

NEC Update – Summer 2022

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Introduction

The NEC meets in person three times a year for a full day or weekend, with shorter, monthly on-line meetings in between.

In May, the NEC met to consider the quarterly reports (see General Secretary's and recruitment & membership report below) and to receive a report on the Party's success in the recent local government elections. Here is a summary of Labour and Co-operative candidates and councillors elected in May 2022:

Summary

1,014 candidates contested 1,030 elections across every region and nation in Great Britain:

- All 7 Mayors
- 1 Metro Mayor (South Yorkshire)
- 6 Mayors (all five in London)
- 91% coverage across the UK
- 134 out of 147 councils contested in England, including **all**
 - 10 local authorities in Greater Manchester
 - 33 authorities in London including the London Corporation
 - 4 newly created authorities in Cumbria, Yorkshire and Somerset
- 22 out of 31 councils contested in Scotland
- 17 out of 22 councils in Wales

Councils with the highest numbers of candidates were:

- 50 – Royal Borough of Greenwich
- 43 – Newham Borough Council
- 36 – Lambeth Borough Council
- 33 – Waltham Forest Borough Council
- 27 – Birmingham City Council

And the next non-London council is:

- 17 – Rochdale Borough Council

And in Scotland and Wales:

- 20 – Glasgow City Council
- 14 – Cardiff City Council

Diversity:

- Nearly half of all Co-op candidates identifying as a woman
- Nearly a third identifying as BAME
- Nearly a quarter having a disability
- Over 15% identifying as LGBTQ+
- Over one in ten co-operative candidates under the age of 30

Candidates

	Co-op Candidates	Total Seats	Saturation
England	849	4360	19%
Scotland	97	1226	8%
Wales	68	1233	5.5%
East Midlands	24	43	56%
East of England	63	431	15%
London	433	1817	24%
North East & N Cumbria	36	234	15%
North West	86	527	16%
South East	67	503	13%
South West	31	181	17%
West Midlands	69	327	21%
Yorkshire & Humber	40	297	13%



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NEC AGM 2022

The most recent meeting of the NEC was the AGM in June. Jim McMahon MP (Westminster Group) was re-elected as Chair, with Ruth Hall (Scotland and Northern Ireland) as Vice-Chair.

Other elections were held for members of the Audit, Staffing & Remuneration, Policy, Rules and Disputes Sub Committees; the Co-operative Party's delegates to the Labour Party National Policy Forum (Chris Bain and Rosa Bolger plus the General Secretary); Conference Arrangements Committee NEC representative (Preet Kaur Gill MP) and the Labour Party Conference Fraternal Delegate (Jim McMahon MP).

The NEC also agreed meeting dates up to June 2023, which will be the AGM for the newly elected 2023-26 NEC.

Co-operative Party Ltd AGM

The Co-operative Party's AGM took place on Saturday 25 June, on-line, with 63 delegates, eleven members of the Board and eighty-two individual members. You can read the full report of the AGM and the results of the votes here: [Co-operative Party Ltd AGM 2022 – Voting and Minutes – Co-operative Party](#).

Alongside the Board Report and Accounts 2021 and the Party's forward plans, the AGM included rule changes on the composition of the NEC, to take effect from the next elections in 2023 subject to FCA approval. These changes were all approved and are explained below.

Changes to the NEC

In 2021 we started a review of the membership of the NEC ahead of the next elections in 2023, and initial views were sought from members in an online consultation over the summer.

Following that first consultation, subscribing societies, local parties, branches, networks and individual members were invited to comment on a series of options for changes to the membership of the NEC. At its meeting in March 2022 the NEC discussed the options for changes to the NEC and the consultation responses, and agreed the following changes. Following the changes to the Society's rules in the recent AGM, these will come into effect at the next election in Spring 2023, if approved by the Financial Conduct Authority:

Individual members

Currently, the NEC has one member elected by and from members in Scotland and Northern Ireland, one from Wales, nine from England and one by and from Youth members (12 in total).

