

SPECIAL OPEN CONFERENCE

CO-OP BANK CRISIS:

Ways Forward for the Co-operative Movement



*DEBATES / CASE STUDIES /
WORKSHOPS / NETWORKING*

Who Should Attend?

Members of co-operatives, credit unions or trade unions

Sponsored by UKSociety for Co-operative Studies, Co-operative Business
Consultants (CBC) and Suma Wholefoods

The conference, held earlier this year, was organised by CBC in response to widespread consternation amongst co-op activists. We believe that the current crisis represents an important and crucial focus for discussing how co-ops, unions and the movement can achieve sustainable progress in the future.

As part of this commitment we asked delegates to comment on the themes raised and to suggest ways that the agenda can be taken forward. The results of the survey are published in this booklet.

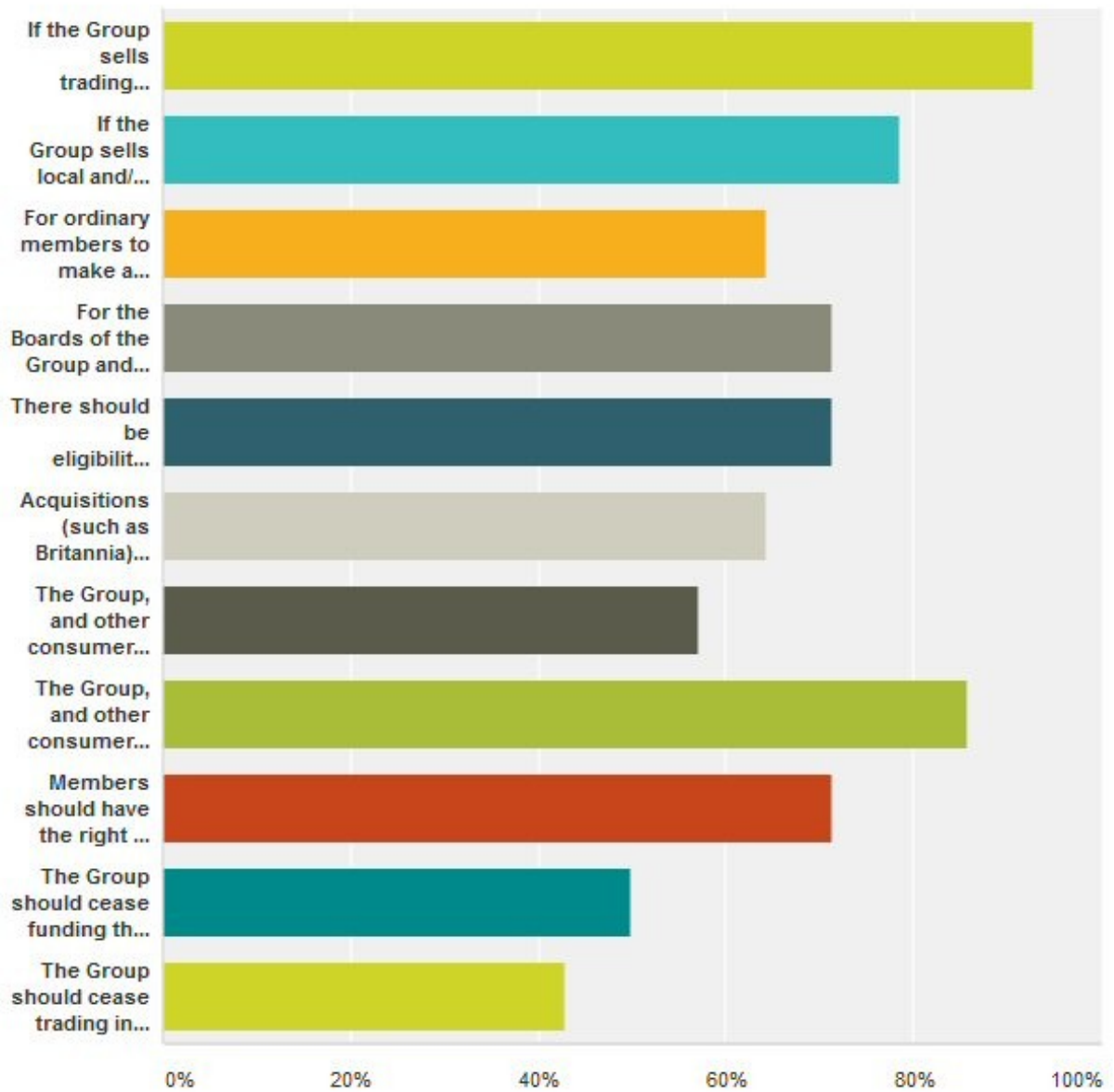


We asked delegates which of these statements they supported. The following records the level of agreement.

Answer Choices	Responses
If the Group sells trading divisions, it should be to new or existing co-operative societies.	92.86% 13
If the Group sells local and/or regional retail outlets, it should be to new or existing co-operative societies.	78.57% 11
For ordinary members to make a meaningful entry level contribution to the Group, for example by annual trade or subscription fee, purchasing a meaningful amount of withdrawable share capital (rather than £1) and/or contributions of time.	64.29% 9
For the Boards of the Group and large consumer Societies to be directly elected by ordinary members.	71.43% 10
There should be eligibility criteria for Board candidates, such as length of co-op membership, proven commitment to professional development.	71.43% 10
Acquisitions (such as Britannia) and disposals (such as Bank shares) should be put to the vote of ordinary members.	64.29% 9
The Group, and other consumer societies, should have at least one elected trade union employee voice on the Board.	57.14% 8
The Group, and other consumer societies, should provide their members with diverse and modern opportunities to actively participate in elections, setting policies and making decisions, including acquisitions and disposals - sufficiently attractive for at least 10% of members to participate.	85.71% 12
Members should have the right to view a register of Director's interests, view the attendance and voting record of all Directors, and dismiss Directors during their term of office.	71.43% 10
The Group should cease funding the Co-operative Party while it is affiliated to another political party.	50% 7
The Group should cease trading in sectors which do not meet the expressed needs of members	42.86% 6
Total Respondents: 14	



Graphically it looks like this.

