

Report Title	Co-operative Council approach
Meeting	Executive
Meeting Date	23 July 2026
Report Author	Dean Langton/Sarah Astin-Wood
Directorate	Chief Executive's
Lead Executive Member(s)	
Wards Affected	All
Public. Part Exempt, or Fully Exempt	Public
Appendices (if any)	None

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report follows the Council resolution at its meetings on 26 March and 21 May 2026 and a further discussion and recommendations from the initial Co-operative Councils Working Group meeting on 24 June.
- 1.2 It asks the Executive to consider Pendle Borough Council's approach to a Co-operative council, including consideration of an application to join the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN).
- 1.3 It explains what a co-operative approach is; what CCIN membership would mean in practice; and how realistic and proportionate it would be to embed co-operative principles and Community Wealth Building approaches within existing governance, procurement and service delivery arrangements during the remaining life of Pendle Borough Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Consider the submission of an application for Pendle Borough Council to join the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network.
- 2.2 Note the areas of Council activity, as set out in the report, where co-operative principles are already embedded in service and project delivery;
- 2.3. Agree that further work should be undertaken on the three areas identified in the report to further expand the Council's approach to co-operative practice;
- 2.4. Request that peer learning from CCIN membership is used to develop the above.

3. Information: the Rationale & Evidence for the Recommendations

Background

- 3.1 At the Council meeting on 26 March 2026, Council resolved to:
- Declare its aspiration to influence the new unitary council to become a cooperative council working in partnership with residents, businesses and community organisations;
 - Approve in principle and request the Executive to consider the submission of an application for Pendle Borough Council to join the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN);
 - Seek the support of neighbouring authorities to join CCIN;
 - Request that the Chief Executive bring forward proposals to the next Executive outlining how cooperative principles can be embedded within existing council governance, procurement and service delivery models;
 - Promote the adoption of Community Wealth Building approaches, including procurement strategies that increase opportunities for local SMEs, independent businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises within the new unitary council and for the remaining life of Pendle Council.
- 3.2 At the last meeting of Council on 21 May 2026, Council further resolved to:
- Establish in principle a Pendle Co-op Development Network, aiming to support new and existing cooperatives, CICs, and other non-profits, with a report to the Executive on the potential financial and governance arrangements;
 - Engage with Cooperatives UK, the Cooperative Bank, and Town and Village councils on working jointly to grow the network.

What is a cooperative approach to local government

- 3.3 A co-operative approach to local government is based on internationally recognised values and principles, including democracy, equality, self-help, self-responsibility and solidarity. In practical terms, this involves councils working with communities as equal partners, sharing power, and enabling residents to play an active role in shaping services and outcomes.
- 3.4 The Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) is a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association, established to support councils to apply co-operative principles in practice. Membership

provides access to peer learning, policy development, case studies and practical tools that enable councils to adopt more collaborative, community-focused approaches to governance and service delivery.

What Pendle Borough Council currently does

- 3.5 For Pendle Borough Council, adoption of a co-operative approach would not require structural change or additional statutory powers. It would involve proportionate and practical measures such as strengthening community engagement in decision-making, embedding social value and local benefit within procurement processes, and working more closely with local businesses, voluntary organisations and anchor institutions. These approaches align closely with Community Wealth Building principles, supporting inclusive growth and increased local economic resilience.
- 3.6 The CCIN toolkit highlights that councils are most effective when they first understand their local context, including existing co-operatives, current business support, relevant policy priorities, and potential delivery partners. It also emphasises the importance of building on existing assets rather than duplicating activity, working across organisational silos, and recognising that co-operative development requires sustained culture change rather than immediate results.
- 3.7 Co-operative principles can also be embedded through existing council systems rather than through stand-alone initiatives. Within governance, this means using co-design, participation and shared accountability to strengthen how policies are developed and decisions are informed.

Within procurement and commissioning, it means giving greater emphasis to social value, local economic benefit, inclusive supply chains and opportunities for SMEs, social enterprises and co-operatives, consistent with Community Wealth Building objectives.

Within service delivery, it means supporting models that enable communities and partners to play a greater role in shaping, managing or sustaining local provision.

