: A Co-operative Energy Transition’

The Scottish Co-operative Party developed this piece with the support of officers. The report was launched in the Scottish Parliament and submitted to wider policy consultations launched by the Scottish Labour Party.

‘Making Britain the best place to start an alternative business’.

This report was co-produced with Social Enterprise UK. The development of the report followed a call for evidence from social enterprises and co-operatives.

The Co-operative Party partnered with the Labour Party on a policy development piece on the wider social economy. Following a launch the work included a call for evidence, roundtables and the final report submitted to relevant frontbench shadow Ministers.

Manifestoes and party policy platforms

As part of the development of the Co-operative Party’s platform for the next General Election, we conducted a platform consultation process, which included holding in person workshops at our regional conferences and a wider online consultation. We received 114 online submissions to the policy consultation, with hundreds of members taking part in workshops during the regional conferences.

The Party also developed and distributed policy platform offers for local elections and ahead of Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

Labour Party National Policy Forum

Through 2023 the UK Labour Party concluded its 2023 National Policy Forum cycle. With the final reports being agreed in June 2023. The Party worked in the lead up to this culmination with its representatives attending, presenting, submitting evidence and contributing to the policy commissions. There was a very strong reflection of the Co-operative Party’s input in to the final reports with co-operative inclusions covering; housing, co-op growth, local ownership, early years, energy, business advice, international development amongst other issues.

Welsh Government Commitments

Through 2023 there were two Welsh Labour & Co-op co-operative and mutual Ministerial commitments. During 2023, the Welsh Government successfully completed doubling the size of the employee ownership sector in Wales, following this Vaughan Gething MS announced further funding for development support and Jeremy Miles MS announced new co-operative education initiatives.



Westminster Legislative Activity

Through 2023 the Party working with its Parliamentary representatives was active in promoting new UK legislation which if adopted would benefit the co-operative movement. This work included:

The Co-ops Bill

Sir Mark Hendrick MP, (Labour & Co-op) introduced a 'co-ops bill' which the Party was keenly involved in. The Bill which legislated for a new voluntary asset lock for co-operatives and laid the groundwork for a future Law Commission report passed through its Parliamentary stages and became law in 2023. The Party supported this Bill and mobilised movement and member support for it through its passage.

FSMA Bill

The Party developed and supported Labour Party frontbench amendments to the Financial Services and Markets Bill which would place new duties on regulator's to provide support for co-operatives and mutuals and put in place growth targets. This work was led by Shadow Treasury Minister Tulip Siddiq MP.

2nd Economic Crime Bill

The Party worked with Lab & Co-op BEIS Frontbench colleagues on co-op amendments aimed at levelling the playing field for co-operative to this piece of legislation, the work was led by Seema Malhotra MP.

Procurement Bill

The Party worked with Lab & Co-op Cabinet Office frontbench representatives including Florence Esholami MP through this Bill in-which the Party supported amendments which would have made it easier for co-operatives and mutuals to access public procurement.

Levelling Up Bill

The Party worked with Lab & Co-op HCLG colleagues including Alex Norris MP to promote amendments to introduce strengthened localism powers and a new community right to buy through the life of this piece of Government legislation.

Local Council motions

Through 2023 the Party continued to promote a number of Council Motions and charters. Through the year a significant number of councils adopted at least one of the Party's work in this area. In 2023 the Party developed and promoted the 'Diverse Council Charter', Fair Tax Motion, Anti-Modern Slavery Charter and Food Justice Motion. The Fair Tax Motion passed its 50th Council signatory in 2023 - this included Rochdale, Bolton, Hyndburn, Medway and North Yorkshire County Council; and the Anti-Modern Slavery Charter passed its 150th Council signatory through the year.

Member-led Party policy process

The Party successfully completed the Policy Process 2023, delivered a new member-led policy paper on housing, with record submissions from both individuals and groups.



**Inspire and educate
our audience about
the achievements
and potential of the
co-op movement**



As the Party continues to grow and develop its range of activity, it strengthens its ability to inspire and educate the Party's audiences through the events and conference programme, its social media output, traditional media pieces, email based work and campaigning.

Co-operative Party Conferences 2023

Over recent years, the number and quality of Co-operative Party conferences has been increasing. In 2023 the Party delivered:

- Co-operative Party Annual conference 'Ambition for Change'
- 11 National and regional conferences
- Local Government Conference
- Equalities Conference

Reports of activity at these conferences are below:

'Ambition for Change' Annual Conference 2023

The Party's 'Ambition for Change' conference took place online on Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September. Conference Saturday was delivered live from a studio setting in a 'magazine-style' format which provided a modern vibrant feel to the event. Member-led participatory sessions were held on Sunday via Zoom. 1,300 attended (viewed) the conference over the course of the weekend, with the filmed and pre-recorded content used to generate online traffic since the event.

Conference Saturday

Saturday's programme took the form of a series of keynote speeches, panel discussions and pre-recorded films focusing in detail on the 3 priority areas for the Party ahead of the next General Election:

1. Growing the Co-operative Sector
2. Community Energy
3. Local Ownership

The pre-recorded film content saw 3 new videos produced featuring case studies from locations around the country. These were ITBC (an employee-owned training provider based in Cardiff); Nudge Community Builders, Plymouth and Ambition Lawrence Weston wind turbine.

