

Engaging & Empowering

Residents of the Woolwich Common Estate



A community-led initiative for positive change

Authors: Danielle Jones & Dina Patel



Contents

CCIN Values and Principles	3-4
Introduction and Background	5-6
Project Objectives	7
Partnerships & Funding	8
Project alignment with CCIN Values & Principles	9-14
Achievements	15-16
Celebration Event	17
Conclusion	18



CCIN Values & Principles

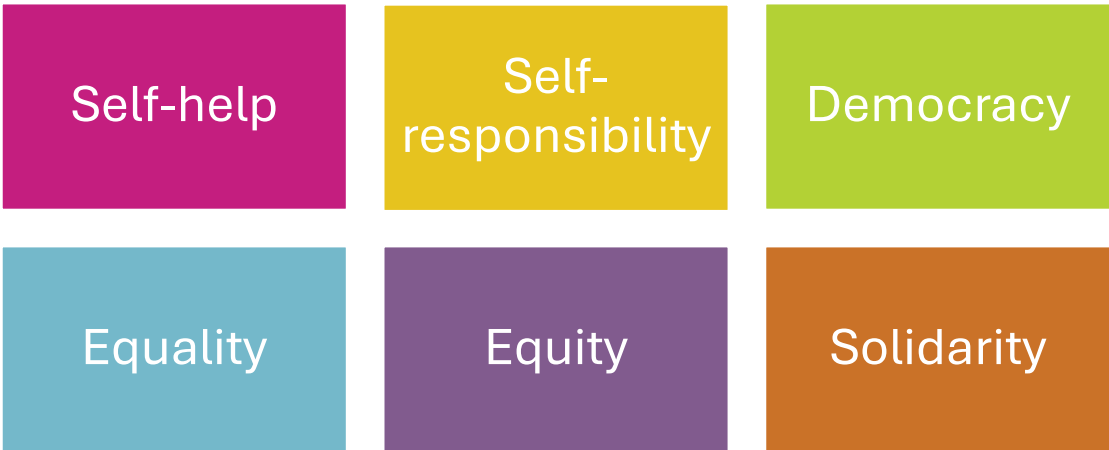


**People-centred councils
driving social innovation
putting people first**

The Co-operative Councils’ Innovation Network (CCIN) is a collaboration between local authorities who are committed to finding better ways of working for, and with, local people for the benefit of their local community.

The Network recognises the need to define a new model for local government built on civic leadership, with councils working in equal partnership with local people to shape and strengthen communities. The network is open to all UK councils regardless of political affiliation who can demonstrate innovation and a willingness to drive forward the Co-operative Councils agenda. At the time of writing, it has 47 full member councils as well as additional associated and affiliated members.

Co-operatives are based on the values of:



In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others. Our Values are what we believe in, and our Principles guide the way we, and our members, put our Values into action.

Below are the ten values of CCIN, which provide a framework to guide the approach local places can take to jointly tackle a whole range of issues.



Social Partnership

We will strengthen the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises & Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing & mutual benefit.



Democratic Engagement

We will support the active engagement of the full range of residents in decision making & priority setting.



Co-production

We will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing & commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.



Enterprise & Social Economy

We will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises & other businesses & providing an environment for co-operative & mutual enterprises to thrive.



Maximising Social Value

We will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and supporting Councils with the tools to ensure better local social & economic outcomes.



Community leadership and a new role for councillors

We will explore ways for councils to act as a platform for helping the community to contribute to local outcomes, & to re-think the role of councillors as community connectors, brokers & leaders.



New models of meeting priority needs

In exploring new ways of meeting the priority needs of our communities we will encourage models, such as co-operatives and mutuals, which give greater influence & voice to staff & users. in designing & commissioning public services & in determining the use of public resources.



Innovation

We will embrace innovation in how we work with local communities to drive positive change.



Learning

We will capture & 'expand' the experience and learning from individual projects & approaches in order to encourage broader application of co-operative principles within individual member Councils & across the Network.



