

The Midcounties Co-operative Society
Walsall & Shrewsbury Council Meeting
Held on Teams 07/06/2022
Chairperson: Pete Hopkins
Minutes: Louise Edgar-Kerrigan

NB – Bold Font indicates most recent response




😊 signifies item dealt with and therefore completed





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| 1 | Welcome Pete welcomed all representatives to the meeting. | |
| 2 | <u>Minutes from the last meeting.</u> Nothing outstanding. | |
| 3 | Pete introduced himself and ran through the new agenda. Communication – Pete advised the reps that he would be unable comment on any issues relating to Pay, Union or Personal Grievances. Pete asked that any issues be raised with him direct following the meeting. | |
| 4 | Breakout Session 1 ➤ Pulse survey ‘Opportunity to develop’ Reps split into groups to discuss. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What does development mean to you?</i> • <i>What are you not receiving in your role in terms of development?</i> • <i>What do you think prevents colleagues from agreeing with the statement ‘I have the opportunity to develop at Midcounties’?</i> | |
| 5 | Breakout Session 2 ➤ What’s the one thing you think our managers could do better to engage you? | |
| 6 | Rupert Newman joined the meeting to give an overview of all the trading groups, Rupert welcomed new reps. Society – AGM went well, with Helen & Phil giving updates. Food & Healthcare – Our first 2 periods have been quite depressed compared to previous years, P3 & P4 have been better but challenging. However, our Customer Satisfaction score, Availability and Member Spend are all improving. There is work to be done to bring down our energy costs; new LED lights, blinds on chillers and new plastic curtains along with the install of an RDM (remote management) system will all help. Rupert urged reps to bring forward any ideas they have on reducing costs in stores. | |

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| <p>Childcare – Challenges in recruitment at the moment and we have a drive on this currently. Our occupancy levels are up however the number of sessions booked is still low.</p> <p>Travel –. Travel is doing much better with people starting to book long needed holidays. Current issues at Airports with staffing are not yet putting people off booking.</p> <p>Utilities – Thankfully we have not been as exposed as we would have been if we had still been involved in the energy business. A new scheme for electric mopeds will soon be launched, to compliment the electric car scheme.</p> | |
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| Question & Answers | |
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| <p>We are seeing lots of fantastic member deals in store, but what about members deals on every-day essentials like Milk, Bread and Eggs? I think enhanced members deals on these everyday lines would encourage even more member sign ups and more members using our card as well as shopping with us instead of going elsewhere to competitors if they can get every-day essentials like these cheaper than anywhere else, especially with the current cost-of-living crisis.</p> | |
| <p>This period, we are doing member deals on essentials. We've got reduced prices on Cheese, Juice, Squash, Washing up Liquid, Apples, Beans, Pasta, Toilet Roll, plus a few more With the current challenge on the price of Milk, and the high sales volumes on Bread and Eggs we can't feasibly afford to do anything with these at the moment. Is worth noting it was announced at the AGM we will be launching 10% off all FT products to Members, which will include a number of essential products such as Bananas, Sugar, Tea and Coffee.</p> | 😊 |
| <p>Some of our competitors have increased their Sandwich meal deal like we have, however they also offer a cheaper rate for their card holders. Why have we not adopted that as well? Again, a great incentive to get more people to sign up for a member's card if we offered the meal deal at £3.75 non-members but £3.50 for members</p> | |
| <p>We are looking into the Sandwich Meal Deal for members but there are some system limitations around this at the moment, again, the cost to run is also significant. Ours £4 for now.</p> | 😊 |
| <p>Membership POS - Can we not have some floor stickers that we can use to direct customers to our members deal sections if we have them? Something similar to the 2-meter stickers we had such as "Members deals this way". Also, some members deal stripping, is this available?</p> | |
| <p>We are looking at options for floor sticker as part of our new Member POS roll out, but this will not be confirmed until later in the year. Member stripping will form part of the new package.</p> | 😊 |
| <p>Also, it appears that we cannot make an SEL stating a member deal if it doesn't come into store via the St. Ives promotion box. Is there any way that member deals can be stated on instore labels when creating SEL's to state that the product is also a member's deal when we create SEL's?</p> | |
| <p>We currently create shelf talkers for member deals in-store as these have more</p> | 😊 |

