

# Meet your candidates

Election of Directors  
2024

Have a say,  
your vote  
matters!

East of  
England  
**CCOP**

# Election of Directors 2024

This year we have 12 candidates standing for 6 vacancies on our Board of Directors, the body responsible for setting policy and strategy and for overseeing its implementation for the East of England Co-op. Please take the time to read the details of the candidates.

**Your chance  
to make a co-op  
difference, your  
vote matters!**

## **Board Information**

The Board has 16 Directors. All are non-Executive. The normal term of office is four years with Directors retiring by rotation each year. To find out more about the current Board of Directors, please visit [www.eastofengland.coop/board](http://www.eastofengland.coop/board)

East of England Co-op and Civica Election Services have made every effort to ensure that the candidates' election statements have been reproduced as they were submitted. The views expressed are those of the candidates and do not necessarily reflect those of the East of England Co-op or of Civica Election Services.

# Meet your candidates

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Martin  
Catchpole



Roger  
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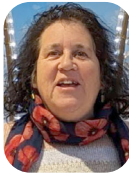
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Garry  
Simmonds



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The results for the Election of Directors 2024 will be announced at our Annual Members' Meeting on 16th May 2024 at 6pm.

## David Blackwell



During my 40+ years in Retail Fashion, I gained a wealth of knowledge in; Sales, HR, Finance, Marketing, Purchasing, IT and Commercial Property Acquisitions, all I consider invaluable to the board, where I'm sure I could be an asset.

Retiring a few years ago, I missed the retail environment, so joined East of England Co-operative Society at my local Fiveways Brightlingsea store as a part-time CSA working in both store and forecourt environments. I am incredibly proud to work for the EOE Co-op and I would bring passion and enthusiasm to the board.

I am impressed with the Locally Sourced range stocked, but also in the ethical way the co-op works with the local producers who are here in our community, and I would love to see this expanded.

On a personal level, I am married, live in Brightlingsea, three children and ten grandchildren. Interests; reading, gardening, travel, walking, and dining out, plus, I work in my local community, as a Rotarian, helping local communities, to make a difference, extremely rewarding to me.

Thank you for taking the time to read my Bio and hope you think me worthy of your valuable vote. I would like to thank you in anticipation, as I would be very proud to be a director, so please vote for me!

## Liam Pocock



Having worked for the East of England Co-op for the past 24+ years, first as a customer service assistant leading up to, and currently, a multi branch manager, I have seen many changes, however, what never changes is my will to do the right thing for both the company and the colleagues within, whilst providing a service and approach to the customer that we can be proud of.

I share a vision with The East of England Co-op to connect people and communities through business and I pride myself on being someone who welcomes everybody with the same passionate approach whilst ensuring the needs of the business are met.

This collaborative approach to business and community is what I believe makes us unstoppable and I feel we are stronger together when we keep the customer as one of our main focuses .

I have seen the society from many angles, from the bakery to the shop floor and in multiple roles as well as being a Health and safety representative, Area Managers representative, Cash and loss representative and most recently I have been trusted to oversee Region 2 in the absence of the Region leader.

I would very much like the opportunity to put my hard working, caring and honest approach to the business into action at board level where I believe I can be an asset. I am incredibly proud to work for the East of England Co-op and I would bring that passion to the board.

## Steven Shaw

Society Director  
May 2015 to Nov 2020



Dear esteemed Member,

I joined the Royal Arsenal Co-operative society back in the 1980's, all my family were keen and active members.

I worked for Royal Arsenal Co-op and then the East of England Co-op as a milk rounds person for many years. I joined the East of England Co-operative society in 2003 when I moved to this area.

I then ran my own window cleaning business for over 15 years. Travelling around Suffolk I would use the society stores and I continue to use them now.

I have worked on the shop floor and in management roles during my working life. In 2015 I was delighted to be elected to the Board of Directors of EOE Co-op.

When I was on the of East of England Co-op Board, I was very honoured and proud to be appointed as a trustee for the Co-op Juniors Theatre Company. Co-op's have supported for many years local groups within the Communities they serve, which shows they are more than just a business. I believe our Co-op should continue that Ethos and support workers, local suppliers, and the community.

I will continue to listen to members and staff and will inform the board of what is going right as well as a focus on what is going wrong. I am hoping for your support and to be able to help run the society the way that our staff and members deserve. Regards

## Julie Mansfield

Society Director  
May 2023 to date



Thank you to everyone who voted for me last year! It does take a wee while to begin to be useful but, if you are good enough to vote me in again, I will continue to speak up about your priorities and issues which come to my attention. I know there is still a need for more affordable and flexible funeral options and I am also aware that some members would like easier ways to report problems and issues. I am keen to pursue these matters and promote strategies which focus on fair-pricing and community.

I have joined the Co-operative Party in order to widen my co-operative experience and I am studying for an independent e-learning qualification to ensure I keep my strategy and governance skills and knowledge up to date.