Speakers included Jonathan Reynolds MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Business & Industrial Strategy),

Ed Miliband MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Energy Security), Vaughan Gething MS (Welsh Government Finance Minister), Miatta Fahnbulleh (Labour & Co-op Party Prospective Parliamentary Candidate and Economist), Sarah Boyack MSP (Shadow Energy Minister, Scottish Parliament), Rhoda Grant MSP (Spokesperson on Rural Affairs), Kim McGuinness (North East Metro Mayor candidate), Tim Davies Pugh (CEO of Power to Change) and Emma Bridge (CEO Community Energy England) .

Conference Sunday

Held on Zoom to facilitate greater engagement with members, Sunday's programme included a member-led debate on Housing policy and an examination of other co-operative policy objectives on Social Justice and Creating a Fairer Economy. Contributions included the Co-op Group, non-member co-operatives such as Equal Care Co-op and South Manchester Credit Union and campaign groups Your Local Pantry, Fair Tax Foundation and Positive Money.

Parliamentary and Network Reports

The weekend of Conference was immediately preceded by three online-only Parliamentary Report events updating members on the ongoing work of Co-operative Parliamentary Groups in Westminster, Holyrood and Cardiff Bay. Post Conference, online reports were received from the steering committees of each of the five Equality Networks.

Media

Conference content was carried on Sky, featured in Politico and achieved a range of newspaper coverage (including Guardian and The I) as a result of comments from conference speakers.



‘From Crisis to Co-operation’ Regional & National Conferences

Throughout spring 2023, the Party held a full range of national and regional Co-operative Party Conferences. Event programmes featured keynote speakers from Labour & Co-operative elected politicians; updates on current Party campaigns and the work of our equality networks; participatory workshops focusing on co-operative policy solutions for the Party’s next General Election platform and spotlighting co-operative solutions specific to each region.

North East in Sunderland (28 January)

featuring Alex Norris MP - Labour & Co-operative Shadow Minister for Levelling Up and Kim McGuinness - PCC for Northumbria.

South East in Gillingham (2 February)

with Tan Dhesi MP, Shadow Minister (Transport) and MP for Slough and Joe Fortune, General Secretary

North West in Liverpool (18 February)

featuring Steve Rotheram, Mayor Liverpool City Region Ashley Dalton MP for West Lancs and Sir Mark Hendrick MP for Preston.

Yorkshire and Humberside in Doncaster (25 February)

with Tracy Brabin - Labour & Co-operative Mayor of West Yorkshire and Rachel Maskell MP for York.

Midlands in Derby (25 February)

featuring Alex Norris MP - Labour & Co-operative Shadow Minister for Levelling Up; Preet Gill MP - Labour & Co-operative Minister for International Development; Baroness Anderson of Stoke on Trent and Lord Vernon Coaker.

London Co-operative Party in Westminster (4 March)

with Policy discussions on Tackling Transport Poverty, Fair Tax, Policing, doubling the size of London’s Co-operative sector and the Great Homes Upgrade campaign; campaigning on Fairtrade and Food Justice; plus information for current and aspiring local government candidates.

South West in Exeter (11 March)

featuring Cllr Philip Bialyk - Leader Exeter City Council; Cllr Tudor Evans – Leader Plymouth City Council; Cllr Jane Kirkham - PPC for Truro & Falmouth and Labour Group Leader Cornwall Council and Joe Fortune – General Secretary.

East of England in Cambridge (11 March)

with Daniel Zeichner MP for Cambridge & Shadow Minister for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

Wales Co-operative Party in Cardiff (22 April)

featuring Vaughan Gething MS, Jeremy Miles MS, Sarah Murphy MS, Stephen Doughty MP for Cardiff South & Penarth, Chris Evans MP for Islwyn, Gerald Jones MP for Merthyr Tydfil and Baroness Wilcox of Newport.

Scottish Co-operative Party in Edinburgh (22 April)

with Anas Sarwar MSP - Leader of Scottish Labour; Ian Murray MP - Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, multiple Labour & Co-op MSPs and PPC Kirsty McNeill. In addition, the Scottish Co-operative Party hosted a post-event drinks reception to mark the retirement of Harry Cairney as President of Scotmid Co-operative.

Northern Ireland in Belfast (13 May)

featuring Jim McMahon MP – Party Chair and Emma Hoddinott – Assistant General Secretary. A session focused on valuing NI Co-operative Party members – how they inform policy and make change was also included in the event programme.



Co-operative Party Local Government Conference (17 June)

Held at the People's History Museum in Manchester, this year's LGC focused on practical steps to deliver co-operative manifesto commitments and brought together Co-operative Party elected representatives from across the UK to demonstrate best practice, collaborate and share knowledge. The programme also featured speeches by Metro Mayors, councillor leaders and Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party. There was a strong turn out from over 120 Councillors participating in the varied programme, which included a range of participatory workshops with external organisations (including the Fair Tax Foundation, Incredible Edible and Sustain) plus a small marketplace with exhibitors Co-ops UK, Co-operative Councils Innovation Network, Labour Coast & Country and Money Matters.

Following the event, the Manchester Co-operative Party hosted a networking event for attendees on the terrace of the venue.