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| | stand out than the standard SEL. | |
| | <p>We understand the COVID policy around colleagues staying off work for 5 days if they test positive, and can return on day 6, but if a colleague chooses to "isolate" for 10 days we cannot add this to the trigger points.</p> <p>Colleagues will abuse this as being able to have 2 weeks sick without there being any repercussions for it.</p> <p>Surely after 5 days if they choose to stay off longer than this, than this is then SICK not COVID Sick and should be treated like any other sick? They could effectively have 1 month off sick and only need to produce a Doctors note for 1 week of it... (10 days COVID related, 7 days Self cert, 7 days then Doctors note cover) this is not much incentive for colleagues to come to work</p> | |
| | <p>Since the start of the Coronavirus the Society has held the stance that where a colleague tests positive for Covid-19 the subsequent spell of absence is omitted from the absence trigger points. Our current guidance is that where a colleague tests positive for Covid-19 they must remain away from work for 5 days and can return on the sixth day, on the condition they are fit and able to return to work. Where the colleague remains unwell and unfit for work after the sixth day they should remain away from work as they are still suffering with symptoms of Covid-19. The reason for omitting Covid-19 absences is in acknowledgment of the global pandemic and that working in public facing environments puts colleagues at a higher chance of contracting Covid-19.</p> <p>If a colleague 'chooses' to self-isolate for 10 days i.e., they are fit and able to return to work on day 6 but chooses not to, then this time away from work should not be classed as sickness and instead be deemed as authorised unpaid absence.</p> <p>Managers should still be holding a return-to-work conversation with the colleagues on their return to talk about their absence and check on their welfare.</p> <p>The self-certification period starts from day one of absence and so if a colleague stays off from day 7, they will need to provide a doctor's note.</p> | 😊 |
| | <p>Colleagues are thankful now that Masks are now voluntary, however they are concerned that the screens will be removed. Are there plans for this? They do add a little bit more security for colleagues on the tills.</p> | |
| | There are currently no plans to remove screens. | 😊 |
| | <p>Litter picks are always in the same areas. Can they not be moved around so we are operating in all the communities we serve?</p> | |
| | <p>The litter picks currently happen across our 20 Regional Community areas on a bi-monthly basis and originally set off from the hub site (usually the biggest and main site within the regional community area) As the litter picks have evolved over the months some of the Regional Community teams now rotate the litter picks to take in different stores across their area. The litter picks were set up as pilots to run for 12 months initially with a review taking place in September 2022 of plans moving forward.</p> <p>Please note the litter picks happen in Regional Community areas only we would ask our colleagues within our Keeping it Local teams to look to local litter picks happening within their areas to support this type of volunteer activity. A good place to look for local litter picks is via the Keep Britain tidy website below or local Facebook pages to identify local litter picking groups.</p> <p>https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/volunteer</p> | 😊 |

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| | <p>Why are all CSAs not expected to have availability for at least 1 night (until close) a week? The ever-changing business and the need to keep costs down, allowing CSAs to have poor availability is adding unnecessary costs to the business because they can't work a Friday night "because I play bingo" for example.</p> <p>We then need to use Team Leaders to cover a CSA shift. The management team have that expectation, availability to work Early's and Late's, and as we are all "one team" why is the same expectation not on all colleagues</p> | |
| | <p>We are looking into this at the moment, we want to be a flexible employer where colleagues feel they have a good work life balance, whilst balancing the requirements of the store and fairness to colleagues. However, for the management teams we should have a Team Leader, Team Manager or Store Manager in at all times so will always have a Team Leader on a Friday night except if there is annual leave or sickness.</p> |  |
| | <p>Why does the Manager pay increase never match the rest of the colleagues? CSA's and Team leaders over the course of the year will get 5%+ however managers are only getting an average of 2%?</p> | |
| | <p>As a Society we negotiate pay with USDAW on an annual basis and the pay review for our lowest paid colleagues is decided in line with the National Minimum wage of which the increase is decided by the government and implemented in April each year. We are pleased that over half of our colleagues are set to receive a 5% increase this year. The CSA's are our lowest paid colleagues and are currently earning £9.50 which will increase to £9.70 at the end of August.</p> <p>For roles that are not anchored to the national minimum wage which includes our Store Managers and Team Managers, we follow the below process:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We benchmark our salary rates with the external market • Our primary source is the Willis Towers Watson Retail Survey – UK which includes over 200 retail organisations and over 1 million job incumbents • We also carry out sector-specific benchmarking • We analyse pay movements between years to determine whether we need to move our salary ranges in line with the market. • We decide as a business the affordability of the pay review and how much we have to spend on increasing pay after the NMW increases has been implemented to give an average % increase which is negotiated with USDAW, balloted for by their members and then implemented. |  |
| | <p>Some staff have asked for more clarity on substitutes on frozen meal deal. A few have suggested having them displayed on POS labels, so customers can easily find items when others are out of stock. One staff member even suggested having a list of substitutes on back of the POS labels, so any staff member can check, without the need to hunt down a list in one of our offices.</p> | |
| | <p>The substitutes are sent in the FFT, so a store could print this off and stick it to the back of the A4 for easy access.</p> <p>The SEL's don't show the deal because it's classed as a "linksave" deal, and so this is switched off, if we turned this on, we'd end up sending labels for the sandwich meal deal every period which we can't do.</p> <p>We shall look to work with Marketing to work up some small SEL's that a store could slide alongside existing SEL's</p> |  |
| | <p>At the Executive Colleague Council meeting, Phil expressed a desire to become a Greener Midcounties Coop. Churchstoke and Knighton are both very big stores with a lot of roof space that could take advantage of solar panels. Furthermore,</p> | |

