

Central England Co-operative

Annual Members' Meeting 2023

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Annual Members' Meeting

As part of the event, we asked Members to submit questions before and during the meeting. We received a number of questions and comments on a wide range of topics.

Time prevented us from raising all of these in the meeting so we have put together an overview of questions raised and responses which can be viewed below.

What are/can we do to attract new people to stand for Board Elections?

We are delighted to see the increased turnout in this year's Board elections and encourage all Members to participate in our democracy, whether that is by voting or standing in our elections.

Our Board is committed to increasing our diversity and welcomes nominations from all Members and encourages nominations from young people, ethnic minority candidates, and candidates with digital skills.

As well as refreshing our election communications and using new channels, this year we successfully trialled Member to Director training to support potential candidates, and one of the Members who took part has gone on to be elected to our Board.

A range of training and support is available upon joining the Board to help you gain the skills and experience needed. If you're interested in standing for election in the future, please get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

What is the Society doing to improve colleague pay?

The Society is committed to improving the pay rates of the Society's customer facing colleagues. Over the last year we invested in pay, benefits, and cost of living support. We were delighted to have made an extra pay award in November, and we increased pay again in April this year as part of our annual pay review.

During the year, we have offered double discount for our colleagues, launched a new reward and engagement platform, our "Difference Maker Hub" and as a thank you, we gave all our colleagues £50 on their Membership card over the festive period. We have also introduced a new wellbeing centre which gives a free health

check for every colleague and virtual GP service for colleagues and their families to use.

What is the Society doing to support Members, customers and colleagues through the cost-of-living crisis and in response to food price inflation?

Delivering value for our Members, customers and colleagues is more important than ever and that's why we've made significant investment in value through our new Member Prices which are available on over 100 products including everyday essentials such as milk, bread, and eggs.

To support our colleagues, we continue to offer colleague discount including double discount at pay day weekends. We also launched a new reward and engagement platform, our "Difference Maker Hub", which offers a range of benefits and discounts with other businesses and we gave all our colleagues £50 on their Membership card over the festive period.

How do you sign up for the Member App and how do you connect to it if you are already a Member?

We're really pleased to have launched our Membership App in March this year. You can download the App from the Apple App store or Google Play store, search "Central Co-op Membership".

If you're already a Member, simply select "Activate" and follow the onscreen instructions to connect your Membership account to the App. You only need to do this once and it only takes a few moments. You can then use your Membership card digitally, add it to your Apple or Google wallet for extra convenience, as well as see your live points and dividend balances, our latest offers and keep up to date with what's happening in your community.

How is Central Co-op supporting diversity and inclusion and encouraging progression of female and ethnic minority colleagues into leadership roles across the society?

We're committed to supporting diversity and inclusion across our Society. Last year we began our partnership with Diversity in Retail which has given us a fantastic opportunity to network across the industry in all aspects of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and are supporting them with the development of a framework that will be used industry wide to assess progress on diversity and inclusion within organisations.

Over the last 12 months we've been working to engage all of our colleagues, customers and Members with our diversity & inclusion journey. Our inclusion

delivery group have been working hard to deliver a program of events throughout the year, including International Women's Day and our first ever podcast on allyship.

We supported several PRIDE events across our trading areas and are looking forward to celebrating PRIDE again at events across Central England this year.

We've also launched five celebration guides with the support of the Inclusion Delivery Group together with new celebration e-cards on our Difference Maker hub. Colleagues tell us how interesting they find these packs and what a great opportunity they give to learn more about each other.

As part of our commitment to ensuring all colleagues feel welcomed and supported, in the last 10 months we've launched five new policies and manager guides; Menopause Support, Trans and Non-Binary, Domestic Abuse Support, Fertility Treatment and Pregnancy Loss. We've supported each policy launch with a manager guide to ensure our leaders feel supported. To help embed these policies, we've hosted webinars and shared personal stories, sometimes from our own colleagues.

We're encouraging the progression of female and ethnic minority colleagues into leadership roles across the Society. We take a proactive stance on our internal development programmes (such as Leading the Way) to ensure female talent is being recognised and chosen to participate. We're now on a second cohort of female leaders being offered positions on programmes facilitated by Diversity in Retail, namely the Global Female Leadership Programme and the Ethnic Female Leadership Programme.

What is the Society's sustainability plan and what goal do you have to become a Net Zero organisation?

Our ambition is to be green energy self-sufficient and we're on a journey to get there. We want to continue to grow our sustainable energy capacity, to eventually be in a position where we can support our communities too.

We continue to be agile in how we'll get to achieving this long term goal, looking at new technologies and evolving our plans along the way.

Technology is constantly developing in the energy space, so we're always on the lookout for new solutions that align to our purpose of creating a sustainable Society for all. We have partnered with Sol PV Group to support our rollout of solar across our trading estate and continue to monitor its output and results.

Since July 2022, we've expedited our rollout of solar panels on our stores, moving from two supermarkets to having 180 stores completed by this Autumn.

What is the Society doing to reduce its use of plastics?

We are looking at what we sell and what we use in terms of plastics and are working to ensure that where sensible changes can be made to reduce plastic packaging, we are making the most of those opportunities. We have phased out single use carrier bags and we have also launched plastic film recycling points inside our stores.

What is the Society doing on colleague safety?

Colleague safety remains a key priority and following our campaign in co-operation with fellow retailers calling for tougher, criminal penalties on those who attack shop workers, we were delighted that an amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 was passed in April 2022.

Under the new legislation, abuse against individuals who serve the public has become an aggravated offence. We will reinforce this important message, highlight the negative impact of violence and abuse towards our store colleagues, continue our efforts through the Shop Kind campaign, and take positive and lawful action to counter aggressive or threatening behaviors.

We have also invested in the rollout of bodycams and headsets for our colleagues.

Can you explain the changes in relation to Distributions Policy?

The Society's Rules provide for the distribution of trading surplus. As a Member owned, co-operative business the distribution of trading surplus is an important point of difference for us.

In accordance with co-operative values and principles, the distributions from trading surplus recognises and rewards Members, colleagues, and the community for their contribution to the Society. These distributions are put to Members for approval at our Members' Meetings.

This year our Board conducted a comprehensive review of our Distributions policy and have agreed changes to align Member dividends with our Society performance by setting a dividend percentage of 10% of trading profit for the year. This is proportionate to individual trade and points earned with the Society, so the more you spend the more you receive as a dividend.