I am a volunteer director of Eastern Savings & Loans Credit Union and employed as the administrator of Churches Together in Suffolk (otherwise Network Suffolk) which facilitates communication for faith groups. I also volunteer with Dora Brown Homemaking where we de-clutter and deep clean homes for families in crisis.

I am married with three children and have lived in Woodbridge for over twenty five years. I have been involved with various community groups for most of that time, starting with being chair of my local playgroup. Before moving to Suffolk, I was a solicitor in Scotland, specialising first in medical negligence cases and then in Wills, Trusts and Probate.

*The following information has been provided by the Secretary:*

Board service since the last AMM (May 2023)  
Board Meetings: 6 of 6  
Performance Review Committee: 3 of 3

## Martin Catchpole



Thank you for taking the time to read my statement

I was born in Ipswich with fond memories of my father managing the Carr Street Co-op carpet department & my mother working at the Co-op distribution warehouse for 29 years (I briefly joined her there in 2000). Saturdays usually involved a trip to the local Co-op after the park on Garrick Way, the old divi number remains embedded

The present we inhabit features a Co-op (& Ipswich) which I do recognise, but is a shadow of its former self. Anyone walking past the Carr Street building after having worked or visited will know the feeling. Not to say there are not positives! But there is much to be done

I worked in care for 15 years & currently as a gardener. To speak up on your behalf, I ask for your letters, comments, suggestions & ideas otherwise I can only talk from my own 30+ years experience which is currently;

- review the Co-op's cost of goods for sale in low income & deprived areas
- review robot tills and headset system focusing on customer interactions
- maximise the use & position of Community Boards in-store
- listen & act on the Co-op's working staff's comments, suggestions & ideas
- more opportunities for grants & loans for local small producers, businesses & farmers
- review the management of Co-op assets & property

Your vote will go some way to achieving these, bringing cooperative back to the Co-op, thank you

## Roger Grosvenor



I am seeking your vote to become a Director of the East of England Co-Operative Society. I worked for the Society for nearly 37 years, latterly as Joint Chief Executive. If elected I would be given a great opportunity to give something back to an organisation with which I have shared Co-op values throughout my career.

The Society is committed to supporting local communities throughout East Anglia and during my career I am proud to say that I instigated a number of ground breaking initiatives which highlighted the Society as a leading organisation. The launch of "Sourced Locally" food in 2007, created and protected jobs, whilst generating revenue that contributed to the local economy. Over 100 suppliers contributed over the trading area. In addition, the "Co-Op guide to dating" entailed selling goods beyond their best before dates, for 10 pence. This helped to reduce food poverty and prevented many tonnes of food going to landfill sites.

Both of the aforementioned, amongst others, received the highest industry awards and one was acknowledged by Prince William after its appearance on the front page of the Times.

If elected, I would uphold and promote Co-op values, driven by ethical behaviour, accountability and transparency. My experience over the years, from shop floor to Boardroom provides me with the ability to be well considered and objective in support of the Society's progression. I would be very proud to carry out the role of Director and continue my Co-op journey so please vote for me.

## Ashley Munson

Society Director  
Dec 2023 to date



Hi there,

I have worked for the East of England Co-op for over six years holding various positions in the data analytics and insight space. Currently I am Reporting & Analytics Manager working within the Business Transformation team.

My team and I are expected to remain up to speed across all areas of the business (food, fuel, funeral, travel, property and Perfitts) with a key focus on commercial performance and stakeholder management. It is critical to my role that I have a strong ability to craft information from data and trends that allow me to effectively influence upwards.

Away from work, I am a husband and father to three young children and am a customer at the Co-op on a daily basis. I mention this as a lot of the traditional Co-op values can be applied to family life. It is my belief that these values are what separates our Co-op from the competition.

That being said, the world is changing and the marketplace is more competitive than it has ever been. I have the required experience, skills and forward-looking mindset to help shape our Co-op for the long term future whilst ensuring that those aforementioned values remain at the forefront of everything we do.

On top of all of this, I have been fortunate enough to serve on the Board of Directors since December meaning I have my eyes wide open to a) what is expected of the role and b) how I can continue making a positive impact.

*The following information has been provided by the Secretary:*

Board service since the last AMM (May 2023)  
Board Meetings: 2 of 2  
Membership and Community Engagement Committee: 1 of 1

## Nicola Fox

Society Director  
May 2011 to May 2023



During my service as a Director of the East of England Co-op, I was actively involved in growing the Society's businesses, setting strategy, analysing and developing new initiatives, increasing member involvement and holding senior management to account.

I served as Chair of the Remuneration & Search Committee, and as Vice-Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee and represented our Society at member events and conferences.

I also undertook extensive training specific to being a Director of our Society.

I've worked in marketing and communications management across the public, private and charity sectors for over 25 years and have run my own business.

I'm experienced in:

- growing and promoting businesses.
- developing and managing local and national projects.
- increasing member involvement.

My experience of bringing people together and working co-operatively to benefit everyone helps me to serve our Society, members, colleagues and communities.

