



YORK SUPPLIES
COMMUNITY CO-OP
57 WATERLOO ROAD



BUILDING | MAKING | GROWING



ANNUAL REPORT

Presented to members at the Annual General Meeting of the Society on 5 July 2025

Building • Making • Growing

Registered with the Financial Conduct Authority number 9059 under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014

Registered address: 57 Waterloo Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7SD

BOARD MEMBERS

(as of June 2025)

Adrian Wakelin

Bernard McCarty

Dani Joseph (Chair)

David Cragg

Dominik Brotherton (Secretary)

Georgina Key

James Langstaff (Co-chair)

Jane Charlesworth (Treasurer)

Phillip Osman

Richard Bickle

Richard Yapp

Sush Kelly (Membership secretary)

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE (2024)

January	Began recruitment for shop managers
February	Viv Harrison starts work. Attended INDX Homewares trade show
March	Acquisition of the business completes and we start trading
April	Household produce refill station launches and Scott Araya starts work
May	Electrical improvement work starts
June	Meg Kelly starts as Seasonal and Saturday Assistant

July	AGM and new board elected
August	Community celebration and open day
September	Attended GLEE trade show at the NEC
October	Preparation of former stable block ahead of building work quotes
November	Fireside goods promotion coinciding with cold weather
December	Shop closes on 21st December. Everyone takes a well-earned break!

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

During the previous year the Society successfully raised £650,000 to “Save York Supplies” based upon a Business Plan and share offer document that were built on the following vision and values:

Our vision is for York Supplies to be an inspiring, inclusive and creative hub for Building, Making and Growing. This is about what the business sells, and also what it provides to build community, grow skills and confidence for resilience, and make connections among the diverse residents of Kings Heath and beyond.

Building Community • Making Connections • Growing Skills

- **Community** - We believe in community as the basis for everyday life, and that local businesses like York Supplies have a key role to play in maintaining a thriving high street and making and sustaining connections encompassing all local residents.
- **Accountability** - We believe in ongoing community ownership with democratic structures, overseeing a growing business, providing employment and using profits for community benefit.
- **Sustainability** - We believe in sourcing goods locally, repair and reuse, choosing natural materials, providing knowledge, sharing skills, and improving the local environment while playing our part in tackling the challenges of climate change.
- **Kindness** - We believe in treating every person properly and decently by giving them time, respect and help with what they need.

- **Accessibility** - We believe in enabling people to benefit from and contribute to living in our diverse community by removing obstacles to participation.

We also set ourselves the following specific aims:

- To run a viable hardware store and garden centre on co-operative principles, trading for community benefit not private profit, that maintains the goods, services and information offered by York Supplies, keeps money in the local economy, and provides employment.
- To grow the business through renting out underutilised spaces, expanding the range of goods, increasing the sales area, and advertising.
- To use profits to provide a hub that offers opportunities to meet and talk to others, supports community projects and runs activities that draw together all the diverse residents of the area.
- To develop a repair shop, create opportunities for development of practical skills and knowledge, provide sustainability advice and demonstrate a business model aimed at minimising damage to the world around us, as well as creating some joy.
- To actively engage all groups in the community, especially young people, those underserved by chain stores, and anyone who may suffer discrimination.

The Share Offer Business Plan included some specific objectives for the first year of trading. While it was written in Spring 2023 and circumstances were always going to change somewhat as plans were turned into reality - below sets out how the society performed against those objectives during the year:

YEAR 1 OBJECTIVES & ACTIONS

Take possession of the business and property and complete immediate repairs and maintenance tasks.

We got the keys and completed the purchase on 16th March 2024.

Undertake a partial rearrangement and redecoration of the shop floor to improve promotional opportunities and secure additional sales.

During February and March, Jon, the previous proprietor, kindly constructed additional and replacement staging for the display of plants in the yard. Later in the year the front of the counter was repainted and new signage installed above the Waterloo Road entrance.

Recruit, induct and train staff to oversee and conduct day to day operations.

We ran a recruitment process for shop managers at the start of the year. Viv Harrison joined us in February, slightly ahead of completing the purchase so that she could be trained by Jon, and Scott Araya started in April.

Increase advertising of the shop on social media, in Kings Heath and surrounding areas.