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| | <p>you can see from old ariel photos of Churchstoke store, that it dominates the area and has no structures casting shadows near-by. Due to its size, it also is always in the sun throughout the day. I have also had some more fun requests saying we could take advantage of our large carpark and install our own windmill, which is a method that's getting more and more popular with famers in the area that have their own windmills in fields.</p> | |
| | <p>This has been raised with our teams who are currently looking at our energy usage / reduction.</p> |  |
| | <p>A colleague, has reported that Coop card holders who have opted to not use the app and have everything sent through the post, are not received any vouchers. Could we have some info on how vouchers will be handled for customers who decide to opt out. To further help customers claiming to be faced with issue. What is the best action they or we can take to get it resolved?</p> | |
| | <p>If this is referring to share of profits vouchers. All members who receive share of profits get a letter or email telling them how they will be paid. If they have an energy or phone account, it is credited to their account. If they have the app, they will have vouchers on the app. If they have previously asked us to pay them a different way, then we paid them that way again. That leaves a large number of members who have never told us how they want to be paid. They get codes in their letter/email which they can use in our businesses other than food. If they want to use in food, they can either download the app or contact us to request paper vouchers, charity donation or a BACS transfer. All this is in their letter and was also in the colleague briefings that went to every area of the business. This is our members' money so we do all we can to give them convenient ways to get it – we just prioritise the digital route.</p> |  |
| | <p>Any info on how colleagues that don't use the rewards app are going to receive their "Thank you Voucher" this year. Any info on what they need to do or who they need to call would be greatly appreciated.</p> | |
| | <p>When we issue thank you vouchers there will be an article on Colleagues Connect telling colleagues about it. This will include telling them what they need to do if they can't use the app. We did this last time too and a number of colleagues contacted colleague reward and requested paper vouchers instead. There is a cost to the Society of issuing paper vouchers, and we want as many colleagues as possible to access them via the app.</p> |  |
| | <p>Recently Coop rewards added support for apple wallet which allowed them to have a coop card on their apple wallets. I was originally writing asking for support for Google Pay but I have just received an update on my phone now and Google Pay support has been added but I still have had customers and staff asking for support for Samsung pay and Stocard. I use Google Pay myself on my own phone, but a lot of people with Samsung phones prefer Samsung pay's added layer of protection by asking for biometrics as mandatory to pay. Stocard is a none pay wallet app, it's good for people who don't want to have a payment app on their phones, but they still want their loyalty cards on their phones, it also works on google wearables which means they can have all their cards on their watches as well.</p> | |
| | <p>This has been passed to our IT department for further investigation</p> |  |
| | <p>A colleague recently lost their card and sent for a replacement a few weeks ago. I got an email saying they suspended my old card and sent me my new card number so I can update my google pay manual card, but the app hasn't updated my card number, I waited for my new card to arrive just in case it changes after the card arrived, my new card arrived yesterday and at time of writing my app is still displaying my old card number. Even though I have my google pay I wanted to make other staff aware of this in case this happnes to other people.</p> | |