This has been amended to one member elected by and from members in Scotland, one from Wales, one from Northern Ireland, eight from England and one from each of the BAME, (dis)Ability, LGBTQ+ and Youth Networks (15 in total). The NEC members for each network will be elected by one member one vote, by and from all eligible members of that network.

The NEC members for England will be elected from four electoral sections, with two members (gender balanced) per section. The electoral sections will be agreed by the NEC following consultation with the parties in England and published before the end of this year, along with the other detailed procedures for the next election.

Following representations from some Parties, the NEC agreed to confirm that in the election procedures for the 8 one member one vote seats for England, no more than one member from any of the nine English regions may be elected. This will ensure that no region takes both seats in their section. In three of the four sections therefore all regional parties will be guaranteed representation.

The NEC will consult with local parties in England on the allocation of the regions to the four sections.

We are not abolishing or changing the nine regions or regional parties. These will remain as is, maintaining their current functions such as managing our relationship with regional Labour Parties. The four electoral sections will simply be for the purpose of the election of the eight NEC members for England.

Elected representatives

In addition to the two members of the Westminster Parliamentary Group, there will be two NEC members elected by all other Labour and Co-operative elected representatives e.g. MSPs, MSs, PCCs, elected mayors, London AMs and councillors.

Societies and affiliates

The NEC currently has two members appointed by the Co-operative Group and two elected by and from all other subscribing societies and affiliates plus a seat for Co-operatives UK, which has remained unfilled. The new NEC structure will keep the two seats for the Co-operative Group, plus the other two seats, which will be now restricted to subscribing retail societies only. A fifth NEC seat will be for all other subscribing non-retail societies, co-ops and affiliates, including Co-ops UK.

Next steps

Subject to approval of the rule changes by the Financial Conduct Authority, the detailed process for the election will be agreed by the NEC before the end of the year following consultation with local parties in the Autumn on the allocation of the regions in England to the four voting sections..

General Secretary's Report

Each quarter, the General Secretary reports to the NEC on the Party's activity and progress towards our Strategic Objectives. Here is a summary of the most recent report, in May :



Strategic Objective: Support the election of co-operators at all levels of Government

There was a presentation to the NEC and discussion on our results from the Local Government Elections 2022 at the May meeting.

In achieving record numbers of candidates, the Party:

- Successfully delivered the new more streamlined process for candidate sign off – required by the delay in Labour Party candidate selections across the country
- Distributed campaign packs to the candidates with Labour/Co-op materials
- Successfully managed the major task of issuing all the relevant candidate certificates with very few issues
- Completed the last round of candidate training within our Candidate Development Programme
- Put on campaign days across the country including a staff campaigning trip
- Provided communication support to candidates
- Delivered a number of training sessions for candidates using Labour Dialogue
- Launched an updated candidate hub
- Provided specific candidate training sessions to members of our equalities networks
- Delivered and sold out official Labour and Co-operative joint postal vote campaign letters available from the national Labour Party print services

The Party also held a Local Government Elections Launch event with Anneliese Dodds MP, Jim McMahon MP, the Chair of the Wales Co-operative Party, the General Secretary, Cllr Joe Culliane from North Ayrshire, Mayor of Hackney Philip Glanville and Mayor of Newham Rokshana Fiaz.

We have also worked to ensure that we are working ahead of the Westminster selections and have:

- Developed new guidance for Local Parties holding official and unofficial selection meetings and candidate support in light of the Labour Party's new procedure
- Continued to increase our Parliamentary Panel, which now stands at 150 potential candidates
- Had a range of panel training sessions with Paul Richards as well as with Jim McMahon MP, Preet Gill MP and the General Secretary
- The General Secretary has also delivered a joint session with members of the Community Union's own Parliamentary panel
- Conducted our first official selection in this cycle – local members selected Jamie McMahon to be their candidate in the Gedling selection
- Continued to provide informal support to panellists ahead of upcoming selections expected in the next tranche of open selections



Strategic Objective: Enable the Delivery of Co-operative Solutions Locally, Regionally and Nationally

Local Manifestos

The Party has worked with Labour Groups and individual councillors to ensure strong representation for co-op ideas in Local Government manifestos across the country. We collated these and used them within our elections content. From what has been collated thus far it looks like a strong return – especially in places like Hackney, North Ayrshire and in the South Yorkshire Mayor’s manifestos.