During the year Scott has taken on responsibility for the shop's Facebook and social media posts, and these have gained significant visibility in the local area and further afield. Since the year end a leaflet drop has been trialled together with advertising linked with partners such as Moseley In Bloom.

Let the vacant adjacent retail unit to a likeminded and complementary tenant to secure rental income and drive footfall.

The letting of the vacant space was pushed when it became clear that there were major structural issues with the main warehouse area because this space was then required for storing stock.

Organise a monthly community events programme delivered in the shop and yard.

A successful celebration event including children's activities and a compost workshop was organised during August, and we hosted a number of pop-up "energy Cafes" during the autumn and winter in partnership with Community Energy Birmingham. Since the year end, we have started hosting regular events with Incredible Surplus and have also trialled compost workshops with the Compost Connection CIC.

Explore possibilities for opening on Sundays and Bank Holidays during the summer.

This work was paused while the new staff team and board became established. We hope to begin a trial, linked with the regular Artisan Market events on York Road, in 2026.

Establish a Tool Club, run by volunteers, building on the informal arrangements that the previous proprietor had with customers over many years.

The tool library/tool club idea was initially paused until building work could be completed and funding secured. Since the year end a partnership has been established with the Kings Heath and Moseley Shed to take forward this idea in a different form.

Investigate opportunities to host basic DIY and gardening classes in collaboration with community partners.

This was paused due to building work and is now part of the ongoing conversation with Kings Heath and Moseley Shed.

Recruit and train seasonal staff, including younger and older people, to supplement core staff during peak trading times.

We recruited Meg Kelly during the summer as our seasonal and Saturday assistant.

Trial new lines, a household products refill station and seasonal promotional offers to grow sales.

Within a few weeks of taking over the business, we had launched the household product refill station with our suppliers Fill Refill.

Since the year end, the Board has reviewed and updated the Strategic Plan and Business Plan for the next 5 years based upon actual trading experience in the year under review. We look forward to reporting on this in the years to come.

CHAIR'S REPORT – DANI JOSEPH

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this Chair's Report, reflecting on a transformative and industrious year for York Supplies Community Society Ltd. 2024 was a year of new beginnings, starting with the taking over of York Supplies from Jon Jaffa on the 15th March, with a new team in the store and a new board for York Supplies Community Society following our last AGM.

The purchase of York Supplies in March 2024 marked a pivotal moment in the organisation's journey from a privately owned hardware store to a thriving community-owned cooperative. This transition was the culmination of months of preparation. The acquisition process was not without its complexities. Legal and logistical hurdles required careful navigation. These were eventually resolved, allowing the transfer of ownership to proceed.

July 2024 marked the successful election of a new board at our AGM, a decision passed unanimously by our membership. The transition between outgoing and incoming committee members was handled with care and clarity, ensuring continuity and shared understanding. The board has since been actively engaged in refining governance structures, devolving decision making to working groups which provide assurance to the Board.

Our financial operations have matured significantly. We appointed Third Sector Accountancy to continue supporting our audit and payroll functions, a move endorsed unanimously at the AGM. The Finance and Audit group has worked diligently to implement QuickBooks and prepare for future audits. Sales have remained strong, running 10% ahead of last year despite increased wage costs.

A major focus this year has been the extensive refurbishment of our premises. Led by Adrian

Wakelin, we secured tenders and at the end of 2024 and selected Jericho Construction to carry out the work which started this year. The project includes structural improvements, a new roof, and reconfiguration of internal spaces to support both retail and community use.

Our retail team, led by Scott Araya and Stuart Atkinson, has shown remarkable initiative. From managing stock levels and merchandising to exploring bulk buying opportunities, their efforts have kept the shop running smoothly during a period of physical disruption. Their engagement and drive have been incredibly valuable.

Community remains at the heart of York Supplies. The Communities Group has launched partnerships with local allotments and sustainability groups. We participated in the Brum Awards and the Social Enterprise Drive Award. Membership engagement has been a consistent theme. We've committed to reopening membership annually, with a rolling programme potentially expanding to twice a year.

