

Pensions Newsletter

2025/26



The Midcounties Co-operative
Pension Scheme

Our
COOP

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Note from the Chair

Dear Scheme Members,

It's a pleasure to be writing to you again after a very eventful year involving important changes for the Scheme sponsor, and in which the Scheme's deficit has seen a substantial reduction.

While interest rates have been high, the impact of the Society's annual contributions of £7 million has continued to be much larger in relation to the deficit than it was before, meaning its effect in paying down the deficit is much more significant in relative terms than it was when rates were lower. With the benefit of the positive impact of the Scheme's return-seeking investments as well, it is pleasing to report that our latest (unofficial) valuation shows we are 98% funded on a "technical provisions" basis – i.e. broadly speaking that our assets represent 98% of our estimated liabilities.

As I mentioned last year, The Pensions Regulator now requires schemes to have a plan that goes well beyond eliminating deficits. This can take a variety of forms, including building enough assets to fund a buyout with an insurance company or getting to a position where the surplus is so large that it is effectively insulated against financial shocks. In September, at the time of our triennial valuation, we agreed a plan with the Society to meet these requirements over the next 10 years. This will require some additional modest contributions from the Society and some growth from our return-seeking assets over that time.

In previous newsletters I wrote about the introduction of the new Pensions Dashboard, which will require all pensions providers to make data available about peoples' different pension arrangements

through a single portal. After some delays, we have been able to work with our service provider Isio to connect to the dashboard, and when the necessary software development has been completed you will be able to view your pension benefits through this facility.

There have been no changes to the Trustee board since the last newsletter, with Dennis Young being re-elected as a Member Nominated Trustee, and once again. I would like to place on record my thanks to my Trustee colleagues and to Helen Flint-Hill, our Secretary and Head of Pensions, for all their hard work in the last year.

There has been one change to our advisors during the year: Following a tendering exercise, we appointed PWC as our Covenant Advisor, replacing RSM.

The really big piece of news of course is the recent merger between Midcounties Co-op and Central England Co-op, which was overwhelmingly approved by members in early December and completed on 26 January 2026. The merged Society will also be choosing a new name, from proposals put forward by members. The Trustees and their advisors believe this is a positive move, which will create a stronger sponsor for the scheme as we look to the future, in a challenging environment.

We hope you find this newsletter informative and interesting. As always, we welcome any feedback and suggestions you may have on future content.

Vivian Woodell
Chair of Trustees



Meet the Trustees

There are seven Trustees, three appointed from the Society Board and three elected by members and pensioners of the pension scheme. An independent Trustee was appointed by the Society on 1 November 2020, Alison Bostock of Zedra Governance Ltd.

The Trustees are:

Appointed	Elected
Vivian Woodell (Chair)	Stephen Ridler
Fiona Ravenscroft (<i>Left 26th January 2026</i>)	Dennis Young
Irene Kirkman	James English
Alison Bostock	Janson Woodall (<i>appointed 19th February 2026</i>)

In the picture from left to right, Damian McClure (Actuary, Mercer), Irene Kirkman, Fiona Ravenscroft, Alex McTavish (Investment manager, WTW), Alison Bostock, Vivian Woodell, James English, Helen Flint-Hill (Secretary to the Trustees), Dennis Young, and Steve Ridler. In the right image: Janson Woodall.



The Trustees meet at least quarterly to review the investment performance of the fund, get a funding update, see if the administrator is meeting its service standards, and a number of other matters involved in managing the scheme.

The Trustees aren't experts in pensions or investment so they have appointed professional advisers who can help deal with numerous other matters and ensure that the scheme is properly managed.

The current advisers to the trustees are:

Advisors	What they do
The scheme actuary – Mercer	Check on the financial health of the scheme
Investment consultants - Willis Towers Watson	Ensure that the Scheme's assets are properly invested and advise the trustees on investments
The auditors – RSM	Check that the year end accounts are correct
The administrators – Isio Pensions	Calculate benefits and maintain records
The legal advisers – Eversheds	Provide legal advice on pension issues
Independent financial advisers – Workplace Solutions	Advised members on their options at retirement
Employer Covenant Advisor – PWC (Appointed January 2025)	Advise the Trustees on the strength of the Society Covenant

Although we have appointed various firms to do things on our behalf and give advice it remains the case that the Trustees retain overall responsibility for the pension scheme.