'Equalities at the Heart of Co-operation' Conference (9th September)

The Party conducted its second annual Equalities Conference, with over 300 people registered to attend. The Equalities Officer worked with Network Steering Committee's to devise programme content which featured an 'in-conversation' with Anneliese Dodds MP and Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP on the topic of the implementation of the Equalities Act and panel discussions with speakers from organisations including Signalise Co-op, Change Out and the Co-op Group's Rise Staff Network examining:

- Equality From The Start – Challenges for those from minority groups starting Co-ops
- Co-operative Values in a Diverse Workplace
- Ensuring more Diverse Councils



Labour Party Conferences activity

UK Labour Party Conference (8/11 October)

The Party attended the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool delivering a successful and well attended range of fringe events:

Why Rural Wins for Labour

in partnership with NALC and Labour Coast and Country. With speakers Jim McMahon MP, Chair of the Co-operative Party and former Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Cllr Keith Stevens, Chair, National Association of Local Councils; Cllr Elizabeth Marsh, Misterton with Walcote Parish Council; Baroness Hayman of Ullock, Shadow Defra spokesperson and chair Emma Hoddinott, Co-operative Party;

Owning and Controlling: the Case for Community Power and Local Ownership

in partnership with Power to Change and the Plunkett UK. With speakers Paula Barker MP - Shadow Minister for Devolution and the English Regions; James Alcock - Chief Executive, Plunkett UK; Inayat Omarji - Community Business Leader; Annoushka Deighton - Friends of Stretford Public Hall and chair Emma Foody, Co-operative Party

A Mission for Sustained Growth - How a Labour Government can support Co-operatives and Social Enterprise

in partnership with Co-ops UK and Social Enterprise UK. With speakers James Murray MP – Shadow Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Labour & Co-operative MP for Ealing North; Rose Marley – Chief Executive, Co-operatives UK; Peter Holbrook, Chief Executive Social Enterprise UK; Miatta Fahnbulleh – Economist and Labour & Co-operative Parliamentary Candidate for Camberwell & Peckham and chair Joe Fortune, General Secretary, Co-operative Party

The Party's Officers also took part in a range of other fringes and roundtables, including:

- Chair of the Party, Jim McMahon MP, sharing a platform with Shirine Khoury-Haq, CEO of the Co-operative Group, on the topic of social mobility.
- A private invite-only breakfast roundtable discussion Co-operative Party Police and Crime Commissioners, Co-op Group and Shadow Policing Minister on the topic of retail crime and violence.

In addition:

- The General Secretary delivered sororal greetings to the Conference – with the speech centring upon the four key areas of work for the Party – growing the co-operative economy, local ownership, community energy and retail crime and areas of policy agreement with the Labour Party.
- Party Officers ran a well-appointed and visible exhibition stand with recruitment, merchandise purchasing and member campaign picture boards.
- The Party had policy content from the main platform from Ed Miliband MP and Yvette Cooper MP.
- The Party ran a WhatsApp group alerting those who wished to join about what co-operative activities and campaigns were happening at the conference.
- The Party produced video and online content throughout the Conference which received strong engagement.

Scottish and Welsh Labour Conferences

Scottish Labour (17/19 Feb) and Welsh Labour (11/12 Mar) Conferences.

The Party had a full presence on both Welsh and Scottish Labour Party conference platforms, as well as holding a fringe event and an exhibition stall. Fringes were well attended and profiled Co-operative elected representatives and figures from the co-operative movement:

- Scottish Labour Conference Fringe: A Right to Food with Rhoda Grant MSP - Scottish Labour & Co-operative MSP for Highlands & Islands; Cllr Joe Fagan - Leader of South Lanarkshire Council and Polly Jones - Head of Scotland, The Trussell Trust.
- Welsh Labour Conference Fringe: Building Co-operative local economies in Wales, in association with Cwmpas. With speakers Glenn Bowen – Cwmpas; Cllr Huw David – Leader Bridgend CBC; Sharon Jones – Creating Enterprise and Jackie Jones - Chair Wales Co-operative Party.

Additional events held included:

- South West Peninsular Co-op Party Council (1 July) in association with Devon Labour Forum and Devon & Somerset SERA - summer conference on securing food justice for our region, country and our world.
- BAME Co-operators network (18 July) – hosting an event at the House of Commons to mark South Asian Heritage Month.



Co-operation Live events

The Party's 'Co-operation Live' online events have become an important and valued part of the activity programme of the Party since their inception through the pandemic. They allow members, activists and supporters the opportunity to hear from experts, practitioners and elected representatives on specific co-operative topics and engage in debate and discussion.

Throughout 2023, the Party presented over 23 high quality online-only Co-operation Live policy and training events. All Co-operative Live events are recorded and made available to view on the Party's YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/ukcooparty/> videos.