This year has not been without its challenges—new teams, complex renovations, and the ongoing task of embedding new systems and structures. Yet, the spirit of cooperation, mutual support, and shared purpose has carried us forward. I extend heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed—our staff, volunteers, board members, and wider community.

As we look ahead, we do so with confidence, knowing that York Supplies is not just a shop, but a living example of what community ownership can achieve.

Thank you for your continued support.

SECRETARY'S REPORT – DOMINIK BROTHERTON

In reflecting on the passing year, it often becomes apparent just how far one has come, and it is no less so with York Supplies Community Society Ltd. Following the successful community buyout and our first AGM in 2024, the board, now boasting twelve capable individuals, has turned its attention to the serious business of managing the affairs of the society. Primarily, our priorities for the year have been to work with store staff and management to stabilise the business, to undertake essential renovation work of the building, and to develop our network within the local community. In doing so, we hope to set the groundwork for years to come, while recognising that there is – needless to say – always more work to be done!

In this new phase of work, the board meets less regularly than it did in its initial flurry as York Supplies Action Group, now meeting in the first week of every month, rather than weekly, and with a more decentralised approach, allowing working groups to act with more autonomy. As such, board meetings are now more focused and serve to review matters arising from the documents submitted by working groups, which are submitted ahead of time and are of commendably high quality. By my assessment, the board comprises great talent in both breadth and depth, capable of making the decisions necessary for the prosperity of the business and the benefit of our community.

In the course of the year, the board has approved a number of important policy documents on topics such as GDPR, financial controls, and governance. In addition, internal systems have been improved, including a restructuring and archiving of our cloud-based drive, and a review of our existing policies in time for the AGM. We hope to follow up this work in the coming months by including all such policies and governance documents in a “YSCS Handbook”, which will be made available to all staff and members.

With the invaluable help of our membership secretary, Sush, we have maintained detailed GDPR-compliant records of, and communication with, our many members, through our mailing list, Facebook and Instagram. We have added a small number of new members, taking our membership to a grand total of 729. It is likely that in the coming year, we will again open the membership up for new members, as we strive for maximum community participation. In doing so, we may also be able to raise additional funds, which along with the application of grants we are pursuing, may allow us to further renovate yet untapped areas of the building.

In November, the society was a finalist at the Brum Awards and Social Enterprise Drive Awards, both of which were attended by members of the board, and in March 2025, we were lucky enough to be awarded winners at the co-ops UK Retail Conference for contributions towards UN sustainability goals, which we are very grateful for. We hope to further live up to this high bar for sustainability. In this regard, board members George, Bernard and David, working for the Communities and Outreach working group, have done tremendous work establishing links with groups such as The Compost Connection, Community Energy Birmingham, Moor Green Allotment Association, Space to Grow, Fruit and Nut Village and Incredible Surplus, many of which will be showcasing at the AGM.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the board, both past and current, for providing an enriching environment in which to learn, build, make and grow. Having been involved from the beginning and having now served on the board for two years, first as director of communications and now as secretary, I am taking the opportunity to stand down from these roles to allow others to take the lead. I will, however, remain on the board for one final year, albeit in a less senior role, to provide continuity and to tie up a few loose ends. As such, I have initiated a handover process to lay the way for a new secretary to be appointed following the AGM. In standing down, I would particularly like to thank Richard Bickle for his continued support, as well as our last secretary, Donald Steel, who served as fantastic role model.

TREASURER’S REPORT – JANE CHARLESWORTH

We had hoped to complete the property purchase in January 2024, but this was delayed until we got the keys to the shop on March 14 and started trading on this date, having carried across the employment of Naomi and Stuart and hired Viv and Scott as shop managers.

We ended the financial year with slightly decreased sales compared with what Jon had achieved in 2023 – this was largely down to a decrease in plant sales in June caused by the

relatively cold and damp summer. That said, sales remained remarkably close to previous years: a significant achievement given the transition to community ownership.

As expected from previous trends, sales were significantly lower during the autumn and winter, as the business model we inherited from Jon relies heavily on making a surplus during the summer to cover staffing and other costs through the quieter months. This model is less sustainable in the longer term for a shop with multiple members of staff whose wages need paying year-round, so the Board are working closely with Scott and Stuart to develop a less weather-dependent business model that continues to meet the needs of the community. Partnerships with other local community organisations began to be developed in 2024, with the hope that greater community engagement will be an important part of our business model in growing sales. The indicators since the year end have been encouraging in terms of the success of this strategy.