- 3.8 In Pendle, this approach is reflected through:
 - Area Committees, where decision taken by the Council are done at a neighbourhood level;
 - Asset Transfers which are being in consultation with Town and Parish Councils;
 - Partnerships with Town and Parish Councils, volunteer organisations who, in concert with the Council, work to deliver Council Plan objectives for the benefit of the Borough as a whole;
 - Community engagement including, for example:

- Digital inclusion programme, as part of Connected Pendle: Digital Together, our Customer & Digital Strategy
- Engaging residents on new initiatives such as the food waste campaign to support behaviour change and take-up;
- Delivery of the Crisis & Resilience Fund (CRF) programme, which actively enables and resources community organisations to design and deliver local solutions that reflect the needs and strengths of their communities, including developing a local resilience hub model to promote a more streamlined approach to accessing services and support.
- Implementation of the Economic Growth strategy, particularly where it supports inclusive growth and local enterprise, enhanced economic activity and skills profile.
- Participation in investment decisions with the most recent example of this being the allocation of Pride in Place Impact Funding;
- Resident-led regeneration, e.g. Colne Levelling Up Fund (LUF), Nelson Town Deal (NTD) and Nelson Pride in Place (NPiP);
- Emphasis on local buying (and the use of local suppliers) to increase investment in the Borough;
- Increasing importance of social value in the evaluation of bids which is reflected in the most recent update to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

What more could Pendle Borough Council do?

- 3.9 Given the funding constraints of the council, and the guidance in the CCIN toolkit stated above, it seems prudent to build upon the range of cooperative approaches that already exist, further applying the principles as appropriate.
- 3.10 There are three areas of focus that could further drive the cooperative principles within the Borough:
- Develop a Pendle Co-operative Network as a sub-group of Pendle Vision Board (PVB). This would depend on the participation of members of the PVB, engagement with the business community and their commitment to co-operative principles;

- Review our Procurement Policy and Strategy to further embed social value, particularly with a focus on supporting the local economy (and in line with the Procurement Act 2023);
- Develop a Digital Advice and Guidance area on the Community Support Hub webpage (similar to the Preston model) for those residents and organisations that wish to adopt co-operative practice: [Community Support Hub | Pendle Borough Council](#)

3.11 If approved, the outcome would be a clear strategic commitment to co-operative principles, collaborative working and improved local economic outcomes. It would also be achievable within the resources available to the Council.

4. Link to Council Plan Priorities: (Providing High Quality Services and Facilities, Proud and Connected Communities and Places, Good Growth and Housing and Healthy Communities)

4.1 The proposals in this report support all Council Plan priorities by promoting co-designed, preventative and locally-focused approaches that improve service quality, strengthen community participation, support good growth and contribute to healthier communities.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

Full membership of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network is subject to an annual subscription fee calculated using a sliding and capped formula based on population and controllable budgets. An overall cap of £7,900 applies. Based on Pendle Borough Council's scale, the fee is expected to be significantly below the cap and potentially met from existing budgets. No additional financial commitments arise directly from membership.

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

There are no legal or governance implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.3 **Climate and Biodiversity Implications**

Community Wealth Building and local procurement approaches may support climate and biodiversity objectives by reducing supply chain emissions.

5.4 **Human Resources Implications**

There are no staffing implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.5 **Equality and Diversity Implications**

An Equalities Screening will be completed, and an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken if required.

6. **Consultation**

- 6.1 Subject to approval, early implementation would include engagement with relevant officers with the aim of mapping relevant local assets, existing co-operatives, support organisations and potential partners in order to identify realistic opportunities for co-operative development.

7. **Alternative Options Considered**

- 7.1 The option of not seeking CCIN membership would mean keeping the status quo.

8. **Statutory Officer Sign off**

Section 151 Officer	X
Monitoring Officer	X

9. **Background Documents**

Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network – What is a Co-operative?

<https://www.councils.coop/resources/toolkits/coopdevelopment/introduction/>

Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network – Membership and Fees

<https://www.councils.coop/membership/membership-fees/>

Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network – Councils' Co-operative Development Toolkit

<https://www.councils.coop/resources/toolkits/coopdevelopment/>

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