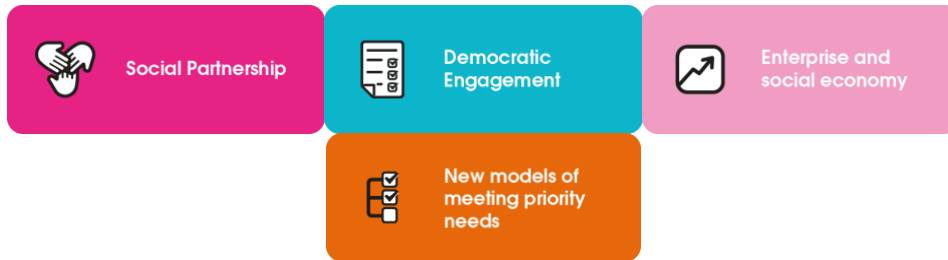




# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

### COMMUNITY



## Royal Borough of Greenwich & Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency

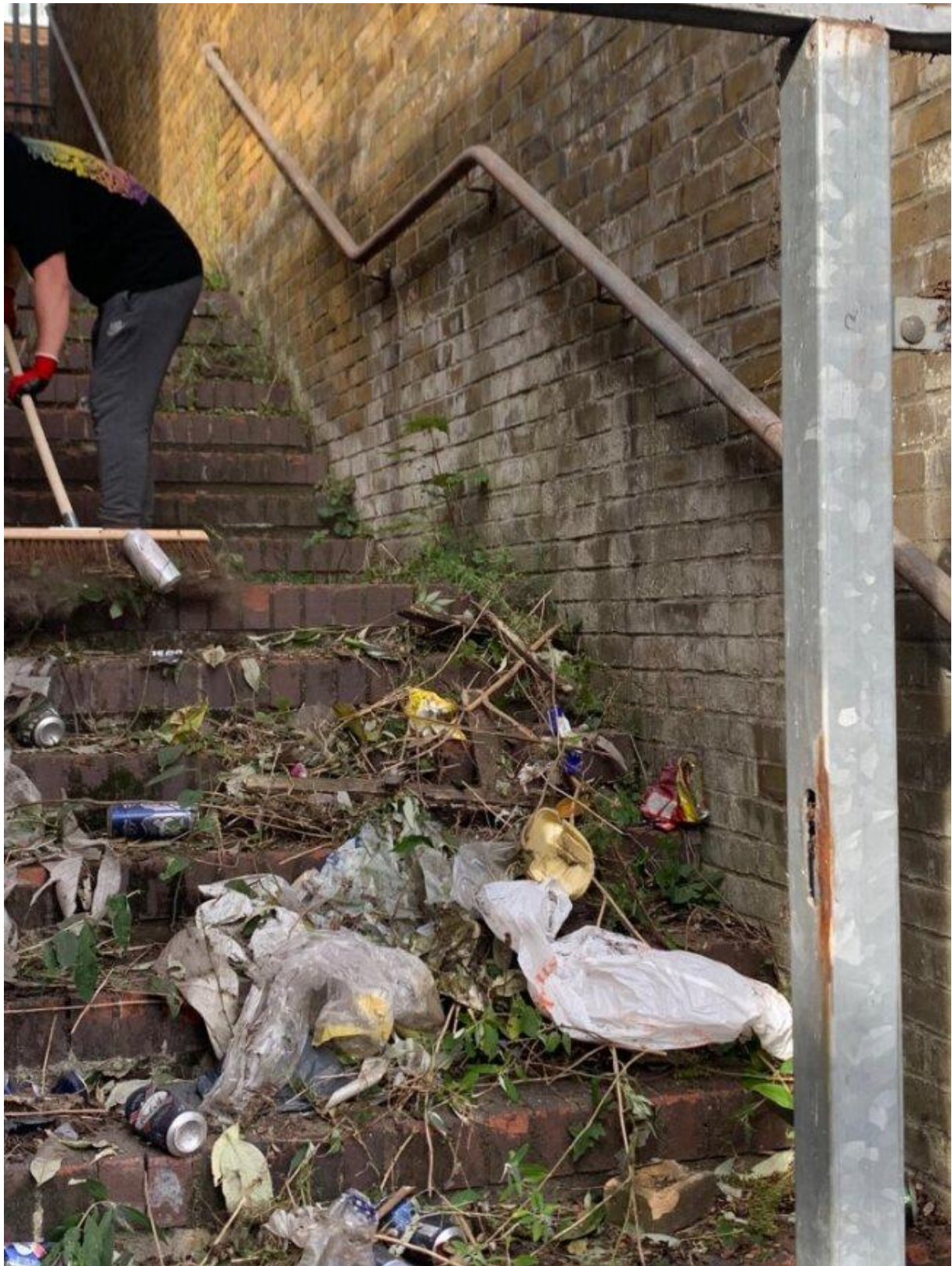
### Engaging and Empowering the Residents of Woolwich Common Estate

In July 2023, the Royal Borough of Greenwich commissioned Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency (GCDA) a third sector organisation, to develop and deliver a joint pilot community cooperative proof of concept (POC) on the Woolwich Common Estate.