Since taking on the business, we've discovered that the structural issues with the old stable block section of the shop are more extensive than originally expected, which has meant some additional investment in building works. The positive side of this news is that the top floor of the new structure will be a greenhouse/plant nursery, meaning that Stuart will be able to put his horticultural skills to use growing plants for sale in the shop, much as he did in the old premises on York Road. We are looking at ways of raising additional funds to cover this work and the cost of these building works, which together with the need for alternative short-term storage space, has meant we have not yet been able to renovate and let the two rental spaces on Balaclava Road.

We are continuing to work with Third Sector Accountancy, who are themselves a co-operative, for accounting support and with BVSC for payroll services. Book-keeping and financial admin have emerged as an ongoing challenge, as shop staff are not able to fit this in around their many other duties in the shop. Filling in gaps in record-keeping for the society has put a substantial burden on volunteers this year, so we are looking at more workable solutions, including buying in some regular local admin support.

The trading deficit for the year was anticipated in the share offer business plan as costs such as additional staffing and renovations are incurred before the sales increases we are planning can be delivered. Based on experience since the year end, we are hopeful that the business will be close to break-even during 2025.

RETAIL OPERATIONS REPORT – RICHARD BICKLE

The first 12 weeks of the year were spent undertaking recruitment of the shop managers and getting ready to take over day to day operations as soon as the acquisition of the business completed. By the time we got the keys, Viv had already been trained by Jon and then Scott joined us at the beginning of April.

Compared with the previous year under Jon's ownership, sales in March, April and May were comparable or a little ahead of 2023. This was encouraging in the context of poor Spring

weather, during which sales across the industry fell and several major national gardening and hardware businesses experienced serious financial problems. However, June and September sales were disappointing, and we finished the year marginally behind Jon's 2023 performance.

In terms of the budget we set in the Share Offer Business Plan, sales were lower partly because we had anticipated starting to trade in January rather than during the third week of March. The gross profit margin rate of 43% compared with 44% in the business plan, reflecting a change in the sales mix and the reduced plant sales during June. The bottom line deficit for the year of £14,523 versus £12,196 in the business plan was encouraging, bearing in mind the lower sales and the fact that we didn't have the £8,000 anticipated rental income for the vacant unit adjacent to the shop.

Operationally, the Spring presented a steep learning curve for everyone. The household product refill station launched in April and after a busy May an additional seasonal and Saturday assistant was hired during June. Various new lines were introduced in response to customer demand and a discount promotion for fireside goods was promoted during the cold snap towards the end of the year.

From a premises point of view, the structural problems with the old stable block turned out to be much more serious than had been anticipated. As a result, stock storage was temporarily moved into the vacant space adjacent to the shop that had been planned for letting. Planned improvements to the shop and yard area were introduced during the year with Jon kindly constructing new and additional staging for plants in the yard, contractors undertaking improvements to the lighting and electrical installations, new signage being commissioned and fitted above the Waterloo Road entrance, and the front of the counter being repainted. The more fundamental relay of space in the shop was deferred until the building works have been completed, but some minor rearrangement was undertaken during the year.

Looking ahead, sales in the early months of 2025 have been very encouraging - significantly boosted by a combination of the partnership with local allotment sites giving 1,000 plot holders a 5% discount on their gardening purchases, the closure of two local competitors and the exceptionally good spring weather.

During the early months of the new year the Board undertook a review of the strategy and business plan. Building on our community partnerships and driving increased sales and footfall in the quieter winter months remains a priority. We are reviewing how the planned introduction of cookshop and kitchen lines can be linked more directly with the "making and growing" part of the business through community activities and hands-on workshops – for example with jam making and preserving in the early autumn, and cake baking towards the end of the year.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE STORE MANAGER – SCOTT ARAYA

Having completed the year to December 31st 2024, I just wanted to share some thoughts on our progression. Having taken on the role as shop manager in April I was happily dropped in

the deep end at the beginning of the busy planting season.