My Dad worked for the Co-op for 32 years. His experience inspired me to serve our Society.

As economic and environmental conditions continue to be challenging, and as other organisations reduce services, our Society's values and position at the heart of our communities are more important than ever.

I will work hard to help our Society continue to improve and grow as a successful, sustainable business, and to bring additional value for money, increase member involvement, and support members, colleagues and all the communities our Society serves.

I hope you will support me.

## Garry Simmonds



As a regular user of my local co-op serving a large number of spread out villages, I see how it is a big part of the community and would be very proud to receive your vote to become a director.

I would bring my experience of people-facing community outreach to support the organisation's decisions, and continue the great progress made towards a caring customer focused mindset making a big difference in many little ways.

For nearly 10 years I've worked with many small local communities, operating the Rural Coffee Caravan that visits and arranges social and information events and links people into essential services. Many conversations turn to local shops, the co-op is highly valued for the staff who are welcoming and patient if someone is struggling or just needing a friendly chat.

I have arranged, event managed, budgeted and run 25 'Golden Age' fairs for seniors, some supported by passionate coop team staff in the past. As a mental health first aider and lover of community I also initiated the startup of new "Meet Up Monday" events in pubs, and am interested in initiating the creation of a 'Men's Shed' on the Shotley peninsula.

Continuing the Society's environmental ethos is important to me, as a nature lover I spent 3 years working overseas in eco-tourism and national parks. I would be keen on supporting the locally sourced range growth and supporting independent suppliers and more community involvement, helping to innovate and keep Co-op the hub of communities.

## Sean Hills



I believe that I can make a positive difference to the future of our co-op. I am a strategic thinker with an analytical mind who gets into the detail to understand decisions to be able to make the most balanced outcome possible.

I bring a wealth of experience having worked for the society for over a decade and have had the opportunity to work within every county we trade in. I started as a Customer Service Assistant in Brightlingsea Supermarket and now lead a team of 400 colleagues as a Regional Leader in Essex, covering all different store sizes and areas which gives me a well rounded view of what customers and colleagues need and how we can deliver a sustainable future in what is a very challenging commercial environment.

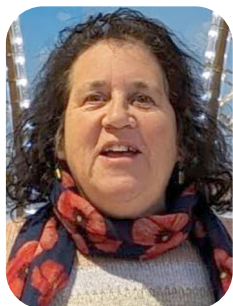
Every day my role enables me to be close to the needs of our colleagues and the communities that we serve. I feel I have the experience, leadership and a genuine understanding to be able to challenge and make the right decisions for the future of the Society.

I live in Thorrington with my wife and 4 year old son and outside work I am very active and enjoy lots of different sports.

I am really passionate about working for our co-op and I would love the opportunity to be elected to the board and bring an energy to the society to make a difference to improve the daily lives of our colleagues and customers in store!



## Suzanne Hawkes



My name is Suzanne Hawkes and I am Suffolk born and bred - so bringing a wealth of local knowledge to the role.

I was brought up in a Newsagent & Grocers shop that my father successfully ran for 45 years. He taught me the value of local enterprise and how to run a business, all very useful skills to bring to the role of Director on the Board.

I am single with three grown up sons and two grandchildren. Hence I know first hand how difficult it can be to make ends meet in these challenging times - and why more than ever people look for value for money as well as quality.

I am Artistic Director of Two Sisters Arts Centre in Trimley St Mary which I opened in 2019 and have successfully run for the past five years as a not for profit, community based enterprise that gives a platform to both local and national talent . I am also a playwright and run Black & White Productions Theatre Company. We specialise in drama based in East Anglia and take our work to site specific locations. Hence not only is a lot of my working life community based - I also have a lot of experience in event management which could be useful skills to bring to the table.

I am also a qualified freelance bookkeeper - and have worked for a number of charities in the past, skills which I could also bring to the role.

## Ann Osborn



I am asking for your vote because I would like to support the EoE Co-op in its development over the next few years, especially in matters of supporting communities and individuals. The development of the business and its ability to meet the challenges it faces are vital, as is its place at the heart of communities.

I have worked for the Suffolk charity The Rural Coffee Caravan (RCC) for 21 years but will retire in 2025. I am currently CEO, responsible for our work addressing the symptoms and causes of rural isolation and loneliness.

The Co-op consistently provides support to local supportive services required by communities, and I would like to help increase the profile of this work. Strong partnerships are good for the community and also make good business sense.

I have been responsible for developing the "More than a Shop" and "MeetupMondays" networks in recent years and have been proud to lead a charity that has received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

In 2021 I founded "500 Suffolk Reasons" a membership based fundraising group set up to address the cost-of-living crisis, making one-off donations to individuals facing unexpected hardship.

In 2023 I was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Suffolk. Living in Suffolk for 36 years I value the EoE Co-op and the place it has in the life of the county.

As a director, I would be proud to be part of its future. Your vote will enable me to do that.

**To find out more visit:  
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