Community Power

The Party developed and launched a policy platform titled ‘Community Power’. This was a definition piece about Co-operative Party’s views on what the building blocks are for community power set within the context of levelling up. The work can be viewed here: [Community Power – Co-operative Party](#).

Tower Hamlets Co-op Commission

Separately the Party worked with Tower Hamlets Lab/Co-op Mayor and Co-op councillors to undertake a Co-op Commission. This commission comprised of:

- An open call for evidence
- The appointment of a co-op panel of experts
- Evidence sessions
- Report writing, designing, printing and disseminating
- An online launch with the Mayor, General Secretary and commissioners

The report can be viewed here: [Tower Hamlets Co-operative Commission – Co-operative Party](#) and the recommendations of this commission can be seen in the Tower Hamlets’ manifesto as well as a commitment to act on the report post-election.

Channel 4

The Party has worked to raise the profile of the possibility of a mutual rather than private future for Channel 4. We have engaged with interested parties, Co-ops UK and the shadow frontbench team. We have 5,000 new supporters join our campaign and have a live petition running. The Party plans further activity post Queens Speech.

Other work in this area has included:

- A full piece by Shadow BEIS Secretary of State Jonathan Reynolds MP on the technical support that a new Labour & Co-operative Government would provide the movement, which was covered by the Co-op News
- A piece from Alex Norris, Shadow CLG Minister on community power and levelling up ahead of the Queens Speech.

Strategic Objective: Inspire and educate our audiences about the achievements and potential of the co-operative movement

The most significant area of campaigning in this period has come within our fair tax work, a campaign that is strongly backed by the co-operative movement.

Through the first Economic Crime Bill the Party worked with others to campaign to ensure that included in the Bill was a register of beneficial owners. This has been a central ask of our 'unlock the high streets' campaign. The Party has worked with the FairTax Foundation, Open Democracy Institute and Transparency International and the shadow Frontbench team on our call to shorten the amount of time between the Bill and implementation of the register. Through this work we:

- Inspired 8,000 people to take part online
- Led constituents of 610 Members of Parliament contacted their representatives on the issue
- Carried email and content from Jonathan Reynolds MP and Seema Malhotra MP
- Issued a FairTax pledge and materials for use by Local Government candidates
- Carried email content from the Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves MP

The Party is now preparing follow up for when the second Economic Crime Bill is published post Queens Speech.

Community Energy – A new plan for community energy

The Party has:

- Campaigned for a new rural community energy fund
- Produced a new community energy plan and pledge which has seen nearly 4,000 people sign up to: [Back our plan for community-owned energy – Co-operative Party](#)
- Engaged with Community Energy England and Power to Change to seek partnership work
- Produced reactive content following the Government's Energy Security Plan launch
- Carried frontbench content from community energy visits

Conferences and Co-operation Live events

The Party held its annual regional conferences in:

- Scotland
- West Midlands
- Northern
- South West

These events were well attended and featured regional speakers, shadow Cabinet Ministers and Shadow Ministers, figures and campaigners from the Co-operative movement and debates on the Party's year-round member policy process topics.

The Party also had stalls and events at the Scottish Labour and Welsh Labour Conferences, promoting campaigns and events with relevant Government Ministers in Wales on the need for co-operative economic expansions and shadow ministers in Scotland on the Right to Food Bill.