The first six months were spent getting a grounding in the day-to-day procedures of how York Supplies actually runs. There were some interesting challenges around staffing, admin, premises and suppliers. Having gotten through the busy planting season I was keen to address the staffing issues. The first few months had been an ad-hoc system of whoever can man the shop, but having re-aligned the staffing levels and having more knowledge of the type of employees we need, and when we need them, it gradually panned out to be much more workable.

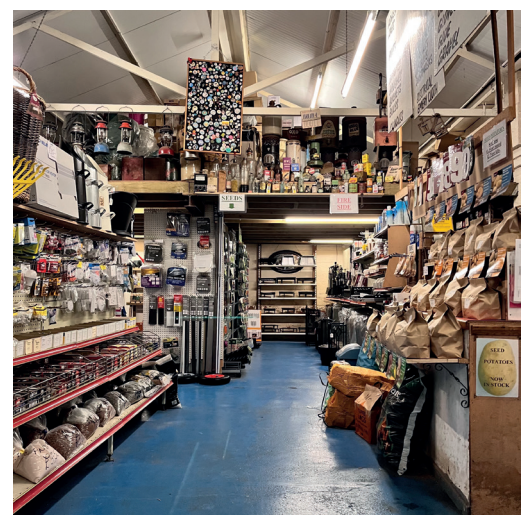
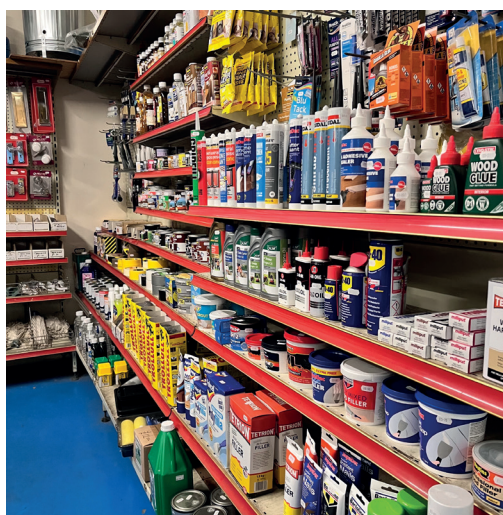
After taking over from Jon, it soon became clear that a lot of the information we needed was only in his head. By trial and error, and repeated phone calls to Jon (!), we gradually built up the database of hardware and garden suppliers, membership of professional trade associations, company van information, energy supplier/solar panel information, etc. As the year progressed many problems were resolved; we took on a new credit card machine provider (with more preferential rates), which, with a new, more reliable, broadband provider, helped us cut costs and generally work more efficiently.

New lines are constantly being added, the refill station has been a great success; the proof seems to be the amount of returning customers for the service. Since then, there has been a greater amount of promotion as we try to spread the word. A few lines have been discontinued; this is generally down to availability issues, and where there were gaps on the shelves we have either found new suppliers or tested new lines. We gladly welcome suggestions and have acted multiple times on lines that sound like a good investment. We also strive to source anything we don't generally stock within the multiple supplier sources we utilise. Overall, we try to fit as much as possible into the small space we have and are constantly reviewing how we go about this. With more familiarity, we have been able to realise a state where the shop is stocked to a level that is manageable (not having a stock room), but not constantly running out of lines. A further thought, and current challenge, is to stock lines that aren't dependant on the planting season and can carry us through the quieter winter period.

The glass cutting, key cutting and tool sharpening services are still going strong. Going forward, we aim to promote this more. We will also be returning to stocking timber when the stock room is completed. Social media is a key factor that was never really utilised before the cooperative took over. We currently use Facebook, Instagram and Next Door on a daily basis. We have been quite successful, particularly on Facebook, at promoting not just stock but events that we are participating in. Feedback from customers, who have come into the shop as a direct result of a post they saw, seems to be a positive step forward.

The building works will make a huge difference to how much stock we can carry, inevitably leading to bigger discounts on bulk purchases, and price reductions where possible.

Overall, the first 6 months have been a steep learning curve, but as we progress and move the business forward into 2025 the lessons we have learnt are steadily paying dividends, and this time next year I hope to tell you all about the amazing success that we have achieved.



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www.yorksuppliesco-op.co.uk

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