



Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network

Annual General Meeting 2024

MINUTES

0830 - 0945 hours Thursday, 13 February 2025

Woolwich Works, The Fireworks Factory, 11 No 1 Street, London SE18 6HD

Present

Speakers:

Cllr Jim Robbins - Chair of CCIN and Leader of Swindon Borough Council

Jonathan Downs – Corporate Policy Lead, Oldham Council

Cllr Milli Patel - Deputy Leader of Brent Council and Chair of the Values and Principles Board

Terry Galloway – Care Leaver Champion and Campaigner

Cllr Ernest Gibson - Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Area Management (South Tyneside Council) and Vice Chair of the Executive Oversight Committee

Cliff Mills – Anthony Collins Solicitors

There were representatives from the following Member organisations present:

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Anthony Collins Solicitors
Brent Council
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Cooperatives UK
E3M
Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency
Hackney Council
Heritage Trust
Inverclyde Council
Knowsley Council
Llanelli Town Council
Manchester City Council
Midcounties Gloucester & Swindon Coop Party Council

Newcastle-Under-Lyme Labour Group
North Herts Borough Council
Oldham Council
PeopleToo
Real World Group
Royal Borough of Greenwich
Social Value Engine
South Swindon Parish Council
South Tyneside Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Swindon Borough Council
Wigan Council
Woughton Community Council

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Cllr Jim Robbins, the Chair of the Network, welcomed all attendees to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and thanked Greenwich for a wonderful first day and the successful launch of the Greenwich Cooperative Development Commission. He also thanked the Borough for the welcome event at the Greenwich Naval College.

The Chair opened the session by reaffirming the CCIN's core mission: to be a people-centred network focused on driving social innovation through cooperative values. The Chair acknowledged the quality of discussions held throughout the first day of the conference and expressed enthusiasm for further collaboration.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting – 2 November 2023 (Sunderland)

The Chair invited questions or comments on the minutes of the last meeting. No issues were raised, and the minutes were approved as a correct record.

3. Review of the Year

The Chair gave an update on achievements during the year; the highlights were:

- Approval of funding for new policy labs and project prototypes.
- Launch of a new case study pack, with over 500 examples now available on the website.
- Introduction of a new welcome pack and checklist for new members.
- A successful study visit to Emilia Romagna.
- Publication of two new policy lab reports:
 - Arts and Culture for Social Cohesion – Led by North Herts Council
 - This is not a Manual for Co-production – Led by Rochdale Council
- An expansion of the network to 45 full member councils, 25 associate members, and over 50 affiliate members, representing over 12.5 million people and a combined budget of more than £20 billion.

The Chair thanked Nicola Huckerby for her extensive work in leading and promoting the network and engaging with new stakeholders.

The Chair emphasised the importance of community wealth building, cooperative placemaking, and embedding cooperative values into local policymaking. Attendees were encouraged to support credit unions, use council assets to assist residents, and engage with local cooperative development organisations.

A summary of ongoing policy lab projects was provided, including:

- Tackling violence against women and girls - Led by Trafford Council
- Launch of a Social Value Toolkit for councils
- Development of the "Being Cooperative" model for inclusive governance.
- A co-operative approach to tackling health inequality - Led by Westminster City Council

Members were encouraged to propose new policy lab topics and to collaborate across the network. Members were reminded of the network's Dynamic Purchasing System and encouraged to utilise it for more effective and cooperative procurement. A growing list of approved suppliers was noted.

4. Budget Report 2023/24

Jonathan Downs – Corporate Policy Lead (Oldham Council) delivered the budget report. Key points included:

- The network remains in a strong financial position, with continued growth across all membership categories.
- Increased investment in policy labs and prototypes.
- Assurance that the budget supports value for money for all members.

Jonathan thanked Greenwich Council for their hospitality and reaffirmed the strategic importance of maintaining financial stability to support innovation.

5. Report back from Values and Principles Board

Cllr Milli Patel Deputy Leader of Brent Council and Chair of the Values and Principles Board reported on the work of the Values and Principles Board. She highlighted:

- Introduction of monitoring forms to oversee policy lab progress.

- Engagement with sponsors for funded projects to ensure alignment with cooperative values.
- Nearly £400,000 invested into policy labs to date.

Cllr Patel thanked Nicola Huckerby and the previous board Chair for their work and encouraged members to propose ideas and complete the survey on how we can improve the Policy Lab process.

6. Care Leavers Protected Characteristic

Terry Galloway gave a powerful presentation on his campaign to make care experience a protected characteristic. He outlined the systemic challenges faced by care-experienced individuals and argued for legislative and local recognition. Attendees were moved by personal testimony and the data presented, which illustrated both the moral and fiscal case for change.

In response, the AGM unanimously agreed to ask all member councils to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic. This will be added to the network's list of expectations for members, akin to existing commitments such as the fair tax and fair pay charters.

7. 2024/25 Policy Projects Funding Round

Cllr Ernest Gibson - Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Area Management (South Tyneside Council) and Vice Chair of the Executive Oversight Committee outlined the process for the upcoming funding round:

- Small projects (up to £2,000) and large projects (up to £20,000) are invited.
- This year £60,000 has been allocated to fund Policy Labs and £15,000 for Policy Prototypes. Although Members can lead on one Policy Lab at any time, there was no limit to the number of projects they engaged in.
- Applications open on February 28th and close on March 13th.
- Successful bids will be announced on 25th April.
- Members were encouraged to collaborate and apply.

8. Policy Lab Launch – Tackling Barriers to Building a Cooperative Economy

Jonathan Downs (Oldham Council) introduced Cliff Mills (Anthony Collins Solicitors) to launch the CCIN's latest policy lab report. The report identifies systemic barriers to developing a truly cooperative economy and offers practical recommendations.

Cliff Mills highlighted key points:

- Co-operatives must be understood as purpose-driven enterprises for the common good.
- There is a lack of understanding of cooperative development across the public sector.
- Legal and structural reform, cultural change, and education are needed.

9. Any Other Urgent Business

No urgent business was raised.

The Chair thanked all participants for attending and formally closed the AGM.

Meeting Closed 0945 hours

Minutes kindly prepared by:

Raymond Bruce-Cathline - Deputy Corporate Governance Manager

Legal and Democratic Services

Royal Borough of Greenwich