

Dublin Food Co-Op Unit 2 – Consultation Process

Final Report - April 2022

Executive Summary

This report outlines the consultation process and resultant findings and feedback from the member consultation process undertaken January – February 2022 to support the Co-ordinating Body of the Dublin Food Co-Op in a decision regarding the rent and allocation of Unit 2 in Kilmainham.

The report outlines the process followed and the results and feedback from each stage, with inference drawn for interpretation and understanding where the results and analysis allow for this. The report does not seek to make recommendations to the CB and is provided as a working tool for their decision making process on the use and allocation of Unit 2

The intention of the consultation process was to gather member guidance on preference and insights for type of arrangement for DFC's hold of Unit 2, test market demand for type of use of the Unit, and deep dive into the inherent balance of the DFC across financial needs and community values.

To deliver on these three elements – philosophical foundations, formal arrangements and how these are then realised into actual products and services aligned with the Co-Op – the consultation process consisted of four elements:

- Survey issued to membership
- Member Affairs Committee facilitated deep dive discussion session
- Social Media campaign
- Facilitation of ad hoc staff specific input and reflections

Key findings from the consultation process

- There is a **deep consideration and awareness across the member base of the inherent balance between financial needs of the enterprise and supporting value mission in an evolving economic and social context, and the role this plays in upholding the foundations of the Co-Op.**
- The member base reflected a preference, and the potential, to **separate shorter-term decision to support financial needs now, from a longer-term decision to uphold community values and give the Co-Op options in the medium to longer term.**
- Feedback reflected the desire to uphold and **apply DFC values at all layers of decision-making** – from the nature of the offer provided by any prospective tenant, through to the nature of any potential tenancy agreement made with any prospective tenant.
- Across all elements of feedback the member based noted **a clear preference to not sell Unit 2 and to allow for flexibility in use of Unit 2**– whether applied directly by the tenant in their service offer, or manner of engagement with the local community, or baked into the nature of the agreement made and give responsibility for multi-use functionality back to the Co-Op.
- However, members noted an **appreciation of the administrative and operational challenges that putting any multi-use function back onto staff of the Co-Op would have.**

Introduction

The Co-ordinating Body (the CB) of Dublin Food Co-Op are required to make a decision on the use and allocation of Unit 2 in Kilmainham. The core tension of financial sustainability and community driven decision-making lies at the heart of any decision made by the CB of the Dublin Food Co-Op. To uphold the co-operative values, support effective and informed decision-making, garner creative input and ideas from the member base to augment the Co-Op, and informed creative thinking and reflection the CB requested a co-ordinated and facilitated consultation process with members to support the architecture of their decision.

The intention of the consultation process was to gather reflections from three angles – member reflections on type of arrangement for DFC's hold of Unit 2, market demand for type of use of the Unit, and hold these in the context of the inherent challenge of the DFC to balance financial needs and community values.

This report outlines the feedback and insights gathered over the full consultation process. This report is provided to the CB to inform their decision and is circulated to members to reflect the full process and insights and reflection gathered over the course of the full consultation process.

Context

DFC hold a 100metre squared unit, currently fitted out as a café, adjacent to the retail space in Kilmainham. For the purpose of this report, this unit is referred to as "Unit 2". The outgoing tenants gave notice to the CB in Winter 2022 and quit the space in December 2022. Since this time a temporary pop-up café has been operated in the space, under a rolling and frequently reviewed agreement.

Rent from the Unit 2 space has been, and continues to be a critical source of income for the DFC, and underpins significant lending commitments. To support financial needs and uphold commitments to lenders, the CB need to make an informed and timely decision on the use and allocation of the space given the financial and operational implications of an empty space.

The CB requested a considered and collective consultation process across multiple channels to engage members to inform the decision architecture underpinning the use and allocation of Unit 2 and to inform and engage with the creative hive of DFC members. The CB were also keen to make use of the opportunity to re-connect with members, and to support and enable members to connect with each other, after a challenging two years in the global pandemic, which stress-tested our traditional modes of engagement and connection across our community.

Given the financial implications of holding an empty space, and the need for clarity on future income streams for our lenders in early Spring 2022, the consultative process undertaken needed to be run relatively quickly, and provide input to the CB to support a timely decision. With that, while the CB were conscious of the need to make a relatively urgent decision, the importance of gathering feedback on future ideas, and providing space for longer-term decisions was also recognised and considered.