The Party is committed to ensuring all our online events are accessible to all. In 2023, the Party trialled using Zoom's in-built facility to provide captioning for Co-operation Live events. The list of events that took place through 2023 is below:

- Passenger Power on rail and buses: with Transport Focus (19 Jan)
- The Warm Hubs Initiative: with Warm Welcome and Good Faith (1 Feb)
- The future of affordable housing: with CCH and Labour Housing (15 Feb)
- Animal Welfare: with Respect for Animals and Labour Animal Welfare Society (22 Mar)
- Celebrating International Womens' Day: with speakers Jennifer Mielke, StyleCrush Co-op and Ksenia Shulyarenko, Radish Co-operative (22 Mar)
- Co-op Growth: featuring Mick Whelan, GS ASLEF and President Labour Unions (5 Apr)
- Online Iftar (19 Apr)
- Co-op Growth: featuring Rose Marley, CEO Co-ops UK (20 Apr)
- Co-operative Party's Rural Commission Report: with Lord Bassam, Baroness Hayman and Plunkett UK (26 Apr)
- Pioneering Change in Local Government: with newly elected Labour & Co-operative Council Leaders in Medway, High Peak and York (17 May)
- Co-op Party's Housing Policy Platform (7 Jun)
- Marking FairTax Week: with the FairTax Foundation (14 Jun)
- Social Care solutions to fix a broken system: with Equal Care Co-op and Leading Live Co-op (17 Jul)
- Achieving Food Justice: with Kandaroo and School Food Matters (6 Sep)
- Black History Month: Celebrating our Sisters, speakers included Kate Osamor MP and Cllrs Kemi Akinola, Denise Scott McDonald, Sharon Thompson, Abi Marshall-Katung (4 Oct)
- Addressing Retail Crime: with the Co-op, Central England Co-op and Emily Spurrell, PCC for Merseyside (18 Oct)
- The Housing Crisis: with Generation Rent, Renters Reform Coalition and Get Commonhold Done (1 Nov)
- Fan Owned Football: with Fair Game, Luton Town Football Club and Derby County Supporters Club (15 Nov)
- Expanding Employee Ownership: with Ra Cristello, Service Employees International Union-United Healthcare Workers West (California) (29 Nov)
- International Day for People with Disabilities: with Nathan Oswin – TUC Lead on Covid Inquiry (13 Dec)

Summer School:

- Getting the most from your membership (10 Jul)
- Introduction to Local Government (18 Jul)
- Working with Labour (25 Jul)



Co-operative movement events and conferences

Through 2023 the Co-operative Party sought to be active and visible through a wide range of co-operative movement events. Amongst other events and seminars through 2023 the Party:

- Had a presence at the Co-operative Retail Conference and the General Secretary spoke within the main programme.
- Had a presence at Co-operative Congress.
- Took part in Co-operative UK's Practitioner Forum.
- Had presence and the General Secretary spoke at the Midcounties Society AGM.
- Produced video content for the Central Co-op AGM.
- Had presence at both East of England, Co-op Group and Scotmid AGMs.
- The General Secretary presented to the Central Co-op Board.
- The General Secretary and the Party Chair attended and spoke at meetings of the National Members Council of the Co-operative Group.

100 Days to local elections event

The Party also held a '100 days to local elections' event – for candidates and members ahead of local elections 2023. Well over 200 people viewed the event, which was addressed by Jim McMahon MP, Anneliese Dodds MP, Shaun Davies (Labour LGA chair), NEC member Cllr Abigail Marshall Katung and a number of Co-op representatives. We revamped and re-issued our local government manifesto tool titled 'Build your own manifesto' that allowed candidates to see co-operative ideas in a useful format.



Other member Events

Over the course of 2023 the Party has held a range of events to encourage and equip them with the knowledge and skills to be active members of our Party. Our Summer training school included online training sessions for members who have joined more recently to learn about the Party, the different ways to get involved and at different levels, how we work with the Labour Party and Labour our work in local government and how to stand as a Co-operative candidate. Regionally we have also held Party Officer drop ins, campaign briefings for CLP delegated, membership retention training and Officer training.

- Co-operative Party 101 (6 July)
An introduction to the work of the Party, our history Wand plans for the future with our General Secretary, Joe Fortune.
- Getting the most from your membership (10 July)
Branches are at the heart of member activity - find out how you can get involved in a branch, our campaigns or equalities networks.
- Introduction to Local Government (18 July)
Co-operative Councillors are leading co-operative action in their communities - learn about their work and how you can be a candidate.
- Sister Parties: Working with Labour (25 July)
For nearly 100 years we've worked with Labour – find out how we work together in Parliament and how to become an active CLP delegate

Press, social media and communications

Over the course of 2023, the Co-operative Party has expanded the scope and reach of its communications across all platforms – helping to reach new audiences, grow our membership and support our key campaigns, candidates and policy areas.

Our communications to our members and supporters by email has continued to drive engagement. While sending a total of 6,062,433 emails, we maintained our above-industry average open rates while driving down our unsubscribe rate by a further 7%.

Our popular mailing list continued to grow, reaching over 90,000 subscribers and continuing to channel support towards our key campaigns and help grow our membership. We also continued to innovate in terms of our email automation to drive up member retention and provide improved journeys both for those new to membership and those new to the Co-operative Party more broadly.

On social media, we were able with increased capacity in the second half of 2023 to improve the consistency, style and number of our posts across all channels. This resulted in particularly improved results on Instagram, where our key metric of post reach was up 157% compared to 2022, and on Facebook where our key metric of link clicks was up 15% despite Facebook's moves to deprioritise both links to external content and political content during the year. Our strategy of insulating against algorithmic changes on any one platform by increasing our presence across multiple channels led to increased use particularly of WhatsApp and TikTok through the year. We also trialled using SMS to drive member mobilisation, asking members to recruit a friend and sign up for further mobile communications via WhatsApp.