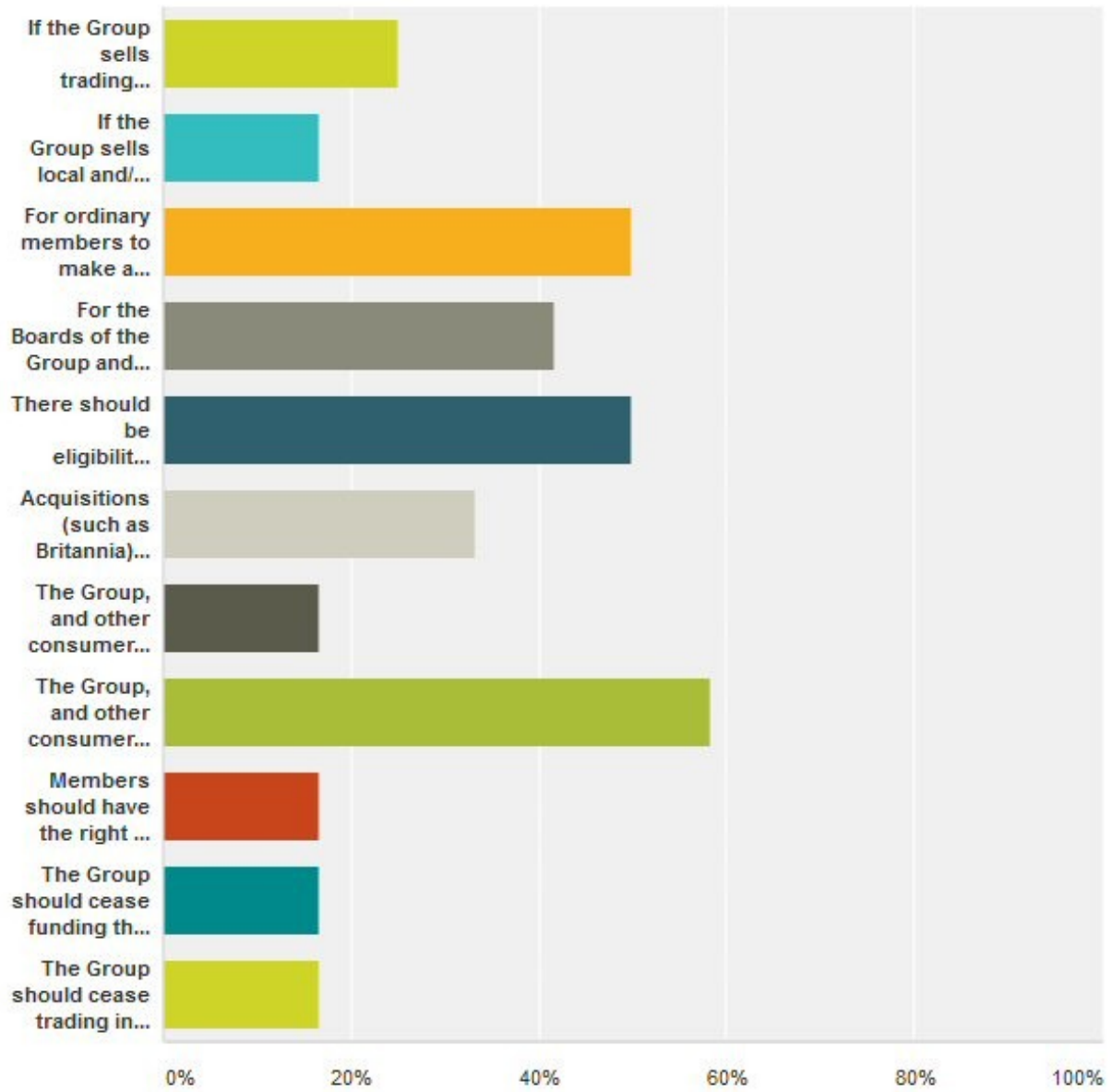


We went on to ask which of the statements delegates felt so strongly about that they would be willing to give time for the purpose of taking it forward?