The CB outlined a number of core elements around responsibilities interacting with the decision on Unit 2, to members to support their reflections in advance of the consultation process:

- that DFC do not currently have the financial and operational flexibility to take on the running of the space directly, as a café or a shop expansion; and
- that given the critical role that the rental income plays, and the operational and administrative burden for management, DFC do not have the capacity to generate the considerable

additional revenue which would be required to cover any lost income, to retain the space solely for ad hoc community use.

More specific and commercially sensitive details were shared with the Members who attended the Member Affairs Committee deep dive discussion to support considered reflection of the space available and the financial context.

The Consultation Process¹

The consultation process, outputs and design were informed through the core DFC values of openness, community, solidarity, accessibility and co-operation in pursuit of sustainable and ethically driven enterprise.

The consultation process consisted of:

- Member survey launched Thursday 20th January, live for 3 weeks, closed midnight Thursday 11th February
- Member Affairs Committee session, held in person Saturday 12th February
- Social Media campaign, launched Wednesday 16th February for 3 weeks
- Facilitation of ad hoc staff specific input and reflections²

The overarching consultation process was flagged by the Chair in her end-of-year email in December, outlined in an overview email on Thursday 20th January 2022 and supplemented by a blog-post outlining the full process. Contact details were repeatedly highlighted for the named CB member designing, managing and facilitating the process to support transparency and connection. For the duration of the process, posters were displayed in the retail store encouraging participation and were updated according to the most current engagement and status.

From Thursday 20th January 2022, each of the survey and the MAC session were supported by multiple call-outs via mailshot to members and on social media to maximise reach and frequency.

The consultation process as a whole was considered in the round with each individual tool for consultation held alongside the full suite – with a view to ensuring the CB optimise input and reflection, allow for multiple forms of engagement, time and attention and optimise the scope and content of feedback to inform decision-making.

The full consultation outreach process lasted 6-weeks including time for review, reflection and an opportunity to factor in need to readjust or include other avenues or channels for input depending on nature of feedback received.

¹ This consultation process ran in parallel with an Expressions of Interest call-out, which connected prospective tenants into the DFC and provided an indicator of market demand for the space. The CB noted the intention to combine the values and reflective feedback from this consultation process with the market demand and opportunities identified as available through the Expression of Interest process.

² The original consultation process included a proposal for a staff specific session, but due to workload and operational pressures on staff at a challenging period, including senior management transition, it was decided to pause on this targeted session. Staff were (and did) participate in the survey and in the MAC session. Direct avenues for feedback were also created and made available to staff for further detailed consideration and feedback. It is reasonable to consider that the insights and feedback from the consultation process outlined in this report are reflective of staff input as well as wider member base views.

Feedback and Insights

Member Survey

A nine-question survey was issued to all members for feedback from January 20th 2022 for a three-week period. Reminders were issued via email to members and on social media platforms over the course of the three-week period.

The intention of the survey was to sense check member preferences and sentiment on available options for the use and allocation of Unit 2, concerns and capture any creative ideas and feedback. The feedback from the survey informed and shaped the Member Affairs Committee deep dive discussion.

The survey included basic descriptive information, targeted ranking questions on member preferences for use of the space and options for discursive further feedback. Full questions are outlined in Appendix One.