In traditional press, the Co-operative Party was again able with increased capacity to improve our reach and impact. As well as being featured regularly in movement-adjacent press publications such as Co-operative News and LabourList throughout the year, we achieved coverage for our issues in outlets such as the Guardian, the Daily Mirror and the New Statesman, including multiple prominent print pieces on our policy success regarding community energy. In terms of broadcast, live coverage from our online conference was carried out on Sky News, while the conference also generated mentions in press newsletter publications such as those sent by Politico, LabourList, Politics Home and the New Statesman.



Party Campaigning

Through 2023 the Party campaigned hard on the issues important to it and the wider co-operative movement. The Party continued to motivate tens of thousands of members and supporters to take action with it. Alongside the full suite of campaign activities and issues the Party sought to begin to focus its campaigning activities on four areas of work 'co-operative growth', the expansion of community owned energy schemes, local community ownership and retail crime.

Retail Crime

The Party has been working with Subscribing Societies and Usdaw trade union to take forward plans to strengthen protections for shopworkers and support calls for additional community policing resources.

Alongside the new Labour Party policy the Co-operative Party successfully worked to achieve in 2023 the Party:

- Produced a joint letter to the new Home Secretary calling for action on retail crime. The Party partnered with Retail Societies and USDAW on this letter. It was led by Co-operative Party Prospective Parliamentary Candidates. 12,000 members and supporters joined this call to action. It was circulated to Co-op Group members.
- A new members campaign pack was produced and circulated through the Party.
- The Party supported a large number of store visits for its elected representatives and prospective parliamentary representatives. This work generated a wide range of local media coverage.
- The Party supported and communicated about a wide range of Parliamentary actions in Westminster, Holyrood and the Senedd.
- The Party and its elected representatives spoke at a range of co-operative movement events on the campaigns and its related issues.

Community Energy

Community Energy has been one of the key focusses of the Party throughout 2023. The Party has sought to ensure that the Party's campaigning reflected that focus. The Party has launched a 'Community Energy Finder' online tool which allows members and supporters to find their nearest community energy project and take actions with local and national political figures. This combined with the campaign toolkit the Party launched has seen 6,000 members and supporters take action with us on this important campaigning area.

Fairtrade Fortnight and Co-operatives Fortnight

In 2023 the Party fully supported both Fairtrade Fortnight and Co-operatives Fortnight. This campaigning support saw the Party circulate campaign packs to members and supporters, deliver Parliamentary EDMs, questions, debates, photo-ops and video content for both fortnights. This was supplemented by Co-op Party Live events and local party activity.

Modern Slavery

Building upon the successful campaign the Party has run on this issue through 2023 continue its work. The focus of this work was the Parliamentary work on the Illegal Migration Bill. The Party campaigned for the Westminster Government not to leave the Anti Modern Slavery Commissioner role vacate, maintain its offices budget and continue to support victims of modern slavery. 3,000 members and supporters took action with the Party on this issue and contacted their elected representatives to support the Party's work with 10,000 signing Party petitions on the issue.

Building Local Ownership

At the Co-operative Party we know the difference local ownership can make to communities. Local people coming together to buy at-risk pubs, shops and other community assets in order to revive or repurpose them in a way that benefits the community.

The Party released a member's campaign pack on local ownership which includes briefings and actions for them to be able to take action locally. We have also spoken to members and supporters, collating best practice examples of successful asset transfers or how the use of the Assets of Community Value (ACV) initiative is giving communities more time and more of a say on the future of venues.

The Party campaigns for local ownership to be a more accessible option for communities up and down the country – we can do that with the introduction of a Community Right to Buy, including first refusal on assets of community value, and long-term vacant high street properties and the right to force a sale on land or buildings which are in a state of significant disrepair - over 6,000 Co-operative Party members and supporters have already signed our petition supporting calls for a UK-wide Community Right to Buy.



Food Justice

Through 2023 the Party continued to support calls for Healthy Start vouchers to be made more accessible and to encourage take-up. We are working with Co-operative Councillors across the country to ensure their local authorities are doing all they can to enable everyone who is entitled to the vouchers are receiving them.

The Co-operative Party were one of the leading voices in calling for an increase in Healthy Start food and formula vouchers in line with inflation – with over 7,000 people signing our petition.

Co-operative Growth

The Co-operative Party are committed to doubling the size of the co-operative sector – a vital ambition to ensuring the benefits of co-operatives can be felt more widely across our economy. The growth of the co-operative model will be essential to improving productivity and business resilience.

In Wales, progress has been strong, with 64 new employee-owned businesses established with the support of the Welsh Government during this Senedd term, bringing us close to achieving our manifesto commitment to double the size of the sector.

Alongside elected co-operators from across the country, West Yorkshire Metro Mayor, Tracy Brabin has been championing both small local co-operatives and some of the biggest in the country which are based in her region – including Suma Foods, Leeds Bread Co-op and Arla Foods UK – highlighting the positive impact they can make to the economy and society.

Bees

As a party we've continued to raise awareness of the use of neonicotinoids, a bee-killing pesticide which is toxic to various forms of wildlife, is banned in the EU and in the UK but we know due to a loophole ministers continue to use the pesticide in "emergencies".

We've encouraged our members and supporters to take a stand again this and call on the government to end the use of bee-killing pesticides once and for all. Almost 10,000 people have signed our ask.

Insulation/The Great Homes Upgrade

Alongside community energy, we know there are other ways to tackle the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and skyrocketing energy costs. The Great Homes Upgrade campaign to get the government to upgrade the millions of cold and leaky homes in the UK has gained support over the past 12 months.