Facts & Figures

Every year the Trustees have to produce a set of audited accounts. Below are some of the key highlights from the 31 December 2024 accounts.

How much money is in the pension scheme?

The value of the fund goes up and down depending on the return on investments but as at 31 December 2024 the fund was worth

£160m



How much does the scheme pay out in pensions and other expenses?

The scheme pays about

£7m each year in pensions

and another £1m a year in other benefits and expenses.

How many people are in the scheme?

The scheme closed in June 2014 so there are no longer any active members.

The Society was contributing £7m in contributions towards the deficit. Following completion of the Actuarial Valuation in September 2025, a new schedule of contributions has been agreed for the future, the deficit was around £4m. In 2026 the Society will be contributing £1.5m to the pension scheme.

Category	Number
Deferred members	1,901
Pensioners	1,344
Total Members	3,245

Get in touch

Scheme Administration

If you would like further information about the Scheme or have a query about your benefits, please contact the Scheme Administrators Isio Pensions, who administer the scheme including notifying them of any change of address.

There is a dedicated Help Line for members of the Midcounties Co-operative pension scheme on **0800 122 3200** and a dedicated email address at **midcounties.co-operativePensionScheme@Isio.co.uk**

Tax Queries

If you have any questions about your tax code for your pension you should contact the tax office.

PAYE, HMRC BX9 1AS. Telephone number 0300 200 3300.
Tax reference 475/ZB18672

Scheme Secretary

If you have any comments for the Trustees, please contact Helen Flint-Hill, Secretary to the Trustees who is based at the Society's support centre in Warwick.

Helen can be contacted on 01926 516009 or email: Helen.Flint-Hill@midcounties.coop



Looking after your loved ones



As at 30th September 2025 the total membership was 3,203, of which 1,068 members had a completed Expression of Wish Form on file.

The Trustees are concerned that many members have not completed an Expression of Wish Form. This form provides guidance to the Trustees about whom to consider as recipients of any lump sum death benefits. The persons nominated do not have to be the same as the beneficiaries named in your Will, as the lump sum is not part of your Estate. For example, you can nominate a partner, your children or other family members or a charity, and the sum can be divided between a number of people or organisations.

Once you have completed an Expression of Wish Form it is important to keep it up to date, particularly if your circumstances change, so that the Trustees can take into account your wishes. If there is no form recorded, or it appears to be very out of date, the Trustees has to make their own judgment on whom to pay, based on our investigations of your personal circumstances, and this may not be in line with what you would have wanted and will take more time.

Please help the Trustees by ensuring that you have completed an up-to-date Expression of Wish Form. If your pension has been in payment for more than five years, there is no requirement to complete an expression of wish form.

There are many life events that may prompt you to review your current nomination including:

a marriage
or civil
partnership

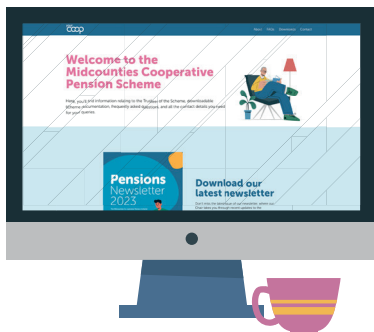
separation
or a
divorce

birth of a
child

death of a
nominee

There is a form enclosed.

Midcounties Co-operative Pension Scheme – Website



We have been working on creating a website for our members.

The website contains all of the latest scheme and Trustee information for your reference.

Visit the pensions website via:

www.midcountiescarepensionscheme.co.uk

The Midcounties Co-operative Society Pension Scheme

Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure

This is a policy which deals with disputes between beneficiaries (or potential beneficiaries) of the scheme and the trustee.

Whose complaints are covered by this procedure

Complaints can be accepted under this procedure from:

- any in service deferred member or deferred pensioner or pensioner of the scheme.
- a former member's widow, widower, civil partner or other dependant.