Engagement

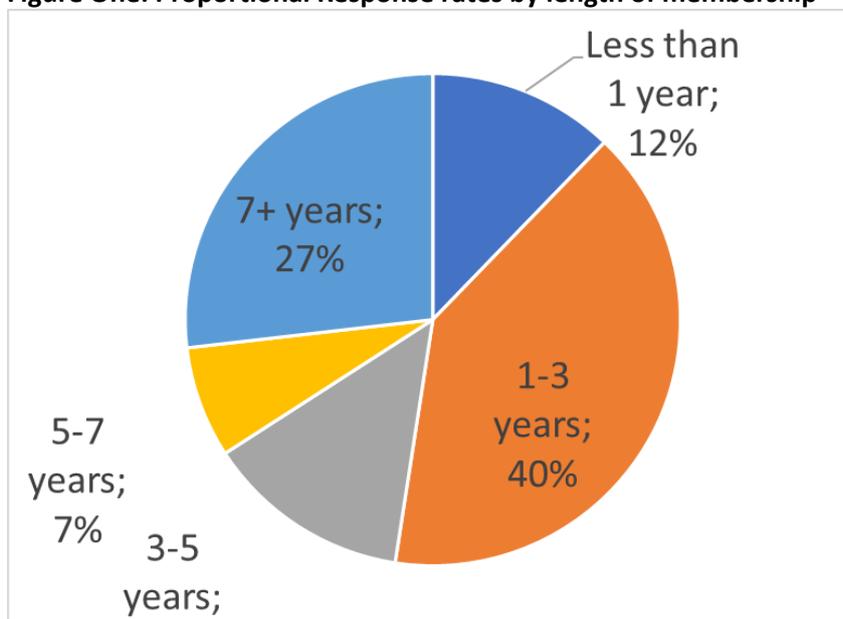
There were 184 responses to the survey of which 164 identified as members.

Non-member responses are useful information for the CB highlighting local engagement with issues and questions. However, given the co-operative decision-making structure of DFC, and the core intention of the consultation process being to inform a decision and provide insights for the use and allocation of Unit 2, feedback and insights reported focus on member responses.

40 respondents identified as staff or volunteers with the DFC, of which 38 identified as members.

As outlined in Figure One below, response rates varied across length of membership.

Figure One: Proportional Response rates by length of membership



Overview of feedback

Across the feedback, while member responses indicated a preference to weight values alignment over financial terms for any leasehold offered, responses also highlighted a deep consideration around the necessity of upholding financial sustainability within any decision to support long-term viability of the Co-Op.

Core results from the member respondents in the survey indicated:

- **31%** of member respondents noted a clear preference for a **longer-term lease for Unit 2, with a tenant focus on values alignment**
- **24%** of member respondents noted a **preference to expand the DFC retail space**.
- **86%** of member respondents noted that **any sale of the Unit would be their least preferred option**. It would lose an asset, an ongoing source of income and would lose the role DFC plays in shaping an alternative economic and social model.

What do members think is the best option and why?

As outlined in Table One below, two options captured over 50% of member respondent first preferences for use and allocation of Unit 2.

31% of member respondents noted a clear preference for a longer-term lease for Unit 2, with a tenant focus on values alignment, with 24% of member respondents noting a preference to expand the DFC retail space.

Given the advance understanding and clarity in surrounding and supporting communications that any expansion of the retail space was not possible in the short-term, this second highest-ranking preference will be capturing a longer-term preference by the member based for wider DFC expansion and priorities. This is useful feedback for reflection for the CB in the context of any immediate decision to be made.

Table One: Proportion of Members ranking best option for use of Unit 2

Option	Total Number of Members	Proportion of Members
Longer-term lease / prioritise values alignment	51	31%
Expand DFC retail space	39	24%
Longer-term licence / concession	18	11%
Short-term lease / prioritise values alignment	16	10%
Longer-term lease / prioritise financial terms	14	9%
Short-term licence / concession	10	6%
Short-term lease / prioritise financial terms	9	5%

Other DFC community related use	6	4%
Sell Unit 2	1	1%

As outlined in Table Two below, in response to their choice on rationale for their first preferences, members overwhelmingly reported that their primary consideration was the importance of balancing financial needs of the Co-Op with community focus. 54% of member respondents noted that they chose their first preference, on the basis of it allowing for this balance of enterprise and values.

This highlights the deep awareness of the inherent challenge of the Co-Op and indicates a member base supportive of a reflective and considered decision by the CB.

Table Two: Rationale for choice of first preference

	Total	Proportion
Maximises potential revenue	16	10%
Maximises community gain	52	32%
Balances financial needs with community focus of the Co-op	89	54%
Other (please expand)	7	4%

This feedback is further corroborated when member first preferences are held directly against their rationale.

As outlined in Table Three below, of the 50 members (31% of member respondents) who identified a preference for longer-term lease prioritising values, 30 of these members highlighted that this was their preference because it balanced financial needs with community focused. And the rationale for the preference of 24% member respondents to expand the DFC retail space was spilt evenly across “maximising community gain” and “balancing financial needs with community”.

