



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COMMUNITY



Woughton Community Council

Building a community approach to sustainable, affordable food

Woughton Community Council has taken a proactive approach to filling some of the gaps left at principal authority level; provision of youth services, delivery of an 'in house' advice service, a wellbeing worker with a dedicated 'Wellbeing Room' and much more.

Recently, the issue of access to affordable food has become a pressing issue – whilst 'Food Banks' are cited as an essential element of managing food poverty, Woughton has taken a different approach, building a project that encompasses a range of services that build resilience, skills development, and community involvement.

This started with the **Community Fridge**; a waste reduction project, originally sitting within the Youth and Environment Teams. This collects food that would be wasted, and then redistributing. This includes 'Food Connect', an environmental distribution system utilising electric bikes and trailers. Whilst primarily about waste reduction, this also addresses hunger, including provision to the Youth Service, feeding dozens of young people each week. **The Community Café** was started during the summer of 2020, where the fridge donations were used to create an outdoor café, with upwards of 100 people attending each day (running three days each week) and at times, volunteers and staff serving upwards of 80 hot meals.

The café has continued, moving indoors alongside the **Community Larder**, a food subscription scheme that provides a weekly session where members can collect items of their choosing, plus extras that may be helpful (bread, fruit veg).

The three sessions see around 400 visits per week. With two other Community Larders and another community fridge on parish (run by other groups) and more being planned, this gives some idea of the demand for low-cost food.

With increasing demands on the services, there are some large-scale projects coming that build food sustainability into the parish. Small gardening projects have previously taken place, bringing previously unused / unloved spaces back to life, providing fruit and vegetables for participants. And our **Community Growing Space**, offering 2000 square metres of land, will provide dedicated space, orchard, classroom, and welfare facilities. Built 'off grid', using solar and wind, water collection, composting toilets, and methane collection, this will be an exemplar of ecologically sound delivery.

This project builds food security and sustainability – whilst this small area won't sustain everyone, supporting residents to develop spaces and grow food will contribute to these aims. This supports the Community Food approach, will also act as the 'Hub', with spokes reach into estates of the parish, finding new spaces, support with building confidence and knowledge. Working with our Principal Authority, we aim to develop guidance to enable this flexibility, within safe and sustainable parameters, contributing to the aspiration to the 'the greenest city'.

For further information contact:

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