

EXECUTIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

1400 - 1600 hours on Thursday, 17 July 2025

MINUTES

Present:

Cllr Jim Robbins	Swindon Borough Council (Chair)
Cllr Ernest Gibson	South Tyneside Council (Vice Chair) (from item 1.2)
Cllr Paul Cassidy	Inverclyde Council
Cllr Barbara Brownridge	Oldham Council (Accountable Body)
Cllr Kelly Middleton	Telford & Wrekin Council (until item 8.2)
Cllr John Fahy	Greenwich Coop Development Agency
Cllr Mike Stubbs	Newcastle-Under-Lyme Labour Group (until item 8.4)

In Attendance:

Jonathan Downs	Oldham Council (Accountable Body)
Nicola Huckerby	CCIN (Minutes)
Pete Vallance	CCIN
Ben Greenwood	Rochdale MB Council
Martin Bell	Swindon Borough Council
Ash Crane Bell	South Tyneside Council
Fiona Gibson	Cardiff Council

Apologies:

Cllr Sandra Barr	Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr Peter Bradbury	Cardiff Council
Cllr Mili Patel	Brent Council (Ex Officio - Chair of V&P)
Cllr Sue Smith	Rochdale Borough Council

Absent:

Cllr Shanika Mahendran	Milton Keynes City Council
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1. Welcome, introductions and apologies – Chair

1.1. Attendance – NH introduced the report.

There has been a concern about EOC attendance for some time. The Chair mentioned this at the January meeting and indicated that non-attendance was being monitored.

A concerted effort would be required over the coming months as the organisation reviews its legal and staffing structure, and that will only be achieved with engaged governance.

A paper was circulated showing attendance at the formal meetings of EOC held in November 2024 and January 2025, the Annual Conference in Woolwich (Greenwich) in February 2025 and the joint meeting of EOC and V&P was held online in March 2025, at which decisions were taken on which policy projects to fund.

It was agreed:

- 1.1.1 To update the quorum in the Constitution so that it reflects the number of full members on EOC, which can be between 6 and 8 members. To amend the number of attendees required from “5 Representatives” and change it to “50% of voting members plus one”.
- 1.1.2 To amend the constitution so that the position of Chair of V&P is a voting member of EOC.
- 1.1.3 To adopt the above decisions with immediate effect to allow these changes to be reflected in the review of the legal structure. Formal approval for these amendments will be sought from members at the next AGM.

Action: Jonathan Downs to note

- 1.1.4 The chair to write to all Governance members to remind them of the purpose/role of EOC and V&P (see Annexe 2 of the Constitution) and their expected attendance.

- 1.2 Jonathan Downs asked on behalf of Cllr Mili Patel whether we needed a quorum for F&GPG.

Action: NH to check the Terms of Reference and report back to EOC.

Agreed: That the F&GPG Terms of Reference was 50% of voting members plus one.

- 1.3 Apologies were received from Cllrs Sandra Barr, Peter Bradbury, Mili Patel and Sue Smith.

2. Minutes of the last meeting – online 28 January

These were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising from the meeting on 28 January

- 3.1. CCIN Membership of Coop Press – NH introduced the report.

A proposal had been received from Coop Press for the CCIN to become a member of it. Based on 45 Full Members, the cost would be £590 pa. It would give CCIN:

- 3.1.1 The right to stand for elections
- 3.1.2 A digital copy of the magazine to a central address to share with members
- 3.1.3 A free print advert or 3-month advert on thenews.coop and discounts on future adverts and commercial services
- 3.1.4 Access to additional printed copies of Co-op News for £35pa.

Agreed: That NH enquire as to the invoicing process for sending printed copies to Full Member Councils and Governance members.

4. Finance and Budget Update – Jonathan Downs – Oldham Council

4.1 Invoicing Update

JD reported that it was approaching the end of the CCIN membership year. Although most councils had paid their fees for 2024/5, seven councils had not: Bury, Hounslow, Hull, Knowsley, Lewes, Liverpool and Westminster. Efforts were progressing to engage with these councils to ensure that fees were paid before the end of July.