Member feedback also highlighted that a decision to undertake a longer-term licence / concession would also balance the financial needs with community focus of the Co-Op, with 16 of the 18 respondents under this first preference. This identifies member openness to flexibility in lease type, providing the CB with an openness to options.

Table Three: First Preferences by rationale for that preference

	Maximises potential revenue	Maximises community gain	Balances financial needs with community focus of the Co-op	Other (please expand)
LT lease / prioritise values alignment	2	19	30	0
LT licence / concession	1	1	16	0
Expand DFC retail space	3	15	15	6
ST lease / prioritise values alignment	1	5	9	1

LT lease / prioritise financial terms	6	2	6	0
ST licence / concession	0	4	6	0
ST lease / prioritise financial terms	3	1	5	0
Other DFC community related use	0	5	1	0
Sell Unit 2	0	0	1	0

The comments section and option to provide discursive feedback for other reasons underpinning respondent choice on first preferences, were largely used to highlight the short-term / long-term trade offs and suggest the option for making a decision now that supported financial needs with a view to fostering an option for retail expansion in the medium to long-term. Feedback also highlighted the potential to use some of the Unit 2 space to give staff breakout areas, or an office – noting this absence in the current set up as a challenge for operationals and a constraint for staff comfort.

What do members think is the least best option and why?

As outlined in Table Four below, members overwhelmingly stated that any sale of Unit 2 would be their least preferred option – 86% of member respondents noted that this would be the worst option for DFC.

Table Four: Proportion of Members ranking least preferred option for use of Unit 2

Option	Total Number of Members	Proportion of Members
Sell Unit 2	141	86%
Expand DFC retail space	5	3%
Other DFC community related use	5	3%
LT lease / prioritise financial terms	4	2%
LT licence / concession	4	2%
LT lease / prioritise values alignment	2	1%
ST licence / concession	2	1%
ST lease / prioritise financial terms	1	1%
ST lease / prioritise values alignment	0	0%

This feedback likely hones in on the long-term vision for the Co-Op, the deep understanding of the member base on the long-term financial needs of the enterprise and the potential and opportunity retaining the space has for both financial needs and for community values. This finding also likely picks up historic considerations around the process and journey the member base went through for the move from Newmarket and the purchase of the space in Kilmainham, recognising the need to honour

the depth of work in that process. This is corroborated by the rationale given by members around their least preferred options.

As outlined in Table Five below, members highlighted that any prioritisation of finance at the expense of community, was not in line with their values and preference for the Co-Op. This further highlights the long-term vision of members, and the consideration of the social and ethical role played by the enterprise.

Table Five: Rationale for least preferred option

	Total	Proportion
Focuses on finance over community	92	56%
Focuses on community over long-term financial stability of the Co-Op	22	13%
Puts too much pressure on staff and volunteers to manage ongoing work	16	10%
Other (please expand)	34	21%

This feedback is further corroborated when member least preferred options are held directly against their rationale. As outlined in Table Six below, of the 141 members (86% of member respondents) who noted that any sale of Unit 2 was their least preferred option, 84 of those members focused on how this would prioritise finance over community.

The detailed discussion and comments provided under the “Other” option, by 30 member respondents, consistently reaffirmed the member respondents concerns that this would result in losing an asset, losing an ongoing source of income and losing an opportunity for expansion of both the retail offer. More nuanced feedback also highlighted that any sale of Unit 2 would also result in a loss of DFC influence in ethical sustainable enterprise, and the opportunity to shape the local landscape, and support like-minded enterprise.

Overwhelmingly, the feedback from the member base in response to least preferred options highlights a core consideration in the role DFC plays in shaping the wider economic and social landscape and how any decision now, should try and reflect this responsibility and core value of DFC.

Table Six: Least Preferred Option by Rationale for concerns

	Focuses on finance over community	Focuses on community over long-term financial stability of the Co-Op	Puts too much pressure on staff and volunteers to manage ongoing work	Other (please expand)
Expand DFC retail space	0	2	2	1
LT lease / prioritise financial terms	3	0	0	1

LT lease / prioritise values alignment	0	1	1	0
LT licence / concession	2	0	1	1
Other DFC community related use	1	2	2	0
Sell Unit 2	84	17	10	30
ST lease / prioritise financial terms	1	0	0	0
ST lease / prioritise values alignment	0	0	0	0
ST licence / concession	1	0	0	1

What other ideas and suggestions do members have about the Unit 2 space?