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| | This has been passed to our IT department for further investigation | 😊 |
| | Coupons that come after the till receipt - these are a waste of paper and details that can easily be placed on the receipt, do we really need these? | |
| | These are driving promotions; we are currently using these to drive new member sign up and we have had 54,000 join since the launch of our app in-store. We could not communicate the amount of information required on a receipt. | 😊 |
| | Till receipts - can these be made from re-cycled paper? | |
| | At the moment this is not a viable option for us as the cost would be completely prohibitive, we're already seeing a £100,000 price increase on standard paper used for till rolls this year. As all the Co-op societies also use the same provider ordering from a separate supplier would push cost prices up even more significantly. What we are focusing on is the reduction in use of paper and we're looking at a number of strategies for this including a review of printers, self-checkout software development, the use of offers and the size of text / QR codes etc. | 😊 |
| | Roast Beef - The half price display on the item is confusing the customers, is there any better way of displaying the offer price? | |
| | Colleague asked to send in an example when next on offer as this is Coop Group promotion. | 😊 |
| | Free eye tests – CSA's have been refused the free eye test as the till screen is not classed in the same way that a pc screen is. could this be explained why as on a busy day we can spend up to six hours in front of a till. | |
| | The provision of eye care vouchers is a regulatory requirement under the Health & Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992 for, what the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines as, DSE Users. These regulations define what activity, duration of work and set up is applicable and, to that end, the steps needed to be taken to mitigate the risks for DSE users. On review of the regulations and the defined requirements, the operation of the checkout is not considered to fall under the regulations and so we would not issue eye care vouchers for these Colleagues | 😊 |
| | Wraps - can these be put on an offer e.g., if you purchase these your get 10% off your drink or put them in a mead deal? | |
| | We've raised with Coop Group regarding Wraps, unfortunately because of the way these are made, the cost price if that much greater and the margin just isn't there to support a promotion on these. | 😊 |
| | When are we all going to be wearing the same uniform as it looks unprofessional with all the staff wearing different uniforms? | |
| | At the moment this is not a viable option for us as the cost would be completely prohibitive. Uniform is being replaced as required i.e. damaged/worn. | 😊 |
| | We are encouraged to ask customers if they would like a bag, but Phil promised that by 2026 we not have carrier bags anymore so how can we push to ask customers if they would like a bag and then in a few years say sorry we don't do carrier bags anymore. | |
| | As our carrier bags are compostable, we shall continue this process. | 😊 |
| | Co-op group Team Leaders are currently paid £11 per hour is there anything in the line where our wages will meet this? | |
| | Our pay is favorable, our plans regarding pay and rewards have been presented to the board, with aspirations to do more | |
| | Are there any plans/when are our kronos contracted hrs going to be increased, | |

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| | so we are not struggling on a 1 to 1 basis? | |
| | We have altered these in a number of stores as we see trading patterns changes Some store have seen an increase with others seeing a decline e.g town center stores not back to normal trading following covid. Our challenge is right people at the right time. Along with other retailers 1-1 working will be in place at certain times of the day however not evenings. | |
| | Chip and pins machines are still currently running slow from our side - is this being looked at? | |
| | This is currently being investigated by IT - however RN will pick up | 😊 |
| | How about adding the meal deal onto members offers for £3.50? | |
| | This should be possible when we move to the next version of Pro-mo pay | 😊 |
| | I have been asked if the thank you vouchers will be the same value as last year | |
| | A communication will be sent out about the thank you vouchers by the end of July. | 😊 |
| | Could we possibly make these meetings maybe half hour longer, just so we could have longer discussion times on the breakout sessions. | |
| | Peter will feed back that the meetings new to be longer in the new format | 😊 |
| | What about the long-standing offers going under member deals – e.g., 2 chocolate bars for £1, 2 drinks for £2.40. | |
| | Currently we enhance the promotions from Tcg to create our Member Deals, funding would be an issue. We should see more Co-op own brand member deals as customers look to shop for more own branded goods. | 😊 |
| | Promotions such as Burger & Stella are not advertised in our area? | |
| | We do benefit from what the Tcg advertise nationally and details are put on the Member App. Currently we are having reasonable success with a trial called “Member 60” in a number of stores. | 😊 |
| | Membership issues - signing up on App! | |
| | Reps are encouraged to send examples to RN direct in order that he can investigate. | 😊 |
| | Can colleagues amend their availability if now able to do more hours? | |
| | Great if people can do more, we shall be re-visiting colleague availability / flexibility later in the year | |
| | Can one person be taken on to do a CSA and a TL role? | |
| | This can cause an issue currently because it is difficult to define when a colleague is a CSA and when they are a TL however, we are in the process of defining what good looks like for all roles which might make it easier. In the meantime, when a CSA is running the store in the absence of a Manager, they receive an increase in pay for the additional responsibility | 😊 |
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| | <p style="text-align: center;">In attendance</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Donna – Shawbury Sonia - Codsall Matt - Merry Hill Matt - The Lakes Annie – Radbrook Green Jon - Tamworth Alison – Penkridge John – Churchstoke Laura – Bicton Heath Linsey – Heath Farm Kelly – Brewood Lisa – Clayhanger Lucy - Kineton Dale -Walsall Kimberley – West Hagley</p> </div> |  |
| | <p>Date of next meeting Sept 6th 14.00 – 17.00 - Teams The Executive Colleague Council Meetings will be held on Tuesday 8th November 2022 Location Warwick Time 11.00am – 2pm 2 x Reps required Please make a note in your diary</p> | |