- 4.1.1 It was noted that Adur, Peterborough and Tamworth had now received their free year of Full Council membership to support their transition. During this time, they had been liable for the Associate Membership fee.
- 4.1.2 Over 30 Associate and Affiliate Members had still not paid their fees for 2024/5.

Action: JD agreed to write to all such Members, giving them a fortnight to pay their outstanding fees. Failure to pay would mean those organisations would no longer be members of the CCIN.

Action: JD reported that he would be sharing the invoicing spreadsheet for EOC/F&GPG on a Google Drive for 2025/6 invoicing so that all Governance members had an accurate account of invoices paid.

4.2 Budget Update

JD reported that, as we were approaching the end of the CCIN Membership year, the Budget was still 'Projected Spend'

Agreed: JD agreed to circulate the Actual Spend in early August once he had had the opportunity to sit down with the Oldham Accounts team.

Noted: JD reported that at the last meeting, Projected Membership Fees had decreased; however, the decrease was less than expected, and we were looking at income of £216k for 2024/5.

Camden Council had also applied to join and would be invoiced in September.

The Conference Expenses had been increased to £30k to take account of some increased costs for the LP Conference in September 2025.

5. Feedback from V&P meeting 26 June

5.1. In Cllr Mili Patel's absence, NH fed back on the last V&P meeting where a number of reports were signed off for approval by EOC. NH thanked those members that had responded to the request to approve those reports so that final payments could be made to the lead councils.

Action: All members to provide feedback, so that invoices could be requests and payments made.

5.2. On the new projects, all the Policy Labs had their comms plan, budget, coop difference and work programmes approved. We are working on a contract for this funding, and once signed by the beneficiaries, each council will be invited to invoice for 50% of the funding.

5.3. Only Westminster City Council had failed to submit an update on their existing project and conversations were being held at member level to get this one back on track.

6. Strategy, Objectives and Key Results

For the third time, the Chair reminded EOC again that everyone needed to step up and play an active part in driving forward the Strategy for the Network. The Network's success will depend on everyone pulling together.

Noted: Cllr Shanika Mahendran had agreed at the last meeting to review the report and identify which actions she would lead on. This was still outstanding.

The Strategy can be found here: <https://www.councils.coop/about-us/governance/strategy-2024-2026/>.

Action: JF suggested that more could be done to get Officers engaged with the work of Affiliate Members of the Network. Please submit any suggestions to NH.

7. Membership Update – Nicola Huckerby

7.1. NH gave an update on the latest Membership numbers:

- Full Members – 46
- Associate Members – 28
- Affiliate Members – 52
- Supporters – 20

- 7.2** The 47 Full Council Members and 14 Town, Parish and Community Councils represent 12.52m citizens and control a £20.6 billion budget.
- 7.3** Since the last meeting, there have been two new Full Member Council, four Associate Members, four Affiliate Members and one Supporter.
- Agreed:** to welcome Camden and Chorley Council as Full Members.
- Agreed:** to welcome Biddulph, Corby and Haywards Heath Town Councils and SW Peninsula Party Council as Associate Members
- Agreed:** to welcome Ikigai Consulting, Greenwich Leisure Ltd, Norman Galloway Homes and SELCC as Affiliate Members
- Agreed:** to welcome LCCDA Management Cooperative (T/A CASE) as a Supporter

8. Taskforce on the future of the CCIN

- 8.1 Feedback from 17 June** - Cllr Paul Cassidy gave feedback on the Taskforce meeting that was held in Birmingham on 17 June and a list of actions that were agreed at that session.

Action: The Chair agreed to action 'thank you to NH' as part of the Plan.

- 8.2 New Legal Entity options and timetable of key decisions** - Cllr Mike Stubbs gave apologies on behalf of Claire Ward. He introduced the Legal Sub-Group, which had been established in 2023 to look at the legal structure of the CCIN, to consider any structure that would support our 'Cooperative Principles' and any changes that would help us 'do things better'. MS said that the CCIN had 'outgrown' its current structure as the CCIN was not a legal entity and needed to be 'more professional'.

Anthony Collins Solicitors prepared a paper for EOC, which was considered in July 2024. It was agreed that the legal structure options to be considered were a cooperative society and a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO).

Conversations had also been had with Cooperatives UK regarding any legal barriers as to why a council could not be a member of a cooperative.