The survey closed with the opportunity for members to feedback reflection on other potential options or combination of options for the use of Unit 2 in a free text response. This was prompted with the question;

“Can you think of any other options or combination of options for the use of Unit 2 that will balance the need to secure revenue to support the Co-Op, have managed impact on staff workload and deliver on our community and social focus?”

The intention behind this question was to ensure that the CB could access full information tap into the creative hive of Co-Op members, recognise the depth of imaginative solutions to the Co-Op challenges and fully embody the distributed care and consideration across the member base.

Across the 164 member respondents, 92 fed back detailed insights, ideas and feedback in this free space.

Across the feedback there were a number of repeated themes and mentions. And member respondents also provided some unique ideas about the potential use of Unit 2. However, largely consistent across the discursive feedback was alignment with core DFC values and the opportunity of the Co-Op to use the space to foster a shared sense of economic and social development and inclusion. Furthermore, responses frequently highlighted the potential to use the space flexibly – while recognising the increase in management and administration, the opportunity to have a mixed-use space, or a space with different uses at different times of the day or over the course of the week were highlighted. This again reaffirms the balance the member base is keen to support in addressing financial needs and upholding and embedding Co-Op values in our operations.

There were 39 mentions of the space being used for retail, across an expansion of the current offer, to a new shop concession working with local producers.

There were 37 mentions of the space being used for a café – across continuing the current arrangement, engaging a new provider or having a member run space.

The role of community or creating a community space was mentioned 25 times.

The possibility of the space being used for talks, workshops or events was mentioned 14 times.

Other repeated mentions included the use of Unit 2 to foster an artistic space, to support a child friendly or family focused space including a community creche.

Unique ideas included the potential use of the space as a recycling shop, a facility for social supports and training provision, a social enterprise café and upcycling facility, the opportunity to create an enterprise working with ex-offenders or people in the prison system, the potential to lease the space for music and social events, and a bicycle hub.

Figure Two: Proportional core themes highlighted by member respondents for other uses of Unit 2



MAC Deep Dive Discussion

A targeted deep dive discussion was held through the forum of the Member Affairs Committee (MAC).³

The discussion was held on Saturday 12th February 2022 in Inchicore College of Further Education. Invitations were issued direct to the MAC mailing list, to members via the newsletter and on all social media platforms. The opportunity to attend and participate was also highlighted on posters in the shop.

25 people came to the discussion, all of whom were members.

The intention of this discussion was to dig into the feedback and findings from the survey, and allow for detailed discussion and interrogation of the core challenge of any decision of the Co-Op around balancing financial needs with community values.

An ancillary intention of the discussion was to also gather feedback on the consultation process followed and ensure that members had a direct in-person opportunity to raise any queries, express concerns or highlight gaps in the consultation process followed.

Attendees were welcomed to the session and informed that the intention was to support the CB's decision-making architecture. Attendees were asked to uphold their responsibility to bring perspective, expertise and challenge to support the CB to hold their responsibility in making a decision which balanced the financial needs of the enterprise with community values. Attendees were asked to participate in the discussion primarily as Members of DFC, recognising that all attendees also played different roles in life, the community and potentially with the DFC.

Overview of discussion and feedback

Attendees were first asked to give a 30second personal introduction including the reason why they attended the session. And the succeeding discussion was then shaped around one core question and a follow-up opportunity for creative brainstorming on ideas in an open space. The creative brainstorming session was facilitated with provision of photographs of Unit 2, floor plan and more detailed information on DFC financial context and considerations.

Core themes from the MAC discussion indicated:

- 1. The importance of ensuring that the Unit 2 space does not cost the Co-Op money and is sustainable**
- 2. The need to ensure that DFC values are actively upheld in the final use of the space, as well being empowered through the nature of the agreement made for the use of the space**
- 3. The value in distinguishing between short-term decision and long-term decision to give DFC flexibility and options**

³ The MAC deep dive discussion would not have been possible without the active support and facilitation of the MAC co-ordinators, Robert Cazaciuc and Jonas Poulsen.