We've continued to encourage our members and supporters to get involved by hosting local meetings to discuss what retrofitting could mean for their community, providing resources to host street stalls through the campaign toolkit and getting our elected members involved by asking them to talk about the positive impact these upgrades could have on job creation, community benefit and housing quality.

Warm Spaces

Through our network of 1,500 local councillors across the UK, we have been working with them to support warm banks, whether it's setting up in their communities, volunteering at existing projects or accessing funding.

This year we've continued that work by speaking with external organisations, including Warm Welcome Spaces and partners, as well as our councillors who are working with council officers, voluntary, community and faith sectors to utilise buildings and spaces to support residents struggling with the energy and cost of living crisis.



**Have an engaged,
diverse and
growing individual
and organisational
membership that
values the Party
and its work**



The last few years have seen significant change for the Party and indeed the country for how we engage, organise and communicate effectively. As a consequence the Party has invested significantly in this area with the introduction of Regional Organisers – initially to assist with the transition of activity online and more recently to ensure that local Parties are able to develop and deliver an interesting and engaging offer for members to get involved in.

Organisers have supported and worked with local officers to get members active in campaigns, attract interesting and engaging speakers and recruit local government candidates. This remains an important piece of work and the feedback from local parties is that the increase in support has become invaluable.

Examples of local Party activity include:

The **Tees Valley** branch produced a short video to promote the work of the Co-op Party locally and to encourage new members to join. The clip has been shared on their social media platforms and sent to Labour Party branches and CLPs in the area to play at a meeting.

The **Barnsley** branch attended the South Yorkshire Festival at Wortley Hall and had an information stand. It was attended by local officers and elected Co-op representatives. This was a profile boost for the branch in the local area and resulted in new members joining. It was a brilliant day and they signed up some new members.

Greater Manchester held their Party Council AGM in person as usual, where they heard from guest speakers including the newly elected Labour and Co-operative Leader of Bolton Council, Cllr Nick Peel. The Party also chose to elect officers to the position of Youth Officer and Women's Officer, with a view to engaging members from across the sub-region among their demographics. Since then, the Youth network have setup a WhatsApp Group and arranged to have a presence at key campaign days including for our Labour and Co-op PPC in Leigh and Atherton, Jo Platt. Meanwhile, the Women's Officer arranged for a GM Women's Forum with Q&A panel featuring key Co-op women Cllr Eve Holt, Jo Platt PCC and Cllr Dena Ryness.

With just 37 members, **Chelmsford Star Co-op Party** must be the smallest Party Council in the country, both in terms of membership and geography covered – just Chelmsford and Braintree. It is supported by the small but long established independent Chelmsford Star Co-operative Society. Last year the Party Council celebrated its 80th birthday. Chelmsford is an electorally challenging area for the Co-operative Party and our sister party, but

Chelmsford Star Party Council always punches above its weight, with regular policy discussions and speakers at meetings, and always contributes to the debate around policy papers ahead of Annual Conference.

The **Birmingham, Solihull and Tamworth branch** continued its now annual tradition of a summer social and garden party, hosted in the Warehouse buildings in Digbeth, a co-operative. Music, raffles, food and the odd political speaker on a sunny day in August

South East Party Council contains a mix of larger (county-wide) and smaller branches covering a much smaller geography. In Kent there are six branches, including East Kent which covers Dover, Thanet and Folkestone. At one of its recent meetings, the branch had a speaker from the Confederation of Co-operative Housing. Not only that, but it held its meeting in a hall which is part of a housing co-op in Deal, and took the opportunity to take a guided tour of the co-op's premises and get a memorable view of how the co-op works in practice.

Northamptonshire branch invited Cllr Kemi Akinola, the Deputy Leader for Wandsworth, to speak to them in December over zoom about food insecurity and the Co-op Party's food justice campaign. As well as covering Wandsworth's impressive approach and the role that Food Champions, as promoted by the Co-op Party, can play, the branch agreed some positive actions they can take forward locally to take forward Food Justice initiatives.

The Central Valleys Branch was successfully relaunched in Wales, ensuring local members had an active party branch. Similar relaunches are planned in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot for 2024.



Building a growing and active membership

In a year where the country has been facing a cost of living crisis and many other membership organisations have struggled to grow, membership remained strong at the Co-operative Party. A challenging environment has meant further consideration to ensure our membership asks are effective and appropriate, and we managed to end 2023 with net growth and the largest individual membership that we have had in the Party's history. In addition to our individual members, we have seventeen societies and affiliates. We continue to work to develop our relationships with other societies to encourage them into membership, and the end of 2023 saw the trade union UNISON affiliate to the Co-op Party for the first time ever. We are delighted to have UNISON affiliate and look forward to working together. Individual recruitment continues to be delivered through our membership journey; we use our campaigns, policy work and our elected representatives to recruit new supporters that we can then convert to new members.

Last year saw us deliver additional resource in our membership work with the recruitment of a Membership Support Assistant. A key part of their work has been to enhance our processes working with local Parties to utilise their local knowledge. In 2023 there have been additional training sessions to support Party Officers in retaining members locally. Building on work in 2022 we have also delivered further enhancements to our member journey, with clearer signposting to membership activity, welcome emails from Regional Organisers and surveying of policy and organisational interests to shape experience.