Fiona Gibson reported that Claire Ward intended to produce a piece of work engaging Monitoring Officers from councils involved in the Task Force meeting to initiate discussions at that level.

Jonathan Downs shared a slide deck that he had prepared, offering a timescale for the consultation and engagement process. All members welcomed this as a basis for next steps.

Agreed: The timescale outlined in the presentation was approved.

8.3 Staffing Structure

8.3.1 Proposed Staffing Structure - Cllr Paul Cassidy gave a detailed account of the growth in the Network and referred to the findings of the work undertaken by the Ideas Alliance in developing the current strategy, which had identified that the level of reliance on one member of staff to keep the Network operating could not be maintained over the longer term. The need to review the structure is now paramount as NH has indicated her decision to step back from her role and there is an opportunity to create a more resilient staffing structure.

Pete Vallance has joined the central team to provide some additional temporary support which conversations on the staffing structure are resolved.

PC explained that as the CCIN was not a legal entity the ability to employ staff is a complicated one so, for the short term we would seek to keep this fluid.

Employment options were:

- Have a Member Council employ staff and be recompensed by the Network

- Employ staff on a direct contractual basis
- Employment under a different legal structure

Agreed:

- To approve the proposed split of the Operations Lead role into two distinct positions: Public Affairs & Policy Officer and Operations Officer, based on the based on the final 'Job Task List'.
- Note the current legal uncertainty and agree that the employment model for these roles will remain flexible until the legal structure of CCIN is resolved.
- Grant delegated authority to the Chair Cllr Jim Robbins and EOC Member Cllr Paul Cassidy, to:
 - Undertake the necessary work to scope, plan, and implement this revised staffing structure.
 - Develop finalised job descriptions, transitional plans, and recruitment strategies.
 - Work with the accountable body to determine appropriate contractual models in line with the legal structure review.
- Note the use of a Chair Action: To appoint Pete Vallance to provide additional resilience to the network until September 2025.
- Note that regular update reports will be present to the EOC to ensure transparency and oversight throughout the transition process.

8.3.2 Job Task List – NH provided an update on her progress with the Task List for her current role. She also explained that some resources provided by Branding.coop website/contacts etc would continue after she had stepped down for as long as the CCIN required them.

Agreed: to complete this list by the end of the month and circulate it to all EOC.

8.3.3 Mechanism for paying salaries in the new structure – JD gave an overview of some of the issues and costs that would be incurred dependent on when and how any posts were filled. At this stage, it was unlikely that any local authority would want to risk hosting two dedicated CCIN members of staff and therefore the Accountable Body would be recommending the 'Contractor route'.

Agreed: that JD would cost the roles based on the completed Task List and any Draft Job Descriptions.

Agreed: that any external contracts might be given over shorter periods or on a rolling basis.

8.4 Map Election Cycle of Members & Members involved in Local Gov Reorganisation

Cllr Paul Cassidy took EOC through a table which outlined the number of Member Councils facing All Out elections in 2026. There was a discussion regarding the impact this might have on membership figures.

Action: F&GP to consider offering members the option to pay for membership up front for 2/3/4 years, having regard to the Government's proposal to provide a 3-year funding settlement.

8.5 CRM & Policy Project Delivery

Pete Vallance introduced himself and the work that he was doing about developing a CRM system and Policy Project Management.

Agreed: that PV should attend the Labour Party Conference.

8.6 Review of the current and future events calendar

NH took the members through the report:

Agreed: several events were approved Event Options for 2025-2026, including the Coop Party Conference in London on 15-16 November.

Agreed: to identify leads to coordinate a CCIN presence at the events we wish to attend. The following members offered to help coordinate attendance at the Coop Party Conference: JR, PC and JF.

Agreed: to confirm the Annual Conference will be online in November and identify the delivery team.

Agreed: to confirm the AGM will be online in February and identify the delivery team.

Agreed: To book LGA accommodation as soon as possible.

8.6 NH to provide introductions for her successor to event organisers.

9. Schedule of future meetings:

Agreed: 1300 – 1500 hours Monday, 8 September 2025

1300 – 1500 hours Tuesday 18th November 2025

10. Any Other Urgent Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 1600 hours.

25.08.25 - NH