Reasons for attending

Attendees largely stated their reason for attending the MAC deep dive discussion as twofold; a desire to learn more about the space and the intended use and allocation of it, and a desire to participate in the structures which upheld and supported DFC's co-operative values.

Deep dive discussion on values

The core discussion focused on the inherent challenge of the Co-Op to balance financial needs and community values. Attendees were asked to reflect on and discuss the following:

Having a solid financial base for our enterprise ensures that we can attend to the social and ethical challenges we are drive to. What is your sense of how we balance financial sustainability of the Co-Op with our desire for community-led activities? Should we compromise? Which side do we compromise? How do we balance that compromise over the medium to long term?

The discussion largely revolved around three themes

1. The importance of ensuring that the Unit 2 space does not cost the Co-Op money and is sustainable

Members highlighted the importance of running the space so that it is financially sustainable and does not reduce income or increase costs for the Co-Op. Members were keen to go further than this and stressed the importance of ensuring that any increased costs due to the need to manage and balance Unit 2 should not be passed onto any prices within the retail offer – as this would start to directly contradict core values.

Members noted that while any potential increased revenue would open up opportunities to expand the community offer of the Co-Op in other arenas, values must be pivotal to any immediate decision – and trading off greater opportunities at the expense of cost to values now was not considered a viable option.

2. The need to ensure that DFC values are actively upheld in the final use of the space, as well being empowered through the nature of the agreement made for the use of the space

Members noted the role of DFC in upholding and representing our values through operational delivery and through the structures and engagement of the Co-Op. With this in mind, Members highlighted the role the Co-Op played in both supporting businesses that are in line with our brand and ethos, and the value of designing an arrangement for the use of the space that fosters and enables our community focus.

On the former, Members noted that any prospective tenant should embody and uphold similar values to ours and that leaning into our values was a core part of our “competitive advantage”. For example focusing on prospective tenants who were local, or small businesses, other cooperatives, social enterprise etc. or that a café space should focus on vegetarian food, or join a food offering with local producers and suppliers.

On the latter, Members highlighted the potential for an arrangement that would allow for flexibility – potentially a retail or café space that could transition to a community space in the evenings. Other ideas included the potential for a worker-owned space, connecting in with local training and community development programmes for the provision of a café or retail offer. Though members also noted the implications any more flexible arrangement would

have for management and administration, and positioned this in the context of short-term versus longer-term decisions and options.

3. The value in distinguishing between short-term decision and long-term decision to give DFC flexibility and options

Members were keen to try and separate out the potential for a short-term solution from a longer-term vision, recognising that there may be limitations within the short-term that would require compromise if these were done in the context of a longer-term vision. The longer-term potential could comprise of an expanded retail offer, or a viable community space underpinned with a flexible model of delivery.

Brainstorm and feedback on ideas

Attendees were provided with floor plans and pictures and asked to discuss in small groups quick fire ideas for the use of the space. Attendees were advised that this was intended to be creative and that these ideas would help the CB make a decision on the type of lease or concessionary arrangement issued. Attendees were further advised on the constraint and boundaries on cost and financial needs and asked to consider this creative space with the context of the previous discussion on values.

The ideas and insights largely revolved around three themes:

1. Ideas for use of the space

In line with the wider discussion, the prevalence and priority of showcasing our DFC values in any use of the space were paramount in the creative brainstorming part of the discussion. While members individually highlighted potential ideas and uses of the space (such as a café or salad bar, using the space for meet-ups, family-oriented activities, as a space for children), a defining aspect of the discussion was around the potential to enable a multi-use space. This space could combine any element of art, public or educational events, musical and cultural events, a culinary space to support students or local residents.

2. Tapping into market opportunities

Members noted the potential for tourist footfall and the lack of opportunities currently in the area that avail of this type of market. This could both be considered for potential expansion or variation of the current retail offer, as well as an opportunity to provide a food or café option and high-quality experience upholding the co-operative values at the same time. Members stressed that a holistic approach in this way would make the Co-Op more of a destination space and provide a new, and currently unmet, particular local offer.