How to make a complaint

The complainant must put in writing the details of the nature of the complaint, along with details of his or her name, address, date of birth and National Insurance Number.

This should be sent to Helen Flint-Hill, Head of Pensions. The trustees have nominated her to investigate complaints.

OurCoop,
Co-operative House
Warwick Technology Park
Warwick
CV34 6DA

Email: helen.flint-hill@midcounties.coop

Helen Flint-Hill will respond within two months of the complaint being received with either a decision or an explanation behind any delay and an expected date of issuing a decision.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, he or she should write within six months of the date of the response to the complaint to Helen Flint-Hill, this will then be referred to the Trustees of the Pension Scheme.

The Pension Scheme Trustees will review and respond to the complaint.

If the complainant is still dissatisfied with this decision the next stage of complaint is to the Pension Ombudsman.

If you would like full details of this procedure please contact Helen Flint-Hill, contact details as above.

Summary Funding Statement 2025

Midcounties Co-operative Pension Scheme

This is an important document and it lets you know how the Scheme is doing financially.
We strongly recommend that you read this statement carefully

Why is it important?

The Scheme's financial health could affect the benefits you receive.

As Trustees of the Midcounties Co-operative Pension Scheme ("the Scheme") we must send you a statement following completion of each formal valuation of the Scheme, which takes place every three years, and after each actuarial report in the years in between.

If you have any concerns, please read this statement for more information or contact the Trustees using the contact details provided. The Trustees cannot provide you with financial advice so we suggest you speak to an independent financial advisor if you need advice regarding your pension benefits.

How is the Scheme doing?



Assets

The money the Scheme has now.



Liabilities

The estimated cost of providing benefits – now and in the future.



Surplus/(shortfall)

The assets minus the liabilities.



Funding level

The assets as a percentage of the liabilities.

The estimated liability figures below assume that the Scheme will continue until all future benefits due are paid. These estimates depend on assumptions about what will happen in the future, such as the investment return that will be earned on the Scheme's assets and how long members will live for.

31 December 2021 full actuarial valuation

£281.4m	£332.1m	(£50.7m)	85%
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31 December 2023 update (the latest figures provided)

£172.0m	£192.8m	(£20.8m)	89%
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31 December 2024 full actuarial valuation

£160.2m	£170.0m	(£9.8m)	94%
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Since we last provided you with an update of the funding position of the Scheme, the Trustees, with advice from their advisers, have carried out the triennial actuarial valuation of the Scheme with an effective date of 31 December 2024. This showed that the funding shortfall in the Scheme fell significantly over the prior 3-year period (as shown above). The main reasons for the change are:

- a significant change in investment market conditions (rise in gilt yields) served to lower the values placed on liabilities and assets, which subsequently led to a lower deficit;

- deficit contributions paid by the Society to help remove some of the deficit; and
- using the latest evidence of life expectancy in setting valuation assumptions.

It is not unusual for pension schemes to have a shortfall at present. The level of the shortfall will change over time, affected by the Scheme’s financial experience and the level of contributions paid by the Society.

Since we last sent you a summary funding statement, no payments have been made to the employer, and the Scheme is not subject to any directions from the Pensions Regulator.

How will the shortfall be addressed?

As part of the formal valuation as at 31 December 2024, the Trustees worked with the Society to agree the funding position, strategy and contributions for the future. There was a further improvement in the funding position since the valuation date and taking account of that improvement to correct the shortfall, the Society agreed to pay:

- £1.5m payable on or before 18 February 2026; and
- £1.0m per annum on or before 18 February 2027, 2028 and 2029.

If the assumptions do not turn out to be right, it may be necessary for further contributions to be paid for the shortfall to be eliminated by 2029. Although there is a shortfall in the Scheme as at 31 December 2025, all members who have retired are still receiving their full pension amounts.

Is there enough money in the Scheme to provide my full benefits if the Scheme is wound-up?

If the Scheme were to be wound-up, we would have to buy benefits in the insurance market, which would be much more expensive than providing members’ benefits from the Scheme as shown below.

