

Martin Strube

Co-op Group Election Address

Summary - 75 words:

Currently work in co-operative development and ICT.

Served Group at Area and Regional level variously between July 2011/April 2015. Witnessed much of organisational débâcle which surfaced then. Had grave concerns about The Group being pushed towards democracy review when focus was needed on financial crisis.

Top priority now: holding the Board properly and effectively to account. Cannot be achieved through listening to speeches. Strong advocate of "select" committees to pursue answers to logical/acceptable conclusion.

74w

Additional Information – 500 words:

Witnessed much of the organisational débâcle which surfaced between July 2011/April 2015 when I served variously on a Group AC and Regional V&P. Consequently feel I have a reasonable grasp of what went wrong. Very much on record as having had grave concerns about the way in which The Group was pushed towards an internal review of its democratic structures in the midst of the financial crisis. This crisis was brought on by flawed executive decision-making, but I felt that we were being diverted and mired by the virtual re-invention of our constitution and the associated administrative entanglements. I felt we should have been fully focussed on financial matters and executive accountability.

However, things have moved on. We are where we are. We now need a very strong commitment to making the new structure work.

Top priority in this is the Council's "primary duty" - holding the Board properly and effectively to account.

The Council has one hundred members and inevitably spends much of its collective time listening to speeches. This is not the way to make the Council either responsive to its membership or efficient in its primary duty.

The bulk of work should be undertaken by committees. Initially there were two Standing Committees ("Scrutiny" and "Directors' Fees") but three others have since been added.

In the early review process I, and many others, pressed for a "select committee" system whereby ad hoc committees could be formed and properly resourced to respond to specific unexpected situations. Standing Committees are not always best placed to respond to the unforeseeable and can sometimes tend towards stagnation. They may get bogged down with routine business, static committee populations, and limited lines of enquiry.

To complement the work of Standing Committees, a "select committee" system stands a better chance of utilising the specialist knowledge, experience, and commitment among the wider group of elected members. Properly resourced, they can pursue specific, immediate concerns without being sidetracked by the pressures of routine business. And, job done, they can be disbanded again.

I would also advocate two or three member "panels", arising from committees, to sit on the main stage at General Meetings and question management and/or Board in detail. Hopelessly generalised "questions from the floor" without the opportunity to press supplementary questions are futile. The best hope for "holding to account" resides in the capability to raise and patiently pursue questions until completely satisfactory answers are achieved.

Have worked for over 30 years as a Co-operative Development professional, initially with various CD Agencies; currently through a small co-operative partnership (solutions.coop) where, among other things, I developed the "Democracy Audit". Founder member of the first UK regional Co-operative Council. Well versed in company law and have served on corporate company Boards. Have also served on trust, school, and college Boards and on Trades Councils and associations and have significant experience of the voluntary sector. Very familiar with company and management accounts and accounting practices. Also director of small ICT company. Please feel free to google.

499w