Members noted the opportunity to use the space to expand the zero-waste offer of the shop, and the opportunity to better connect with and avail of the outdoor space in front of the Unit. Members also noted that association with our genuine environmentalism could be attractive to a range of prospective tenants but we should be mindful of who we chose to legitimise.

3. Ideas for funding

Members were conscious of providing active supports to the CB to facilitate any longer-term potential of the use of Unit 2, and sought to draw attention to a number of alternative financing options which may allow for a community focused or flexible multi-use space. Members noted that these ideas would in turn need to be administered and managed accordingly, but wanted to provide creative input that may open up further avenues. Such ideas included the option to use membership fees to facilitate

and cover the use of the space – either as a once off donation, as an ongoing increase in fees, or in a “lifetime membership” model used to facilitate the move to Kilmainham. Members noted that it could be possible to charge members in a “pay as you go” model for film evenings, attending events, availing of family friendly events and activities. Members noted that if there were a clear decision which required a lump sum investment that a crowd-funding model could also be an option. This in turn would dig into the sense of community and co-operation fundamental to DFC.

Social Media Campaign

The intention of the social media polls was to continue to support uplifting the message that Unit 2 is under consideration to attract potential tenants and to test market demand. The social media polls were also aimed facilitating a continued conversation around the use of Unit 2, to connect with wider community groups and local networks in support of a considered collective response to economic and social development of the Kilmainham area, and to test potential options and ideas with committed DFC supporters.

Three questions were posed to the DFC Twitter followers over a 2-week period starting February 16th 2022.

- Question One: What do you think the Kilmainham area would most benefit from?
 - Launched Wednesday 16th February
- Question Two: When you think about the Kilmainham area do you want to see:
 - Launched Sunday 20th February
- Question Three: How much would you personally pay, on an annual basis to support and retain a space for community groups, parent groups, art groups, pop-up stores, social enterprise and non-profits to meet and use in Kilmainham?
 - Launched Friday 25th February

Questions One and Two were targeted at testing market demand for the use of the space. This would support the CB in assessing expressions of interest around type of offers and type of lease offer.

Question Three tested “willingness to pay” for use of community spaces. This question demonstrated potential demand for support for a community space in the Kilmainham area. This provides feedback to the CB on potential flexible models of financing over the medium-term, and demonstrates the Co-Ops desire to find creative approaches to balancing issues and delivering for the community. Furthermore, the question also highlights the need to support community spaces and the role that the third sector can play in doing so, alongside formal local government provision.

The value in testing “willingness to pay” was corroborated in the MAC deep dive session which highlighted the potential willingness of local residents to pitch in to support a child-friendly community space.

Engagement

The social media polls were noted in member newsletter outreach, publicised on posters in the shop, and discussed at the MAC deep dive discussion with a targeted request for attendees to participate and to encourage others to do so as well. The attendees of the MAC deep dive discussion were also reminded of the campaign in a follow-up email.

It must be noted that figures on engagement and impressions for each of the three poll questions posed, are lower than would have been expected for this campaign. This is in large part due to a central decision to continue to launch the poll and questions but to considerably scale back waterfall requests for outreach, due to shifting priorities, in the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the active desire to not in any way unintentionally distract attention from the war and humanitarian efforts.

However, while numbers in polls are low and cannot be taken as representative, they do provide insights into the type of potential demand for a tenant, and provide the CB with alternative insights onto how to support the balance of needs of the Co-Op.

Table Seven: Social media poll engagement

	Impressions	Engagement
What do you think the Kilmainham area would most benefit from? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More local food retail • A restaurant or café • Local non-food retail • A community space 	6,618	230
When you think about the Kilmainham area do you want to see: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term store & café • Change up every few years • Spaces that are flexible 	452	38
How much would you personally pay, on an annual basis to support and retain a space for community groups, parent groups, art groups, pop-up stores, social enterprise and non-profits to meet and use in Kilmainham? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • €0 • €20-€40 • €50-€75 • €85+ 	1,585	98

Overview of feedback

Results from the social media polls indicated:

a preference and demand for **local food or café options**, and a willingness to consider **creative approaches to financing community spaces** and realising DFC values.

Results from market demand questions highlighted a preference for a local food option. This outcome aligns with member preferences on lease over sale, and the lease arrangement identified in the member survey.