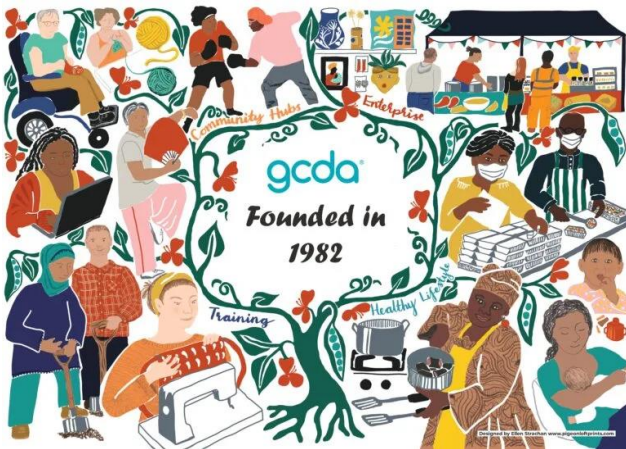
Walking the talk

As a membership organisation we will make this statement of our principles operational by; co-operation among members, openness of membership, co-production of the Network's work, being action-focused, being membership-based & being non-party political.

Introduction & Background

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 re-engage residents to positively contribute to the care of the environment in and around their estate. 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.

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. 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).

The aim was to build on a shared sense of responsibility for well-being and mutual benefit. By harnessing local community spirit and volunteerism, the project helped improve the feeling of solidarity on the estate while also encouraging local people to have a greater voice on local issues and how they can be addressed through self-help.

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 bonus of tenants being and feeling much safer on the estate.



Taking a cooperative approach for the project has enabled new solutions to be tried out for community safety in a way that has strengthened the cooperative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises, and the Council.

Through using the co-operative delivery model to improve safety and community ownership, we will be able to take our approach and embed this across the other estates within the royal borough of Greenwich, if not wider to drive positive change.

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 GCD, 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.

Project Objectives

Key objectives achieved through this initiative included:

- Improved resident satisfaction
- Increased resident engagement & participation.
- Improved perceptions of safety
- Reduction in crime & ASB
- Development of employment & training opportunities for local people
- Established information sharing processes.

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

Community Ownership

- Community ownership of identified green spaces for purposes of planting and food growing

Recycling & Reducing Fly-tipping

- Encouraging recycling and reducing fly tipping through additional bins and collections by local community stewards.

Improving Safety & Security

- Provide, at a cost only basis, handy-person services for residents seeking to improve the safety & security of their homes (e.g. ring door-bell installations).

Education & Engagement

- Tackling dog fouling, without need for enforcement, through education & engagement but also appropriate development of ‘dog parks’ within the estate.



Partnerships and Funding

The financial support for the Woolwich Common Estate Improvement Project was sourced from RBG, the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN) and the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency (GCDA).

RBG provided £20,000 in funding for the project, while GCDA contributed financially by raising additional funds. Together, they supported project management, job roles, and extra workshops facilitated by Taru Arts, as well as a celebratory event to mark the completion of the initiative.

The CCIN contribution of £2,000.00 was allocated as follows: £180.00 for volunteer expenses, £200.00 for project materials such as gardening tools and litter pickers, £400.00 for communications and outreach, and £1,220.00 contribution to the recruitment of a local community member for a 14-hour per week role over 10 months.

Aligned with CCIN's values and principles of **Social Partnerships**, **Enterprise and Social Economy**, and **Democratic Engagement**, this funding supported initiatives designed to foster collaboration between residents, enterprises, and the local council.

The project enhanced environmental stewardship, empowered local volunteers, and provided fair employment opportunities. Moreover, by encouraging active participation and shared decision-making, the initiative strengthened the community's voice and established a framework for cooperative problem-solving.

These principles were integral to the allocation and impact of CCIN's financial contribution.

This financial support enabled the project to successfully meet its objectives by facilitating essential activities such as volunteer mobilisation, environmental enhancement, and effective communication with the community.



