

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

Held Wed. 29th Nov. 2:00pm in the Mike Bower Boardroom, Aizlewood's Mill

1. Welcome and introductions:

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, especially those who had travelled a long distance to be here. Attendees introduced themselves.

2a. Attendance:

Dave Berry, John Carlisle, Jonathan Cook, Nick Edmondson, Gillian Lonergan, Naomi Lopez, Michael McGowan, Margarita McGowan (visitor), Jayne Meadow, Bryan Munsey, Geoffrey Nixon, Diane Patterson, Felicity Reed, Steve Thompson, Jean Tinsley.

2b. Apologies:

Dennis Chambers, Chris Croome, Neil Rhodes, Gareth Roberts, Steve Wagstaff, Dave Powell, Jamie Risner, Kath Clements.

3. Minutes of the last AGM:

Agreed as a correct record (Proposer: Dave Berry, Seconder: Nick Edmondson)

4. Matters Arising:

4a. An update was given about Martin Mayer, of Sheffield Trade Union Council, who was suspended from the Labour Party after campaigning against expulsions. He remains suspended and an appeal has been lodged.

4b. Jeremy Corbyn MP responded in writing following the offer of honorary membership of Principle 5 agreed at last year's AGM. The letter was circulated.

5. Directors' Report:

5a. There was a screening of the Principle 5 short video. Steve Thompson thanked everyone for their input this year, especially Chris Olewicz for his work on publications. *Six Years of Labour Rule in Sheffield 1926-32* was particularly praised for recalling the vision of socialism in practice, a period in which the City Hall was built and many improvements made for working people.

5b. Mike Bower was remembered, as one of Sheffield Co-operative Development Group's first workers. It was his idea to buy Aizlewood's Mill in order to create managed working space in the building and return a fund for co-operative development in Sheffield. (The Board Room was renamed in his honour).

5c. Michael McGowan was thanked for donating another eight volumes of *Co-operative News* to the Resource Centre. He noted the history of Leeds with a warning that Conservative businessmen deliberately took control of Leeds Co-operative Society to stifle the development of the co-operative commonwealth in Leeds.

5d. It was noted that Wortley Hall has a large and useful library of political significance, and that Theatre Deli in Sheffield is now home to a political lending library, run by Sheffield Trade Union Council.

5e. It was also noted that a consultation is underway on the co-operative principles of the ICA (International Co-operative Alliance), with an event today in the East Midlands.

5f. A suggestion was made that Principle 5 book a stall at Sheffield Peace and Craft Fair 2024. The Directors' Report was accepted (Proposer: Dave Berry, Seconder: Jonathan Cook).

6. Accounts:

The financial accounts were presented; a satisfactory picture similar to the year before. But the income and expenditure of Principle 5 are about the same. This means that our co-operative survives financially, but only by a tight margin. It was noted that member subscriptions are the main income, as sales and advertising largely cover publication costs. There is no grant-funding but donations are accepted from co-operators and co-operative organisations.

The Accounts were accepted (Proposer: Dave Berry, Seconder: Bryan Munsey).

7. Publications:

7a. Principle 5 has now produced 4 pamphlets, and 4 editions of *The Sheffield Co-operator*. Other publications subscribed to are *Co-operative News*, and *Stir to Action* magazine.

7b. It was also noted that Real Economics, established by John Carlisle, has published articles focussed around Social Credit, a proposal for Universal Basic Income originating in the 1920s Guild movement. The lifetime work of Frances Hutchinson was praised, particularly in exposing the illusion of money 'creation'. A library of her books is held in Nether Edge, Sheffield.

8. Community Wealth Building:

8a. Dave Berry described the efforts to retain wealth in communities like Cleveland (USA) where de-industrialisation caused a one third drop in population. Political capture is intense, Alberta (Canada) for example has banned sustainable energy projects, under pressure from the oil/tar sands industry. All the gains noted in Helen Jackson's book *People's Republic of South Yorkshire : A Political Memoir 1970-1992* have now been lost but Community Wealth Building is intended to return political and economic power to local people.

Sheffield City Council has passed a resolution in support, but only pressure from below will result in real changes. Principle 5 has invited two Councillors to speak on the issue this year, and will continue to pursue it.

9. Co-operation Town:

Nick Edmondson has introduced the work of Principle 5 to Mikey Whiston, the newly appointed Co-operation Town worker of VAS (Voluntary Action Sheffield). His role is to work on co-operative formation for the food supply, working with users of food banks. It was noted that this may have been a result of *The Sheffield Co-operator's* special Co-operation Towns edition.

10. Election of the Directors:

10a. Jonathan paid tribute to Dennis Chambers, a founder member of Principle 5, now retiring from the Committee. He has been a lifelong committed activist, and particularly encouraged the environment to stay on the agenda of Principle 5. A commemorative certificate for Dennis was signed by all present.

10b. In retiring from the role of Chair, Jonathan suggested that Principle 5 should make efforts to increase diversity on the Committee, encouraging members to consider especially women and/or non-white people who may be persuaded to join.

10c. The following directors were re-elected:

Jonathan Cook	Dave Berry
Nick Edmondson	Chris Olewicz

A second vote took place and John Carlisle was elected.

In all cases, the votes were unanimous.

John outlined his previous experience as a businessman in South Africa. He has worked in corporate supply chains, and also run two small enterprises, including a project to care for AIDS victims.

There was no other business. Members stayed for refreshments and The Resource Centre was opened for members and guests to visit.