



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

## COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING



Oxford City Council

## Food doing good in Oxford

Residents at an extra care housing site gained a vibrant community restaurant serving healthy meals from food that would otherwise go to waste, thanks to local public and community anchor organisations taking a cooperative, community wealth-building approach to local economic development.

From May 2023, Waste 2 Taste will be providing affordable and ethical food at Shotover View, serving residents and local people through a Community café, and providing a catering service committed to a vibrant, healthy and sustainable food culture.

The cafe will be highly sustainable, using food surplus for its main ingredients, and inclusive, providing a pathway into work to homeless and vulnerably-housed people through food-related mentoring and training opportunities.

The community café space and commercial kitchen is leased at no cost, under a cooperation agreement between Waste 2 Taste and a local housing association, bpha, which will enable Waste 2 Taste to grow as an ethical catering business.

## How did this come about?

When local ward councillor and Small Business & Inclusive Economy Champion, Ajaz Rehman, visited the extra care housing site at Shotover View, he noticed that the on site restaurant/cafe had been closed for some time. He immediately saw the potential and contacted the council's Community Wealth Building Officer to discuss the opportunity.

Through the Owned by Oxford project, a grass-roots community wealth building project aimed at addressing inequality in the city, council officers had built strong relationships with local organisations and were well placed to identify suitable potential providers.

Rather than seeking to maximise rental income by appointing a for-profit café operator, Shotover View recognised the deeper benefits to their residents and the wider community of appointing a community-led business to provide meals to their residents.

Council officers alerted the OX4 Food Crew to the opportunity, recognising their members' unique position to meet the community benefits that Shotover View were looking for.

OX4 Food Crew member Waste2Taste CIC was chosen by bpha to take up the café at Shotover View, moving from their base at Oxford's Ark T community arts centre.

Oxford Community Action, a multi-ethnic community group working in OX4, have also benefited from these developments and will take on the café space at the Ark-T centre to expand their global food enterprise arm, OCA Kitchen.

This network of local public and community anchor organisations, working collaboratively and putting community needs ahead of profit maximisation, demonstrates the potential of Community Wealth Building to generate new, people-centred economic opportunities in the city.

## Spotlight on:

**OX4 Food Crew** is an alliance of 9 organisations, who came together during the Covid-19 pandemic to tackle the high levels of food inequality experienced by people living in the OX4 area of Oxford. Learning from wider networks such as **Good Food Oxford**, the Partnership has begun to work towards a system change in how we think about food and eating well and addressing the food inequalities that exist within the community.

**Waste 2 Taste** - Started by two local women and passionate food activists, chefs and community workers Sandra and Marie, Waste2Taste are a café and catering business, who work with homeless people, providing hot meals, cooking classes and volunteer opportunities for work experience and skill development.

**Oxford Community Action (OCA)** - is a multi-ethnic community group working in OX4, running children and youth activities, providing 320 families a week with emergency food parcels and leading on community research. OCA has been supported by Flo's Social Enterprise Kitchen and the Owned by Oxford project to launch their own social enterprise,

OCA Kitchen, which trains and employs people from migrant communities to work in the catering trade. OCA Kitchen will provide a revenue stream to support OCA's unfunded community work.

**Flo's Place in the Park** - is a community-owned hub in Oxford's Florence Park neighbourhood. The organisation leases a former children's centre building from the council, providing a place for people to meet, work, play, create, learn, eat and connect. Their Social Enterprise Kitchen works with emerging, diversity-led social enterprises, including OCA, supporting communities to generate sustainable income and creating employment for people who may otherwise face barriers.

**Owned by Oxford** – is a community wealth building partnership supporting locally led, community owned businesses that meet local needs and tackle Oxford's inequalities. It combines community led economic development with the purchasing power and assets of larger organisations and focusses on relationship building and authentic community engagement. It has provided enterprise development support and grant funding to Oxford Community Action and six other grassroots-led community enterprises.

As a major public anchor, **Oxford City Council** has corporate priorities to enable thriving communities and a more inclusive economy. The council seeks to do this through:

- Buying from local organisations that 'do good'
- Accounting for social value as well as commercial value in its decision making
- Using assets and spaces creatively to support inclusive economic activity
- Being led by the needs of community and authentic engagement with those voices
- Enabling inclusive ownership of the economy by supporting social enterprises, cooperatives, and VCSEs to play a more prominent role in the city's economy

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