The Party has for a number of years been collecting data on how our members identify. This is actively helping us monitor our progress in recruiting a diverse membership and has also been used to facilitate membership and voting for the networks. Working with local branches to develop activity for our branches and members is central to the work of the Co-operative Party, and our goal of building a society where power and wealth are shared. Party staff work hard to support and equip members to deliver activity both online and in person, producing branch officer guides, resources in the Buzz newsletter, regular training opportunities, and speakers at events. In 2023 we revamped our 'Buzz' to try and make clearer opportunities for Party activity and key governance asks for officers. After launching in 2023 we will take feedback in 2024.

Campaigns have included a range of campaign packs, websites with local actions and activities for branches and

members to undertake, such as Community Energy, Local Ownership, Retail Crime and Doubling the Size of the Co-operative sector. These resources have included model letters to politicians, motions, templates and other activity.

Societies and Affiliates

Central England
Chelmsford Star
Community Union
Co-operative & Mutual Solutions Co-op Forum (NI)
Co-operatives UK
Co-op Press
East of England
Enabled Works
Glenhall Housing
Grafton Housing Co-operative
Midcounties Co-operative
Revolver
Scotmid
The Co-operative Group
UNISON
USDAW



Equalities Networks

Our member-led equality networks have been vital in supporting the work of our Party ever since they were founded back in 2020. Their work contributes to ensuring the Party is a welcoming environment for members from all backgrounds. It gives them the chance to contribute, as a group to our Policy Process and to share their own ideas. The Networks can organise their own events with the assistance of staff.

Our now annual Equalities Conference was hosted online in September with several contributors and speakers, and an 'in conversation' piece between Annelise Dodds MP and Harriet Harman MP. We marked several special events throughout the year including a piece showcasing women run co-operatives around the world for International Women's Day, our annual Virtual Iftar, LGBTQ+ History month on Inclusive Education with Baroness Glenys Thornton and Olivia Blake MP, Celebrating Our Sisters for Black History Month, and a discussion piece on the impact of COVID-19 on disabled people for International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

Other Equalities events throughout the year include a face-to-face event for South Asian Heritage Month in Westminster, a policy discussion about the impact of the Spring Budget on disabled people, and a Youth event with partners on how young people driving change in politics. Working with local government colleagues, we have also put together specific Candidate Development Sessions about removing barriers to standing for election for women and others with protected characteristics. This has been the focus of our Diverse Councils Declaration for local government which saw its launch at LGA Headquarters in February 2023.

In addition to our online events, members of our Equality Networks have stepped forward to shine a light on issues that matter to them in print – either as part of the Pioneer or in blogs. Topics have included Islamophobia Awareness Month, Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month, Co-operation among students and empowering women in leadership.

The Chris Herries Development programme, relaunched in partnership with Labour Women's Network ran throughout 2024. Feedback from attendees has been very positive and provides us with further learning for further years of the programme.

Elections for the Youth Committee were held in the summer, and in late in 2023, all other Equality Networks held 'by-elections' to fill vacancies on the steering committees.

National Executive Committee (NEC) Hustings and elections

Throughout February and March, 11 online member hustings were held featuring candidates standing 2023's NEC election.



Ensure the Party is organisationally and financially stable



Party AGM 2023

Annual General Meeting -24 June - the AGM of the Co-operative Party is one of the main ways that members can engage in the democracy of our Party and is held online on Zoom. Open to members and delegates, 42 delegates representing 23 local Co-operative Parties, Societies and affiliates were present. In addition to the registered delegates, 74 individual members and 12 members of the Board attended. Minutes are available online here: <https://party.coop/agm2023>

Membership income

As a result of growing membership, membership income in 2023 was £482,000, up from £444,200 in 2022. This sustained income growth has enabled the Party to invest additional resources in our members' priorities including the upcoming General Election, campaigning capacity, as well as building on our work in local government, including training sessions for local government representatives.

Fundraising

We are very grateful for the continued generosity of our members. The Party has been successful in increasing the number of individuals who are making additional donations. Work through 2023 has helped to deliver more members paying at the Higher/ Solidarity Rate, and our 100 and 1917 Clubs. We thank all our members for their continued support, without which the Party could not operate.

In 2023 the Party attracted a significant individual donation to help expand our communications function ahead of the General Election. Additionally, the Party received a bequest from a member who had passed away in 2022 – Robin Cherney. Robin was a long serving co-operator and we are very grateful that on top of the contribution he made to the cause, that he would leave us such a generous donation.

Subscribing Societies

We continued our regular meetings with our subscribing societies, picking up their issues of concern for wider campaigning. A relentless focus continued to be the ongoing problem of Retail Crime, culminating in more MPs and representatives taking part in the Freedom from Fear campaign week with USDAW in November. We also engaged relevant Police and Crime Commissioners on this issue, and ensured they were fully briefed on the problem.

The Party supported and emailed members about the Co-op Group and Independent Co-op calls on the Government to better support community energy.

The Party provided focussed support to Fairtrade Fortnight this year. This saw activity in each Parliament including EDMs, Debates and video content. Photo opportunities also happened in Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd. This was supplemented with Co-op Live and Local Party events.

We have ensured that societies have taken part in our events both online and in person and the General Secretary spoke at the National Retail Conference, various society AGMs and the Midcounties Fairer Living Festival.



