



COMMUNITY



The Royal Borough of Greenwich

‘Together for Greenwich: Co-operation for the future’

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has a rich history of co-operative development, dating back to the 1700s with the founding of the first co-operative corn mill in Woolwich. Today, it hosts an array of organisations committed to fostering community, environmental, and social impact. This unique position enables Greenwich to lead in growing the local co-operative economy across various sectors.

In early 2024, Royal Borough of Greenwich formed the Co-operative Commission, which is led by The Rt Hon. the Lord Bassam of Brighton. The Commission's mission is to develop a long-term vision for co-operative collaboration within the borough, focusing on producing recommendations across three sectors: co-operative business support, community energy, and social care. Over a year, the Commission crafted recommendations to empower communities and foster community-led, co-operative solutions to significant challenges.

The Commission hosted over ten evidence-gathering sessions, consulted with experts, and launched a public call for evidence, receiving 63 responses. Insights were gathered from local, regional and national organisations to identify best practices and the unique benefits of co-operatives, as well as barriers and opportunities for growth.



At the CCIN Conference, 12 to 13 February 2025, with Cllr Anthony Okereke and Cllr Mariam Lolavar holding the Together for Greenwich report

The Commission's report **Together for Greenwich: Co-operation for the future** officially launched at the 2025 CCIN Conference, held at Woolwich Works in Greenwich on 12 and 13 February. This event brought together leaders, communities, and decision-makers from across the UK to explore innovative ways councils can tackle major challenges, such as supporting local economies and building stronger communities. One of the key highlights of the launch was the pledge of £1 million in carbon offset funding to support the launch of a new Community Energy Fund in the borough. The launch highlighted Greenwich's commitment to co-operative principles and its vision for a more equitable and resilient future.

Findings and Recommendations

Supporting New and Existing Co-operative Start-ups and Businesses

Key findings:

- Co-operatives face challenges such as securing long-term financing and limited awareness among policymakers and funders. However, businesses with these models tend to be more resilient and have more chance of survival over a five-year period.
- Specialised support and awareness-raising of co-operative business models are crucial for growth.

Recommendations:

The Commission made four recommendations to grow Royal Borough of Greenwich's co-operative economy. These include working with local universities and anchor organisations to promote co-operative business models, and ensuring local businesses can access existing support programs to foster the growth of democratic and co-operative business models. It also recommended investing in officer training to embed a co-operative mindset across the council, and exploring the establishment of a London-wide co-

operative network to support collaboration between councils and increase procurement opportunities for community businesses and co-operatives.

Social Care

Key findings:

- The social care sector faces significant challenges, such as workforce shortages, high staff turnover, and funding issues. Often staff face poor working conditions and low wages, and care recipients receive a general one size fits all service, not catered to their personal circumstances.
- Co-operatives can offer personalised, relationship-based care and promote innovation.
- Employee-owned social care organisations empower their workers and enhance the quality of care given as a result.
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Recommendations:

To embed co-operative principles in health and adult social care, the Commission recommended co-producing a Co-operative Care Compact with residents, workers and care providers to set out shared values and goals for a more co-operative care system. It also calls for a strategic review of future commissioning to identify opportunities where co-operative models can be adopted and for changes in procurement processes that favour democratically run, socially valuable providers. Finally, the Commission proposes encouraging the growth of micro-businesses grounded in co-operative principles and establishing a local health and social care workforce board, and a care workers network to strengthen partnerships, improve communication and promote co-operation across the sector.

Community Energy

Key findings:

- Community-led initiatives are uniquely positioned to address complex energy challenges, especially in the context of rising energy costs and the intensifying climate crisis. Their understanding of local areas enables them to bring people together around a common purpose.
- Challenges include financial constraints, complex energy markets, and limited funding.

Recommendations:

To advance community energy in Greenwich, the Commission recommended launching a Community Energy Fund (CEF) to support local community energy projects that reduce carbon emissions. The Royal Borough of Greenwich has secured £1million in carbon offset funding to support the launch of the CEF, highlighting a commitment to sustainability and community empowerment. In preparation for the national Great British Energy initiative, the Council should develop a Local Power Plan in collaboration with a cross-sector taskforce and community partners to ensure readiness and identify priority projects. Finally, a Community Energy Partnership Board should be established to bring together stakeholders, unite efforts towards a common community energy goal and support community groups in accessing funding, information, and expertise.

Governance

Recognising the importance of effective implementation, the Commission proposed an additional final recommendation: **To establish a Co-op Commission Board to provide oversight and governance to monitor the progress of the recommendations.**

The recommendations aim to position Royal Greenwich as a leading co-operative borough, embedding co-operative principles across these three key areas.

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