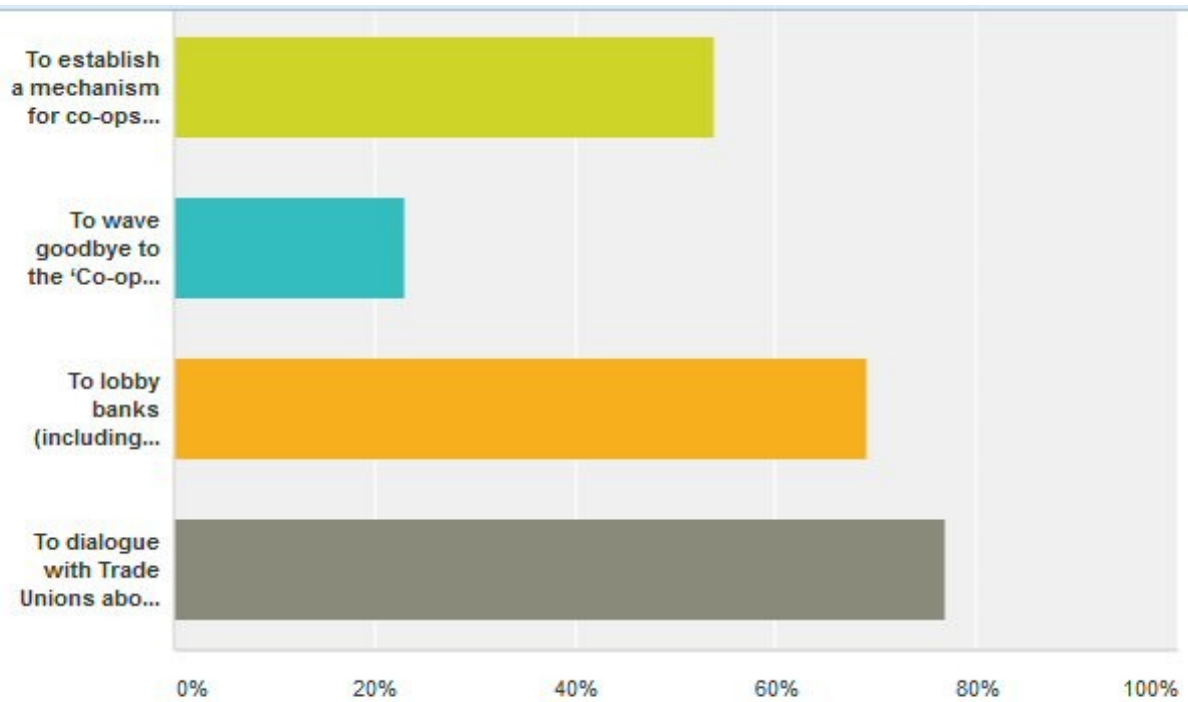
Answer Choices	Responses
If the Group sells trading divisions, it should be to new or existing co-operative societies.	25% 3
If the Group sells local and/or regional retail outlets, it should be to new or existing co-operative societies.	16.67% 2
For ordinary members to make a meaningful entry level contribution to the Group, for example by annual trade or subscription fee, purchasing a meaningful amount of withdrawable share capital (rather than £1) and/or contributions of time.	50% 6
For the Boards of the Group and large consumer Societies to be directly elected by ordinary members.	41.67% 5
There should be eligibility criteria for Board candidates, such as length of co-op membership, proven commitment to professional development.	50% 6
Acquisitions (such as Britannia) and disposals (such as Bank shares) should be put to the vote of ordinary members.	33.33% 4
The Group, and other consumer societies, should have at least one elected trade union employee voice on the Board.	16.67% 2
The Group, and other consumer societies, should provide their members with diverse and modern opportunities to actively participate in elections, setting policies and making decisions, including acquisitions and disposals - sufficiently attractive for at least 10% of members to participate.	58.33% 7
Members should have the right to view a register of Director's interests, view the attendance and voting record of all Directors, and dismiss Directors during their term of office.	16.67% 2
The Group should cease funding the Co-operative Party while it is affiliated to another political party.	16.67% 2
The Group should cease trading in sectors which do not meet the expressed needs of members	16.67% 2
Total Respondents: 12	



