

Board Meeting 15th October 2025

Attendees

- Dave Selby, Joan Curtis, Nora White, Ruth Keeling, Sandra Sutherland

Absent

- Chuku Modu, Dave Morris, Sue Jameson, Yvonne Richards

1. Financial Overview and Cash Flow Concerns

Summary of Discussion: The meeting began with a financial update from Dave Selby and Nora. The summer months (June–August) were described as “choppy” in terms of trading performance, with September showing slight improvement. However, cash reserves were low, with only £21,000 in the bank at the end of the month. This figure is at the lower end of historical balances and raises concerns about the organisation’s ability to weather the typically lean winter months.

Nora expressed particular concern about cash flow, especially after large outgoings like staff wages. She noted that the account has dipped as low as £15,000 post-payroll, which could be dangerous if unexpected expenses arise. The group acknowledged that while the situation isn’t dire, it is precarious and requires proactive fundraising.

2. Fundraising Strategy and Opportunities

Summary of Discussion: The board discussed ongoing and upcoming fundraising efforts. A National Lottery bid for approximately £19,000 has been submitted, with results expected in 2–3 months. Planned events such as Fireworks Night, a Winter Fair, and a Community Day were identified as opportunities for donation drives.

There was a broader discussion about the need for a structured fundraising strategy. Nora expressed that while the idea is good, current staff capacity is too limited to develop one. Joan suggested leveraging a volunteer, who had previously expressed interest in supporting fundraising. Dave proposed using AI tools to generate a draft fundraising strategy, which could be refined by the team.

Agreed Actions:

- Continue promoting the current crowdfunding campaign with a £7,000 target – **Joan/all**

- Share the campaign widely via social media and community groups – **all board members**
- Assign volunteers or staff to collect donations at upcoming events - **Nura**
- Use AI to generate a draft fundraising strategy – **Dave Selby**
- Follow up with Chloe about volunteering for fundraising when/if Chloe responds – **Joan and Nora**
- Pursue participation in the 2027 “Rebel Borough” Year of Culture as a long-term fundraising and visibility opportunity – **Joan/Nora**

3. Staff workloads

Summary of Discussion: Nora reported that staff are feeling overwhelmed, often working beyond their hours to keep operations running. The reduction from three to two office staff has significantly increased the workload. Nora noted that the lack of time and support makes it difficult to pursue new initiatives or strategic planning.

There was a discussion about the need to identify tasks that could be deprioritized or streamlined. Dave suggested a “Sunset Squad” approach, where board members observe staff operations to identify inefficiencies or non-essential tasks. Ruth and Dave volunteered to spend time in the office to support this process.

Agreed Actions:

- **Ruth and Dave** offered to spend time in the office observing operations and identifying potential efficiencies or tasks that could be reduced - **Nora/staff** to consider and contact if useful
 - Explore opportunities to automate or simplify manual processes.
 - Staff and board to collaboratively review findings and decide on changes.

4. Flat Management Structure

Summary of Discussion: The flat management structure was a focal point of concern. Nora and Ruth both expressed that while the model promotes equality, it often results in certain individuals taking on disproportionate responsibility without formal recognition or support. This has led to burnout and dissatisfaction, as seen in past staff departures.

The board acknowledged the need to revisit how the flat structure operates in practice.

Nora recommended that we use Cooperatives UK HR package to support improvements of flat management structure before the package runs out end of 2025. She recommended that we

don't extend the Cooperatives UK HR package beyond December. She suggested we instead look at People Support Co-op which has support for smaller cooperatives which may be useful.

Agreed Actions:

- Share resources on flat management structures with the board - **Nora**
- Review materials and reflect on potential improvements – **All of board**
- Explore how to better support staff within the current structure, including clearer lines of responsibility and communication – **All of board**
- Consider a joint board-staff session to discuss practical applications of flat structures – **All of board**
- Don't renew Cooperatives UK HR package in 2026 – **Nora/Ruth**
- Look at People Support Co-op for alternative HR and structural support – **board member volunteer needed to investigate.**

5. Shareholder Returns

Summary of Discussion: The issue of delayed shareholder returns was raised. Nora noted that due to cash flow constraints, the organisation had postponed payments. The total outstanding amount is around £1,200, with most shareholders either donating their returns or not responding. A few individuals have requested their money back, and smaller amounts have been repaid to reduce administrative burden.

Agreed Actions:

- Continue to delay larger shareholder repayments as long as possible and until financial stability improves – **Nora/Dave Selby**
- Make small repayments if that helps reduce administrative overhead – **Nora/Dave Selby**

6. Building Works and Facilities Update

Summary of Discussion: Joan provided a brief update on the building works. Most of the major work has been completed, including replacing damaged joists and installing rat-proofing under the decking. There may be additional work on the café's lower boarding, pending council funding. Overall, the building is in good condition, and the team expressed relief that the disruptive works were completed.

7. Rotating board chair

Summary of Discussion:

Nora highlighted the difficulty in coordinating meetings and communications due to the lack of a consistent chair. She also noted that staff often don't know who to contact for board-related matters.

Agreed Actions:

- Dave Selby volunteered to chair the next board meeting in December – **Dave Selby**
- The board agreed to always identify the next chair before the end of each meeting – **All board members**
- Sarah, the Secretary, will serve as the consistent point of contact for meeting coordination
- **Sarah**