

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>DETAILS</b>
Title / Theme	Decision Making at The Co-op
Facilitator	David Dunn
Date	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
Participation	John O'Donoghue, George, Mark Malin, Elizabeth Bourke, Reini Bock, Cathy McCarthy, Pears Hussey, Pauric Cannon, Fintan Molloy, Owenroe Lemass, Dave Moore and Tim Cookson
Overview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants Expectations</li> <li>2. Examples of decision making</li> <li>3. Decision making stakeholders</li> <li>4. Categorisation of decision making</li> <li>5. Questions around decision making at The Co-op</li> <li>6. General Observations</li> <li>7. Identifying the obstacles to effective decision making</li> <li>8. AGMS</li> <li>9. Identified obstacles to General Meetings</li> <li>10. Observations on DFC Members' Groups</li> <li>11. Suggestion: Special events</li> <li>12. General Suggestions</li> <li>13. And finally, a bit on language used around decision making</li> </ol>

Notes	Notes taken by David Dunn on flipchart and from memory
Participant's Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interested in the nature of the discussion</li> <li>• Interested in how decisions are made – both good decisions and not-so-good decisions</li> <li>• Clarity on the routes to decision making – where should members go when they want to access decision making.</li> <li>• What kind of cross-communication routes are there amongst the structures of The Co-op (between: CB, staff, volunteers, members groups, etc.)</li> <li>• What are the obstacles to decision making in The Co-op</li> <li>• Are we mindful of the language that we use when talking about decision making in The Co-op?</li> <li>• Can The Co-op be an example of best practice in its governance?</li> </ul>
Examples of Decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The move to the front space with the core produce store</li> <li>• Financial investments</li> <li>• The information flyer (marketing and external communications brief)</li> <li>• Maintaining a presence in Pearse St</li> </ul>
Decision Making Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership</li> <li>• Coordinating Body (CB)</li> <li>• Staff</li> <li>• Members Groups</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Forces</li> <li>• Producer Members</li> </ul>
Categorisation of decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic and Operational</li> <li>• Big or small</li> <li>• Financial cost</li> <li>• Social capital benefit / happiness benefit</li> <li>• Time, resources costs</li> </ul>
Questions around decision making at the Co-op	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who makes the decisions?</li> <li>• Who is deciding on whether decisions are strategic or operational?</li> <li>• What is the process of Talkin' Co-ops note-taking?</li> <li>• Is, and if so how, the CB listening to and receiving feedback from Members?</li> <li>• How are issues raised by the staff managed and coordinated by the CB?</li> <li>• What is the capacity of the CB?</li> <li>• How much time is allocated / factored in for consultation on decision making?</li> <li>• How does the CB feedback to the membership?</li> <li>• What happens about decisions that get taken (particularly policy decisions) and then forgotten?</li> <li>• How can we increase the capacity of The Co-op to make decision effectively?</li> <li>• What are the internal communications structures for internal stakeholder groups within the Co-op.</li> <li>• Where is the Finance Members Group? Shouldn't it be responsible for exploring decisions regarding Co-op's finances?</li> </ul>
General Observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a discrepancy of theory over practice in relation to the interaction between Members Groups and the CB as a coordinator of these action and decision processing vehicles.</li> <li>• Committed DFC members must accept that high involvement in The Co-op isn't for everyone.</li> </ul>
Identifying the obstacles to effective decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There can be dissatisfaction about where the energy goes</li> <li>• Information and communication is equally as important as the vehicles of decision making – thus lack of information obstructs effective consensus decision making.</li> </ul>
AGMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One AGM is not enough for participative democracy</li> <li>• Perhaps there should be more EGMs (80/20)</li> <li>• How can we be more creative in designing and calling General Meetings?</li> </ul>
Obstacles to General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting bums on seats (always a problem, no matter what)</li> <li>• Perception of dis-empowering current decision makers (aren't we about</li> </ul>

Meetings	<p>participative democracy? Clear communication should mitigate against this)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing people up to speed – i.e. giving the context and the background to issues. (again clear and regular communication alleviates this)</li> <li>• Perhaps use open space technology.</li> </ul>
Observations on DFC Members' Groups	<p>How do we support and empower the Members' Groups?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Display information on the decision makers at The Co-op – a Who's Who.</li> <li>• Generate an awareness of the Members Groups as a decision processing vehicle: website, newsletter, The CO-op notice board, have a dedicated Talkin' Co-op on Members Groups, have Members Groups offer an update at each Talkin' Co-op.</li> <li>• Are the Members Groups being listened to? Are they feel empowered or powerless?</li> <li>• What is the attractiveness to Members to get involved in the members groups – What are the rewards? Can they look forward to the rewards of successful work done?</li> </ul>
Suggestion: Special events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use special events which involve and include Members in the decision making processes of The Co-op.</li> <li>• A social events space is essential to support the participative democracy culture of The Co-op</li> </ul>
General Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggestion: Offer new Members a welcome pack which explains the decision making vehicles of The Co-op.</li> <li>• Suggestion: Communicate the minutes of the CB meetings (paraphrased and suitably abridged) to show what decisions are on the agenda of the CB and what has been achieved. Perhaps post these at the Café – where people have a chance to browse them easily – and in the bi-monthly Newsletter.</li> <li>• Suggestion: Could CB meets take as a standing order an examination of Talkin' Co-op notes?</li> <li>• Suggestion: Could the website have a accessible and yet meaningful facility open to Members only?</li> </ul>
And finally, a bit on language	<p>“CB members are members as well” – the language around decision-making is also language about power and hierarchical structures. The language that we use in The Co-op should be mindful to present an open, accessible and participative culture of decision making</p>
Other	<p>Signs / Posters needed around the Co-op space reminding members and visitors alike of what the Co-op is and what membership entitlements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discount on Core Produce</li> <li>- buy Core Produce in Bulk</li> <li>- be involved in the running of the Co-op (as a volunteer, staff or producer member)</li> <li>- participate in decision making</li> </ul> <p>This would be building on the displays that the Welcome Desk hopes to develop for the reception area.</p>