And graphically the results look like this



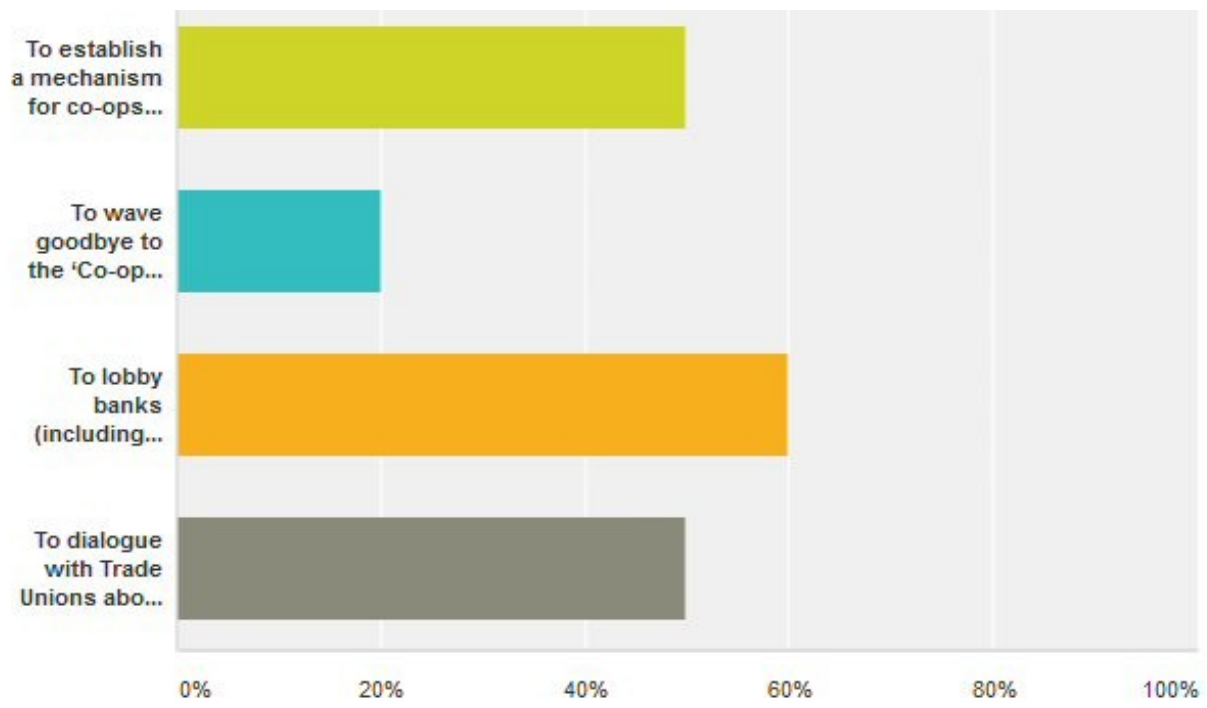
We asked delegates which statements about the Co-operative Bank they supported. The results are shown, below.



Answer Choices	Responses
To establish a mechanism for co-ops and co-operators to buy shares in the Bank, and buy out the hedgefunds in due course	53.85% 7
To wave goodbye to the 'Co-op' Bank, as an institution with a future in the co-operative and trade union movements.	23.08% 3
To lobby banks (including Unity Trust Bank and 'Co-op' Bank) to offer services that meet the business finance needs of co-ops.	69.23% 9
To dialogue with Trade Unions about their strategy for Unity Trust Bank, and whether there is an opportunity for mutual ownership.	76.92% 10
Total Respondents: 13	



We went on to ask which statements about the Co-operative Bank they felt so strongly about that they would be willing to give time for the purpose of taking it forward?