Table Eight: Question One Results: What do you think the Kilmainham area would most benefit from?

	Number of Votes	Proportional
More local food retail	20	13.5%
A restaurant or café	66	44.6%
Local non-food retail	9	6.1%
A community space	53	35.8%
total votes	148	100%

Table Nine: Question Two Results: When you think about the Kilmainham area do you want to see:

	Number of Votes	Proportional
Long-term store & café	22	61.1%
Change up every few years	4	11.1%
Spaces that are flexible	10	27.8%
total votes	36	100%

Results from Question Three highlighted a considered openness of respondents to actively paying to support the retention of a community space. Just under 80% of poll respondents noted a willingness to pay some contribution to holding a space.

Table Ten: Question Three Results: How much would you personally pay, on an annual basis to support and retain a space for community groups, parent groups, art groups, pop-up stores, social enterprise and non-profits to meet and use in Kilmainham?

	Number of Votes	Proportional
€0	14	21.5%
€20-€40	37	56.9%
€50-€75	8	12.3%
€85+	6	9.2%
total votes	65	100%

While the feedback and results on Question Three cannot be taken as indicative of actual potential finance it opens up the space to reflect on potential models which may award the Co-Op more flexibility in decision making in the medium-term. Furthermore, it is again aligned with the survey feedback for consideration of a use that could be flexibly used to underpin delivery of DFC value proposition.

APPENDIX ONE: Survey Questions

Question
<p>Are you a member of the Dublin Food Co-Op? Yes / No</p>
<p>Do you work with the Dublin Food Co-Op, on either a paid, or a voluntary basis? Yes / No</p>
<p>Would you be interested in a staff and volunteer specific consultation session? Yes / No</p>
<p>How long have you been a member of the Dublin Food Co-Op? Less than 1 year 1-3 years 3-5 years 5-7 years 7+ years</p>
<p>Please rank the following options in order of the options you think would best serve DFC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Short-term lease, prioritise financial terms 2. Longer-term lease, prioritise financial terms 3. Short-term lease, prioritise values alignment 4. Longer-term lease, prioritise values alignment 5. Short-term licence/concession 6. Longer-term licence/concession 7. Expand DFC retail space 8. Other DFC community related use 9. Sell Unit2
<p>Thinking of your response to Question 4 above, can you tell us why you think your number 1 is the best option for the Co-Op right now</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximises potential revenue 2. Maximises community gain 3. Balances financial needs with community focus of the Co-Op 4. Other (please expand)
<p>Thinking of your response to Question 4 above, can you tell us why you think your number 9 is the <i>least</i> best option for the Co-Op right now</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focuses on finance over community – we’ve been through worse and we’ll be fine again 2. Focuses on community over long-term financial stability of the Co-Op 3. Puts too much pressure on staff and volunteers to manage ongoing work 4. Other (please expand)
<p>Can you think of any other options or combination of options for the use of Unit 2 that will balance the need to secure revenue to support the Co-Op, have managed impact on staff workload and deliver on our community and social focus?</p>

APPENDIX TWO: Social Media Questions

Question	Poll Options	Rationale and Notes
<p>What do you think the Kilmainham area would most benefit from?</p> <p><i>Put out Wednesday 16th</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More local food retail • A restaurant or café • Local non-food retail • A community space 	<p>Test market demand for use of the space. This will support us in assessing expressions of interest around type of offer and type of lease offer</p>
<p>When you think about the Kilmainham area do you want to see:</p> <p><i>Put out Saturday 19^h</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term stable store and café providers • Variation in offerings every few years • Spaces which allow for flexibility and organic needs 	
<p>How much would you personally pay, on an annual basis to support and retain a space for community groups, parent groups, art groups, pop-up stores, social enterprise and non-profits to meet and use in Kilmainham?</p> <p><i>Put out Thursday 24th</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • €0 • €20-€40 • €50-€75 • €85+ 	<p>Test willingness to pay – this will demonstrate potential demand for support for a community space, demonstrate our creative approach to balancing issues, remind people there’s a cost to facilitating community spaces, and potentially pave the way for a creative solution in the medium-long term. Depending on MAC session feedback can flex or amend this.</p>