 Assets	 Liabilities	 Surplus/(shortfall)	 Funding level
31 December 2024 wind-up position			
£160.2m	£187.8m	(£27.6m)	85%
<p>The fact that we show this position does not mean that the Society is planning to wind up the Scheme. It is just another piece of information, which we hope will help you understand the financial security of your benefits.</p>			

So how secure is my pension?

We aim to have enough money to pay pensions now and in the future, but this is dependent on contributions continuing to be paid and the investment returns on the Scheme's assets. In the event the Scheme was wound-up without enough money to buy all the benefits with an insurer, then it is unlikely you would receive the full pension benefits you were expecting. To help members in this situation, the Government set up the **Pension Protection Fund (PPF)** in 2005.

The benefits you would receive from the PPF depend on your age and your period of Scheme service. Further information and guidance is available at www.ppf.co.uk or can be contacted by various options below:

By telephone: 0345 600 2541

By email: information@ppf.co.uk

Can I leave the Scheme before I am due to retire?

You can, if you wish, transfer your deferred benefits in the Scheme to another pension arrangement before you retire. If you are thinking of transferring out of the Scheme for any reason, you must consult an independent financial advisor before taking any action. **Legally, we cannot provide you with financial advice.**

Where can I ask questions, or get more information?

Please use the contact details below if you have questions about the content of this statement or need information.

Helen Flint-Hill, Head of Pensions:

helen.flint-hill@midcounties.coop

If you have any queries about your individual benefits, need to change your address or provide details of a spouse or dependant for your pension, please contact the Scheme's administrator, Isio, using the contact details below.

Isio, the Scheme's administrator:

Midcounties.Co-operativePensionScheme@ISIO.com

Additional documents available on request

The Statement of Funding Principles

This explains how we (the Trustees) plan to manage the Scheme with the aim of being able to continue to provide the benefits that members have built up.

The Statement of Investment Principles

This explains how we (the Trustees) invest the money paid into the Scheme.

The Schedule of Contributions

This shows how much money is being paid into the Scheme by the Society and includes a certificate from the actuary showing that it is sufficient.

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Midcounties Co-operative Pension Scheme

The Scheme's income and expenditure. The latest report is for the year up to 31 December 2024.

The Formal Actuarial Valuation Report as at 31 December 2024

The details of the actuary's check of the Scheme's financial situation as at 31 December 2024.

From the Trustees of the Midcounties Co-operative Pension Scheme

Pension Scams Don't get stung

DON'T LET A SCAMMER ENJOY YOUR RETIREMENT

Pension scammers will do whatever it takes to get their hands on your savings and enjoy your retirement.

If you are contacted out of the blue by someone claiming to be able to help you access your pension before the age of 55, it will be a scam so hang up immediately. Such scams are becoming increasingly more sophisticated, so it is essential that you check before succumbing to any sales pitch, as you risk losing a life time of pension savings.



**Please check on the following website
www.pension-scams.com
or phone 0800 138 7777**

Important Scam Alert:

Protect Your Pension

The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has issued a warning regarding a sharp rise in impersonation fraud (as of March 2026), where fraudsters pose as scheme members or officials to access funds.

Be Vigilant Against These Tactics:

- **Impersonation:** Criminals pretend to be pension providers, trustees, or regulators.
- **Email Hacking:** Scammers hack personal emails to gather private pension information.
- **Fake Accounts:** Creating duplicate accounts to redirect funds.
- **Cold Calling:** Unexpected phone calls about your pension are illegal.

How to Protect Yourself:

- **Take Your Time:** Do not be pressured into making quick decisions about your savings.
- **Verify Identity:** Always verify that the person contacting you is who they say they are by using contact details from official, trusted websites.
- **Strengthen Security:** Use strong, unique passwords for email accounts and set up two-step verification where possible.
- **Update Records:** Keep your contact details up to date with us so you know if you receive unexpected communications.

What to Do If You Suspect Fraud:

Report it:

Contact Report Fraud immediately on 0300 123 2040, or visit their website if you believe you have been targeted.

Contact Us:

Reach out to your pension scheme administrators directly to report the incident.

Check the Register:

Use the Financial Conduct Authority | FCA register to verify if a firm is legitimate.



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www.midcounties.coop

We are happy to provide publications in alternative formats.