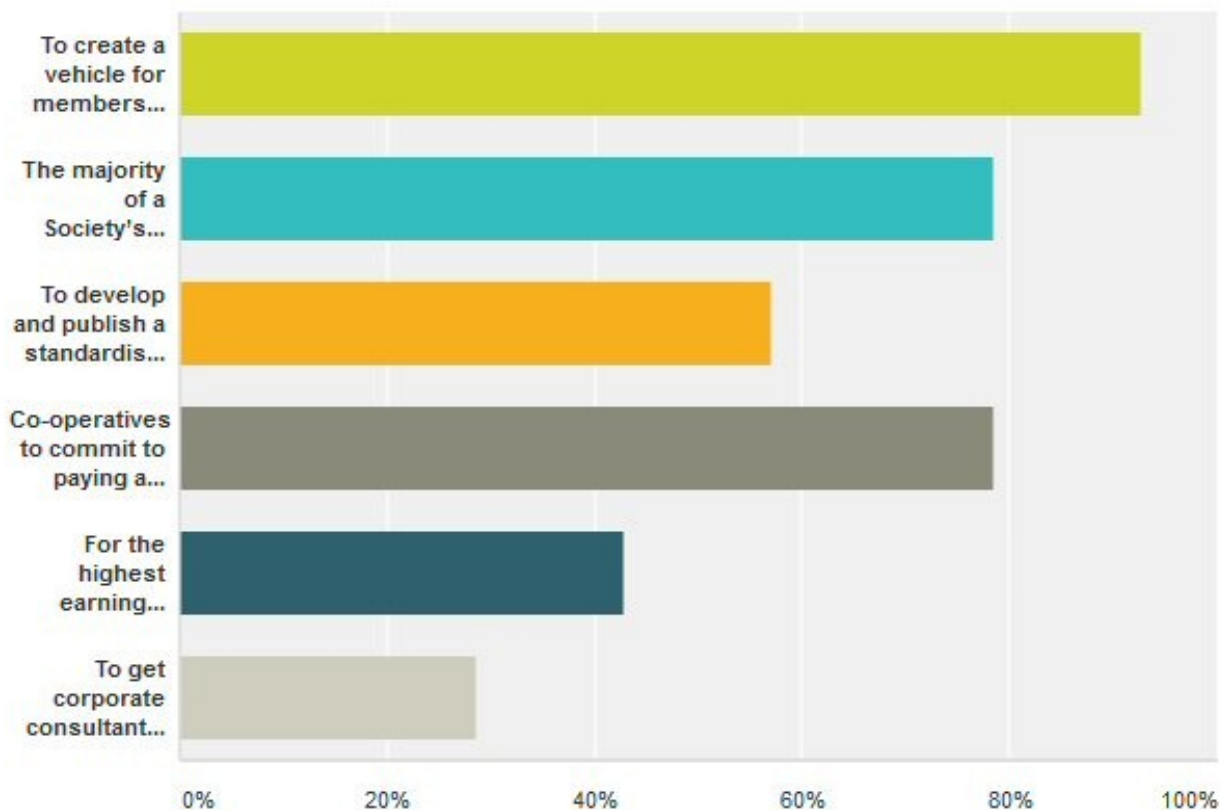
Answer Choices	Responses
To establish a mechanism for co-ops and co-operators to buy shares in the Bank, and buy out the hedgefunds in due course	50% 5
To wave goodbye to the 'Co-op' Bank, as an institution with a future in the co-operative and trade union movements.	20% 2
To lobby banks (including Unity Trust Bank and 'Co-op' Bank) to offer services that meet the business finance needs of co-ops.	60% 6
To dialogue with Trade Unions about their strategy for Unity Trust Bank, and whether there is an opportunity for mutual ownership.	50% 5
Total Respondents: 10	



We asked delegates which statements about co-operatives in general they supported. The results are shown, below.

Answer Choices	Responses
To create a vehicle for members capital investment into Societies, including at short notice.	92.86% 13
The majority of a Society's share capital should be from co-op members – on the basis of one member, one vote - not one share, one vote.	78.57% 11
To develop and publish a standardised, measurable co-operative audit.	57.14% 8
Co-operatives to commit to paying a living wage for all employees.	78.57% 11
For the highest earning manager to be paid no more than six times the lowest paid employee.	42.86% 6
To get corporate consultants, advisers, accountants and auditors out of our co-ops	28.57% 4
Total Respondents: 14	