For more than 40 years, GCDA has been helping people reach their full potential through community hubs, free training programmes, enterprise support and food projects, and so were deemed best placed to deliver the POC, with established community contacts and relationships.

Woolwich Common was identified as a location because of the number of anti-social behaviour concerns raised and the need to reengage residents to positively contribute to the care of the environment in and around their estate. GCDA already had a substantial presence on the estate including existing infrastructure and reach, and these resources were utilised to maximise delivery to achieve the outcomes being sought. Like many places, residents within Woolwich Common felt left behind, particularly following COVID-19, and as a community, unloved. The estate is an area which has a higher level of deprivation than others in the borough and suffers higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The project's aim was to encourage more tenants to become actively engaged to help improve the overall safety, security and the look and feel of Woolwich Common estate.



Estate Cleanup

The initiative employed a local coordinator to work with a range of partners to encourage people to volunteer, be trained and to explore potential employment opportunities

alongside Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB). A key requirement was to enable the Council to identify how it could better share information with delivery partners regarding local crime and disorder, as well as broader issues such as environmental crime, with the added bonus of tenants being and feeling much safer on the estate. A wider requirement was for this pilot to provide the foundation for how the voluntary sector and local communities can be better engaged in tackling community and public safety concerns in their neighbourhoods. The tenants' and residents' association (TRA) for Woolwich Common Estate has been involved in the pilot and have attended community meetings and assisted on clear ups.

If successful, the intention is for the POC to be a potential beacon of best practice for other estates within Royal Greenwich, if not wider.

Working with the residents, GCDA identified opportunities to empower volunteers and estate residents in the following ways:

- Taking community ownership to maintain green spaces across the estate, including planting and growing food. This encourages residents to make full use of the space as well as helping with maintenance. The improvement of green spaces contributes to the feeling of health and wellbeing of all residents.
- Encouraging recycling and reducing fly tipping and littering by introducing additional bins and collections, which are monitored by local community stewards. This encourages pride in neighbourhoods which in turn improved the look and feel of the estate and sense of wellbeing and safety for tenants, as well as reducing levels of anti-social behaviour.
- Providing, at a cost only basis, handy-person services for residents seeking to improve the safety and security of their homes (e.g. ring door-bell installations).
- Tackling dog fouling, without need for enforcement, through education and engagement and the development of 'dog parks' within the estate. Thus improving safety and wellbeing for all.

Once engaged, and where appropriate, residents were supported to consider training and employment opportunities, being referred to the Greenwich Local Labour and Business service (GLLaB), who work in partnership with a range of organisations to provide support for residents including:

- help with employment
- help to learn new skills to re-train or up-skill for a new career
- help for residents who want to get back to work after a break
- help for residents looking for their first job
- help with applying for apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeship programmes
- providing financial advice from Welfare Rights Service on benefits and better off calculations based on job options
- providing housing advice from the Housing Inclusion Team for support for tenants and people at risk of becoming homeless.





Estate Cleanup continues

A resident who did volunteer work during the project was interviewed and recruited to work one day a week at Woolwich Common Community Centre. They performed well and now work full-time at another GCDA Community Centre.

The Council and GCDA is currently recruiting for a role to support the growing activity of the project.

Key outcomes achieved through this initiative included:

- decreased littering and flytipping
- improved resident satisfaction
- increased resident engagement and participation
- development of employment and training opportunities for local people
- established information sharing processes.
- a written blueprint for use by other estates/areas wishing to achieve the same or similar outcomes.

Moving forward, the Royal Borough of Greenwich continues to show its commitment to the improvement of Woolwich Common and its management. A total of just under £210,000 of UK Shared Prosperity or Levelling Up Funding has been allocated towards the physical improvement of the area around Leslie Smith Square, the main local shopping parade for the estate.

To implement the changes that local people want, landscape designers will be working with residents, through GCDA, to co-design improvements and ensure work already underway in this pilot positively influences any physical improvements. The decision to invest this resource over the coming year reflects the excellent work underway in gaining resident engagement via this community cooperative approach.

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