Engaging & empowering residents of the Woolwich
Common Estate

The engaging & empowering the residents of the Woolwich Common Estate project supports specific CCIN values and principles, namely:



Social Partnerships:

We will strengthen the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises & Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing & mutual benefit.

The project took a co-operative approach to trial new solutions to community safety in a way which strengthened the co-operative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises and the Council, with the aim of building on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit.

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 encouraged residents to make full use of the space as well as helping with maintenance. The improvement of green spaces has contributed 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 has encouraged 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.





Enterprise & Social Economy:

We will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises & other businesses & providing an environment for co-operative & mutual enterprises to thrive.

This project worked alongside one of the borough's long established co-operative organisations GCDA with a focus of creating employment and training opportunities for local people. This project further strengthened co-operative partnerships between residents, communities and enterprises fostering Just and Fair Labour Markets.

Once engaged and where appropriate, residents were supported to consider training and employment opportunities and 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.

A local resident who engaged as a volunteer as part of the project was interviewed and recruited to work one day a week at Woolwich Common Community Centre. They have since been employed at a second GCDA community Centre in a full-time role.

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

Democratic Engagement

We will support the active engagement of the full range of residents in decision making & priority setting



Through harnessing local community spirit and volunteerism, the project improved the feeling of solidarity on the estate and encouraged local people to have a greater voice on local issues.



A photo board was placed in the community centre where residents could pinpoint problem areas & add ideas & suggestions

Following resident consultation & engagement events at the Woolwich Common Community Centre, residents agreed they felt more empowered and that their voices were being heard.

They are taking lead of continuing estate improvements with the support of GCDA and RBG teams, focusing on clearing rubbish and litter across the estate and tackling overgrown hedges as well as planting bulbs that will flower in early spring. The clear up has been so impactful with a noticeable reduction in littering.



We would love more of you to join us on these clear-up days, equally we would like to hear about your ideas and how you would like to see the outside areas of our estate improved and used.

Dates and times

For clearing & rubbish collection, then bulb planting

Meet at Woolwich Common Community Centre
17 Leslie Smith Square, SE18 4DW

Nov 3rd & 4th, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-3.00pm

Dec 1st & 2nd, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-3.00pm

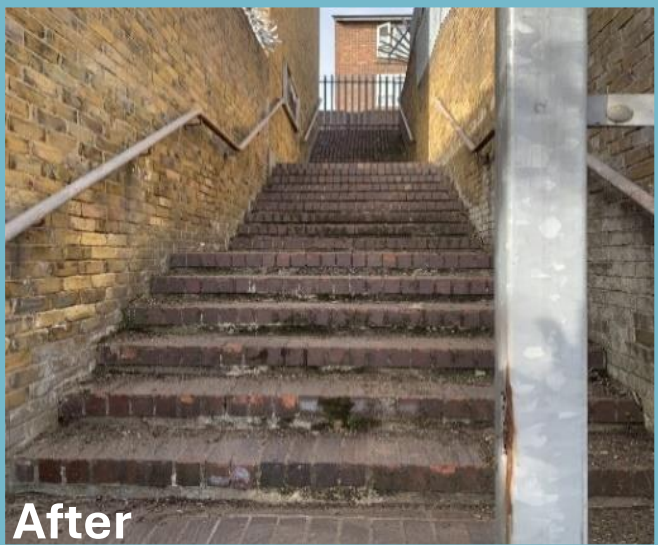
Jan 12th & 13th, 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-3.00pm

- Protective equipment will be provided by the caretaking team
- Hot drinks will be available all day at WCCC
- For more info please call Woolwich Common Community Centre on 020 8855 2437 or pop in and talk to Jane & Andy, or speak to Carol Oghene-Eghaghe & Paul Aigbedo from the Woolwich Common Residents Association



Community Participation and Diversity Team have engaged residents through its YourView platform, Talk Housing newsletter publication and Housing and Estate Walkabout meetings. Information and support around cost of living and Community Safety issues were addressed by RBG.

Posters giving key contacts for Housing & Safer Communities are displayed on estate notice boards. Proposal to install digital notice boards to be piloted in 8 blocks.