Co-operation Live events

Since the last report the Party has continued with our Co-operation Live events, holding Wednesday evening member sessions on topics including:

- Community Energy (featuring a range of community owned schemes and Community Energy).
- The benefits of mutuals (with Gareth Thomas MP and the Building Societies Association).
- Fair tax (with the FairTax Foundation and Seema Malhotra MP).
- Focus on Fairtrade (with the Fairtrade Foundation and Co-operative Group).
- A People's BBC (with Prospect the Union)
- International Women's Day event (with AGS Emma Hoddinott and Emma Foody, Kim McGuinness PCC and Cllr Abigail Marshall Katung)

Food Justice and Healthy Start vouchers

Jim McMahon MP led an opposition day debate on the central aspects of the Party's Food Justice campaign. This allowed for a renewed campaigning push on our food justice work through this period. The Party also launched its Rural Policy review, which aims to report by the end of May. This work has been backed by frontbench Oral Questions on food justice from the last two DEFRA Oral Questions sessions.

The Party also launched the Northern Ireland version of the Healthy start voucher work as well as pushing the existing campaign tool to members and supporters.

Fairtrade Fortnight

The Party marked Fairtrade Fortnight with a range of content including video and written content from Preet Gill MP, Shadow Minister for International Development.

Strategic Objective: Have an engaged, diverse and growing individual and organisational membership that values the Party and its work

Work during this period has included:

- The Party held the six-monthly meeting of the Subscribing Societies, which was attended by Jim McMahon MP. Jim McMahon followed up on the meeting in relation to funerals with engagement with relevant Government Ministers.
- Sessions for new members and potential new officers of the Party as outlined within the strategic plan
- We produced and prepared the latest copy of the Pioneers Members Magazine, which featured Shadow HCLG Secretary of State Lisa Nandy MP
- Events online to mark Ramadan (a virtual iftar with Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury Tulip Siddiq MP and Cllr Mete Coban) and International Women's Day

- Elections for the new Youth Committee, which has since held its first event
- Candidate training sessions with each equalities network ahead of the elections
- Training sessions with Co-op Party CLP delegates and has continued to build its data on CLP delegates across the country
- Met with the Equalities Advisory Committee to begin planning the new Equalities Conference
- The General Secretary delivered a presentation to the Co-operative Retail Conference. This is a well attended event by retail society board members
- The Party has held its quarterly P6 smaller society membership recruitment event
- We have continued to recruit through national join asks 3-4 times per month – recruitment has been steady at about 150 a month on average.

Strategic Objective: Ensure the Party is organisationally and financially sustainable

The Party launched its annual campaigning work ahead of the Co-operative Group AGM. This included emails from USDAW to its members as well as emails to Party members and supporters from Co-op Group board members, and the usual social media advertising and Co-op News adverts.

We provided a video that was shown through the main session of the Central England AGM, and will be represented at the Midcounties AGM.

The Party has undertaken extensive work on membership retention. We have tested different methods of retention and alongside new staff resource in the area we have reformed our processes to increase our membership retention levels.

We have issued its physical membership cards for the first time since the pandemic.

Whilst elections have dominated much time and resource, the focus of the Party support work relates to:

- Identifying potential new officers of the Party.
- Restarting dormant branches
- Increasing the Party's data on CLP delegates
- Encouraging purposeful branch meetings.

Recruitment & Membership

Our total individual membership at 31 March 2022 was approximately 13,400. This reflects strong monthly recruitment, low arrears and resignations, and targeted retention.

Total recruitment in January to March was 516, which includes both new joiners and those who re-joined after being lapsed. Taking into account membership churn, we increased our membership by a net 438 compared to the end of 2021 figure.

Total supporter list at the end of April 2022 stood at just under 75,000. Converting supporters to members is our main recruitment source – this growth has been driven by strong campaign and policy output, and social media advertising. We continue to gain our greatest share of new members through a diverse range of targeted "Join Asks".

Membership income at 31 March was just over £184,000 – this is already more than the total taken in all of 2013 & 2014, and only around £20,000 short for all of 2015). The forecast for 2022 is to add another net 1,000 members and an overall income of around £420,000 (up around £10k from 2021).

With the increase in individual members, this year we are on track to see the share of funding from the Co-op Group fall below 50% in for first time.

Contacting the NEC

[See here for details of the NEC](#). You can contact the [NEC](#) at nec@party.coop or by emailing Karen Wilkie, Board Secretary at board@party.coop.