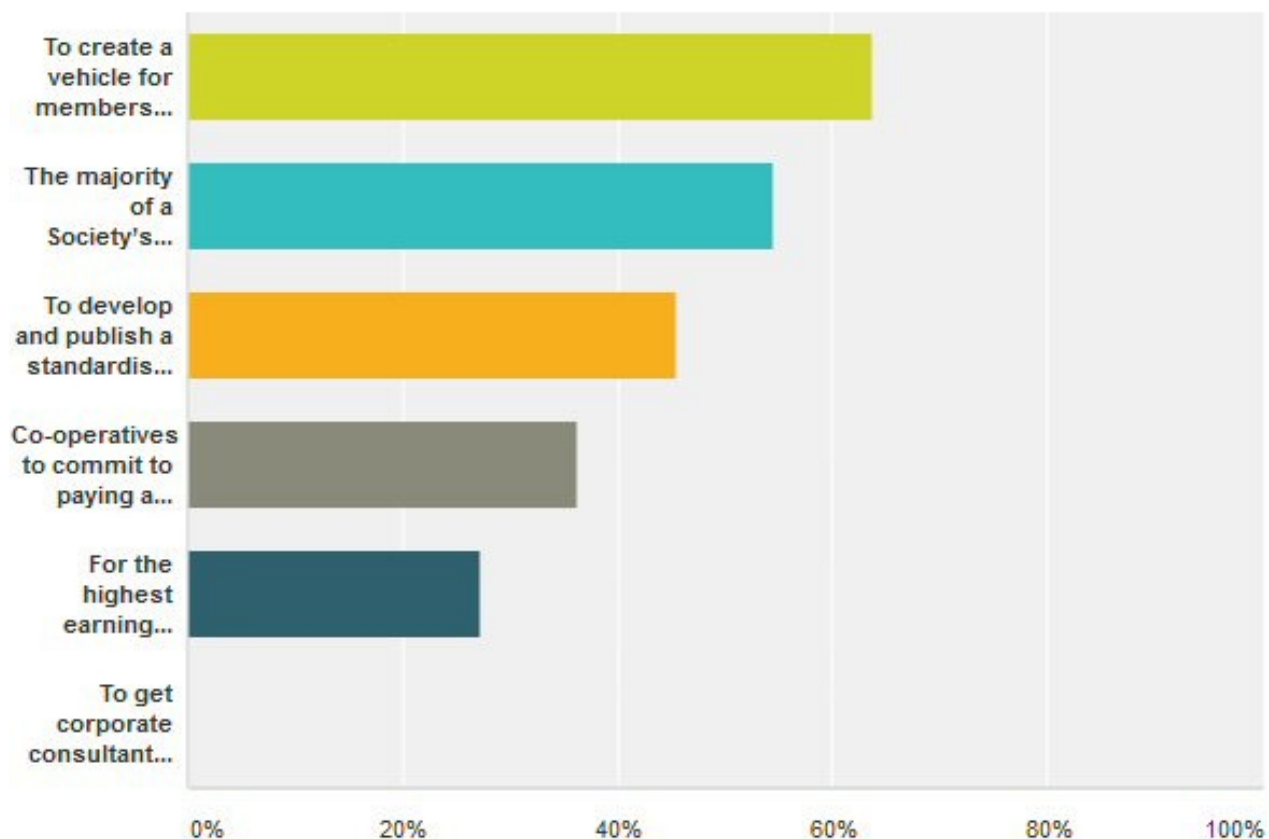
And graphically the results look like this



We went on to ask which statements about co-operatives they felt so strongly about that they would be willing to give time for the purpose of taking it forward?

Answer Choices	Responses
To create a vehicle for members capital investment into Societies, including at short notice.	63.64% 7
The majority of a Society's share capital should be from co-op members – on the basis of one member, one vote - not one share, one vote.	54.55% 6
To develop and publish a standardised, measurable co-operative audit.	45.45% 5
Co-operatives to commit to paying a living wage for all employees.	36.36% 4
For the highest earning manager to be paid no more than six times the lowest paid employee.	27.27% 3
To get corporate consultants, advisers, accountants and auditors out of our co-ops	0% 0
Total Respondents: 11	

And graphically the results look like this



We asked whether there anything else that delegates felt should have been captured from the conference that hadn't included in the previous questions.

How the campaign can be continued on a democratic basis. An earlier attempt at this - the National Federation of Progressive Co-operators - should have fulfilled this role, but failed abysmally to respond to the crisis and is now completely discredited in my view. Hopefully the conference has started to put something better in its place, but it will need a structure of some kind.

Who represents the movement at ICA? The existing exposure of retail independents to group debts?

Re-introduction of store-level local democracy / social interaction involving both the workforce and customers

Look into the Co-op Group breaking down into more manageable and accountable Regional Coop Societies Encourage the setting up of more Worker Coops The Coop Bank to lend money to Start-up Coops and Social Enterprises and Credit Unions

We perhaps need to provide support for all types of co-operatives to understand likely future business developments to assist them with strategy.

