

Co-operatives UK Board of Directors

Update on Key Decisions

June 2022

The Board of Directors of Co-operatives UK met on 16 June. The agenda included a range of strategic topics including our support for the creation of a new federal body for worker co-ops in the UK and details on the Board's approach to recruiting a new Society Secretary. It was the final meeting for some directors as we come to the end of the governance year and our AGM was the next day.

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



Zena King
Society Secretary

Operational Performance

Our CEO, Rose, presented an update to the Board on her activity since the last meeting which includes leading plans for [Co-operative Congress](#) on Friday 17 June – our first large scale hybrid event, our forthcoming Youth Summit in Manchester on 11 July and an update on organisation design work since the establishment of our new Leadership Team.

The Board discussed plans for recruitment of a new Society Secretary as Zena King will soon move into the Advice Team and will begin delivering governance services to members. The recruitment pack for the Society Secretary role will be shared with members in the next few days.

The Board heard a financial update which outlined performance against the budget and agreed the performance indicators which will be tracked to develop baselines against our strategic aims. A dedicated workshop session on Key Performance Indicators and priorities for our impact on behalf of members will be organised for directors over the summer.

Worker Co-operative Federal

Directors received a further update on discussions with the Worker Co-op Council for this member group to evolve into an incorporated federal body for worker co-ops. The Board worked through some of the proposed contractual details; potential impacts and detailed working arrangements to ensure worker co-ops are supported in considering membership of the new federal body but can continue to be direct members of Co-operatives UK and able to access our services.

The Board reiterated its support for this new way of working and that effective relationships with all federal members is key to delivering our new strategy to grow our membership and build a strong, diverse and sustainable movement.

The Board noted that, in line with the progression of the proposals for incorporating the new federal body, John Atherton our Head of Membership, has accepted an offer to lead the formation project for the new entity and will leave Co-operatives UK in August.

Worker co-op members were invited to a dedicated session at Congress, hosted by Emma Laycock, Member Services Lead, to begin conversations about the proposed federal and its relationship with Co-operatives UK. The Board agreed that, as part of the ongoing consultation with members, it will be our worker co-operative members themselves that agree Co-operatives UK's approach to the extent to which dual membership may provide funding to support the start-up of the federal organisation.

2022 Board Appointments

Prior to members being informed at the AGM, the Board noted an update following recent elections and forthcoming changes in serving directors. Mark Simmonds and Vivian Woodell stood down and Lois Hill lost her qualifying office on the Co-op Group's National Members Council. The Board passed on their thanks to each director for their service and dedication over the years.

This year, just one Board seat was due for election; the seat allocated to members that are Co-operative Development Bodies (CDB). We saw a contested election for this seat with five candidates for one seat – the first time we have ever had so many nominees for the CDB seat. Dave Boyle, nominated by Principle Six LLP was successful in the election.

The Board will also see Fiona Ravenscroft join in the seat appointed by Midcounties Co-operative and Cath Muller retained her seat as appointed by the Worker Co-op Council.

The Worker Co-operative Council itself had three seats up for election this year and after a contested election these were won by: Ross Hodgson – Suma, Sion Whellens – Calverts North Star Press Ltd and Stephen Gill – VME.

Co-operative Bank – Demonstrating its values

In 2012, in conjunction with the International Co-operative Alliance and after consultation with our members, Co-operatives UK developed criteria to enable it to determine the suitability of organisations that are not co-operatively owned to use the word 'co-operative' in their name. We use these criteria to determine whether it is appropriate for The Co-operative Bank to continue to have 'co-operative' in its name.

Each year, our board scrutinises an update relating to our ongoing engagement with the Bank and its leadership team collates evidence of how it has supported the co-operative movement and promoted co-operative activity through funding, products and voice. The Bank is also required to demonstrate how its day-to-day operations and colleague behaviour demonstrates the commitments made to co-operative values and ethics.

The Board received this year's report on how The Co-operative Bank continues to be guided by co-operative values and were satisfied that there are no current concerns around it meeting the agreed criteria. Co-operatives UK continues to closely monitor compliance with the framework as the Bank has a more secure financial footing. Over the last 12 months the Bank has: increased the number of small co-ops and credit unions choosing to bank with them; created a Values, Ethics & Sustainability Committee that reports directly into its Executive; worked with us on the consultation on its Ethical Policy which will be launched later in the year; continued to fund the start-up and growth of co-operatives alongside networking and learning opportunities for existing co-operatives; and outlined plans for its 150th year celebrations which will focus on its co-operative heritage.

Governance Process Improvements

The Board approved a number of governance policy and process documents in this meeting. A revised terms of reference for our influential member group the International Co-operative Working Group; an updated Code of Conduct for Directors; more detailed process for election of our Chair and Vice Chair; and, in compliance with the Co-operative Corporate Governance Code, a separate Conflicts of Interest Policy.

If you have any queries related to the details of this report or if you'd like to see us share this information in a different way then please email secretary@uk.coop.