Operations and governance

NEC (National Executive Committee)

The National Executive Committee (NEC) is responsible for the governance, strategy and policies of the Party. It is elected every three years by and from individual members and subscribing Societies and affiliates. The NEC also serves as the Board of Co-operative Party Ltd.

In 2022 the AGM approved a rule change to the structure of the NEC/Board. This came into effect with the elections for the NEC/Board 2023-26 in Spring 2023. The NEC will next be elected in 2026. The new Board took office at the NEC AGM on 10/11 June 2023. At the AGM for the new NEC in 2023, Jim McMahon MP was re-elected as Chair, with Ruth Hall as Vice-Chair.

The NEC met six times in 2023: 3 meetings prior to the election of the new NEC and three meetings following the election.

Following the election of the new NEC for 2023-26, members of the NEC and their attendance in 2023 was as follows:

Stella Creasy MP	England East & London
Chris Vince	England East & London
Jamie McMahon	England Midlands
Kindy Sandhu	England Midlands
Michael Bell	England North
Abigail Marshall Katung	England North
Dr Savneet Bains	England South
Lucy Naylor	England South
Tony McMullan	Northern Ireland
Ruth Hall	Scotland
Mary Wimbury	Wales
Preet Kaur Gill MP	Parliamentary Group
Jim McMahon MP	Parliamentary Group [Chair]
Paul Sweeney MSP	Elected Representatives
Zach Evans	Co-operative Group
Sarah McCarthy-Fry	Co-operative Group
Maria Lee	Retail Societies
Eddie Thorn	Retail Societies
Rev. Chris Wilson	Affiliates
Prof. Cecile Wright	BAME
Sandra Wilson	(dis)Ability
Ashley Halstead	LGBTQ+
Ellie Ormsby	Youth

Thank you to Chris Bain, Rosa Bolger, Gary Booth, Nathan Burns, John Hughes, Pat Juby and Faisal Rana who served on the 2020-2023 NEC.

The NEC also had one observer from June 2023, which was Lord Roy Kennedy, representing the Co-operative Parliamentary Group in the House of Lords.



Party Staff

The Party now employs 21 staff – eleven full time and ten part time.

Eight of the Party's staff work in Head Office (in London). The remaining staff work from Scotland, Wales, the Midlands and the North.

This year we said goodbye to Moya O'Rourke as she left for new opportunities elsewhere and we wish all the best. At the end of 2023 we saw the retirement of John Boyle – John has been a huge part of the work of the Party and the movement more generally for many years now. We are very sorry to see him go but wish him a very happy retirement.

Our new starters in 2023 included William Sorenson (Digital Officer – Content), Beth Cheshire (Digital Officer – Mobilisation) and Eva Murray (Campaigns Officer). All of whom have joined us with a wealth of experience and hit the ground running.

At the start of 2023 we were also delighted to make permanent our Regional Organisers (Stephen Barry-Stanners, John Cook and Gareth Dowling) who are invaluable in the work they do supporting local parties.

- General Secretary:
Joe Fortune
- Assistant General Secretary (Membership & Organisation): Emma Foody
- Assistant General Secretary (Politics & Representation): Emma Hoddinott [Part time]
- Head of Communications:
Georgia O'Brien
- Finance & Office Manager:
Dorota Kseba
- Parliamentary & Political Officer:
Rob Bates
- Policy Officer:
Daniel Monaghan
- Political Officer (Scotland):
Richard McCready [Part time]
- Digital Officer (Mobilisation):
Beth Cheshire (from August 2023)
- Equalities Officer:
Jennifer Hemingway [Part time]
- Communications Officer:
Georgia Horsfall
- Political and Membership Officer (Wales):
Huw Lewis [Part time]
- Campaigns Officer:

Eva Murray [Part time] (from August 2023)

- Membership Officer:
Joel Northcott
- Digital Officer (Content):
Will Sorenson (from August 2023)
- Events Co-ordinator:
Issy Oozeerally [Part time]
- Regional Organiser and Membership Assistant:
Stephen Barry-Stanners [Part Time]
- Regional Organiser:
James Butler [Part time]
- Regional Organiser:
John Cook [Part Time]
- Regional Organiser and Local Government:
Gareth Dowling [Part Time]
- Board Secretary:
Karen Wilkie [Part Time]

Fair Tax Mark

In 2023, the Party was again awarded the Fair Tax Mark and continued to be the only political party in the country to do so. The majority of organisations accredited with the Fair Tax Mark are co-operatives and mutuals.

Living Wage

The Party also maintained its accreditation as a Living Wage Employer in 2023.

Rules

The NEC continued to review the Party's rules in 2023 to ensure that they are clear and consistent. Compliance with the rules and policies of the Party by members is good. Disciplinary issues are investigated as swiftly as possible and appeals are to the Disciplinary Committee (CPDC), which is an independent committee elected by and from the membership every three years. There were no cases necessitating a meeting of the CPDC in 2023.

Compliance

As both a Political Party and a registered Co-operative Society, the Party must comply with the Political Parties, Registration and Referendums Act 2000 and the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, reporting to both the Electoral Commission and the Financial Conduct Authority. Detailed information on the Party's compliance can be found separately in the Board Report and Accounts 2023, which will be available at the AGM in June 2024.





**co-operative
party**