

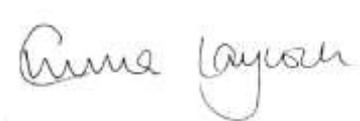
Co-operatives UK Board of Directors

Update on Key Decisions

December 2020

The Board of Directors of Co-operatives UK met on 9 December. The agenda included a range of strategic topics for discussion. For the second meeting, the Board also welcomed our new CEO, Rose Marley, to the meeting as an observer. Rose will take up the post on 1 January. The Board also welcomed Paul Gerrard from the Co-operative Group to the meeting as an observer, Paul will take up a place on our Board appointed by the Co-operative Group in January 2021.

A summary of the Board's discussions and decisions can be found below.



Emma Laycock
Interim Society Secretary

Operational & Financial Performance

The Board noted the update from the Management Team (MT) on recent activity in line with the annual Operating Plan and our mission to Promote, Develop and Unite, but in the context of the current wider issues we are facing due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We continue to provide a wide range of support and guidance to members related to the impact of the pandemic, specifically HR and governance advice and a range of webinars and briefings. The Team is noticing a slow return to business as usual with regards to the types of advice our members are requiring.

We are now a living wage employer! The Board and staff Team are rightly proud of this status.

We have signed a new contract with the Co-operative Bank to continue the Hive support. A revised support programme will be shared shortly. The Reboost programme, funded by Power to Change was launched and is open for applications. Work is ongoing in our Development Unit to confirm our funding strategy for 2021.

We launched our fantastic new website, the result of a year long digital transformation project, which can be viewed [here](#). We have started our 2021 renewals programme and a progress update will be provided to the Board at its meeting in February. Our Impact Report can be viewed [here](#).

The Board discussed a desire to see more externally focussed agendas and Management Team reporting moving forward to demonstrate our impact more widely and opportunities for networking and partnership working. Rose will work with the rest of the Management Team to review its reporting.

Forecast and Budget

Following a recommendation from the Audit and Risk Committee the Board agreed the 2021-2023 budget. This sits alongside the 2021 Operating Plan that was agreed by the Board at its last meeting.

Student Co-operative Homes Report

The Board noted a report from Student Co-operative Homes (SCH) that gave an update on its progress over 2021. For the past two years, Co-operatives UK has supported the incubation of Student Co-op Homes (SCH) in order to help scale-up the nascent student housing co-op sector in the UK. The Board heard details of the support provided by Co-operatives UK which included:

- Day to day operational capacity via the employment of a part time dedicated Project Manager. This fixed term contract has now ended and won't be renewed.
- Secretarial cover through appointing Linda Barlow as the society secretary
- Legal work with our Advice Team on drafting and amending SCH rules
- Communications with support on branding, campaigning and social media
- Finance with support on managing SCH's funds.

The report outlined the impact and key achievements of SCH over the past two years:

- SCH has raised over £300K as initial capital from Supporter/Investor (non-user) members through a community share issue to purchase properties which will allow to start generating an income stream and get the co-operative off the ground.
- SCH has secured £36K of revenue funding over three years towards core costs.
- SCH now has three property acquisition projects in the pipeline. This will lead to the consolidation of existing student housing co-operative assets into SCH and the launch of two new student housing co-operatives.
- SCH has welcomed over 160 new supporter/investor members.
- SCH has become well recognised in the co-op movement with several established societies that have rallied behind the organisation. It has also established a formal solidarity agreement with NASCO, formed relationships with the Studentendorf (Berlin) and La Ciguë (Geneva), has become a member of Co-operative Housing International and of the Confederation of Co-operative Housing.
- SCH has contributed to raising the profile of student housing co-ops in the UK and engaged with supporting new student groups wanting to establish (on top of providing ongoing support to its seven user members)
- SCH has successfully managed to mitigate challenges brought by the first year of the COVID19 pandemic through providing ongoing support to its members and adjusting its financial strategy to afford delaying its operations.

Booster programme Succession Plan

The Audit & Risk Committee has been working for some time to understand whether there are ways to move the equity investments, that Co-operatives UK has made through the Booster programme, off our balance sheet. The aim of this exploration was to ensure clarity and deal with confusion from Board and Co-operatives UK members as to the nature of the investments. Following an extensive piece of work and having taken legal, financial and taxation advice the Board agreed with the recommendation from the Committee that the equity investments should remain on our balance sheet and that the Head of Finance would work with the Committee and our

auditors to discuss changes to the way we show the investments on our balance sheet to offer more clarity on their status and nature.

Our Governance

The Board approved revised terms of reference for the Audit & Risk Committee, RemCo and the Worker Co-operative Council, copies of which can be requested by members by emailing secretary@uk.coop. This saw the completion of the planned ongoing governance improvements for 2021.

The Board also discussed its methods of delegation to sub-committees and the usefulness of their indepth discussions which then enable the whole Board to focus on more strategic items. The Board asked to the Governance Committee to discuss the Board's preparedness to delegate items to committees and bring back any recommendations to a future Board Meeting.

Following recommendations from the Governance Committee, the Board agreed to the setting up of a Google Group to enable improved discussions between Board Members between Board Meetings. This usefulness of the Group will be reviewed at the February Board Meeting.