Learning

We will capture & ‘expand’ the experience and learning from individual projects & approaches in order to encourage broader application of co-operative principles within individual member Councils & across the Network.

The Woolwich Common Estate project aligns closely with the principle of capturing and expanding learning from individual projects to encourage the broader application of cooperative principles across member Councils and the Network. By leveraging the expertise of the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency (GCDA), which has decades of experience in community development, the project ensures that valuable insights and approaches are not only utilized locally but also shared for broader application. The cooperative model fostered among residents—through initiatives like green space maintenance, litter reduction, and community events—demonstrates how active engagement and shared responsibility can be replicated in other estates, promoting a sense of ownership and pride.

Additionally, the project seeks to improve equity within the local community by identifying opportunities to employ and upskill local people, particularly those unable to work full-time or lacking formal qualifications. This focus on equity complements the project’s broader goals of enhancing diversity and inclusivity. By improving the look, feel, and use of the estate for community events, the project also promotes inclusivity, enabling residents from different protected characteristics and groupings to come together. This holistic approach not only addresses immediate community concerns but also lays the foundation for a more equitable and connected community.

Furthermore, the project is designed with scalability in mind, explicitly aiming to embed its successful elements across other estates within the Royal Borough of Greenwich and beyond. The establishment of a Steering Group to coordinate efforts and the introduction of innovative solutions, such as digital notice boards and modernised CCTV systems, further exemplify how the project’s outcomes can be adapted and expanded. This continuous learning process ensures that the cooperative principles demonstrated in this project can inspire and inform similar initiatives across the network, fostering a broader sense of community solidarity and empowerment.



Engaging & empowering residents of the Woolwich Common Estate





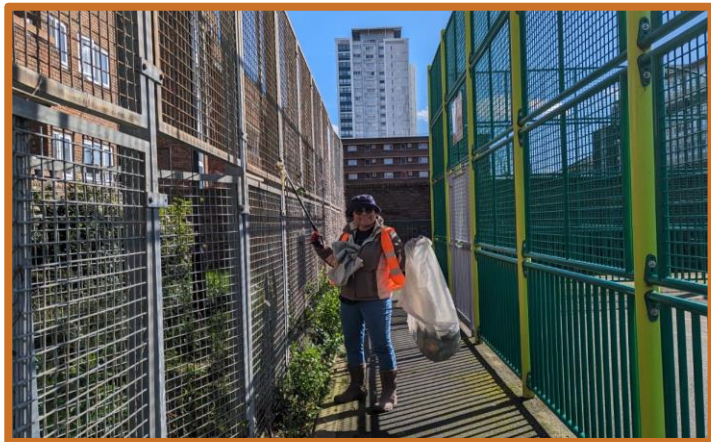
New models of meeting priority needs:

In exploring new ways of meeting the priority needs of our communities we will encourage models, such as co-operatives and mutuals, which give greater influence & voice to staff & users. in designing & commissioning public services & in determining the use of public resources.



The Greenwich Cooperative Development Initiative aims to enhance public services by strengthening the role of voluntary, community, and socially motivated sectors through a cooperative model. Aligned with the "Our Greenwich" Corporate Plan, this program seeks to provide greater support to those most in need and influence future approaches to public service design and commissioning.

By adopting a Cooperative Council approach, the initiative promoted collaboration with local communities, encouraging their active participation in decision-making. Additionally, it focused on innovation through a new cooperative delivery model that improves safety and fosters community ownership. By testing and implementing evidence-based approaches, the initiative strives to embed successful methods into standard practice, driving positive and sustainable change in public service delivery.



Achievements

Key achievements & resident comments



4

New litter bins installed



Workshops on Growing, Recycling, Food Waste and creative activities.

"I feel that it made more people aware of dropping and dumping litter."



Taru Arts has been commissioned to create 2 pieces of artwork for display across the estate, utilising recycled materials collected by residents.

GCDA have obtained a **£5000** grant to create a new community garden off Fennel Street

10.5

Tons of rubbish removed

4

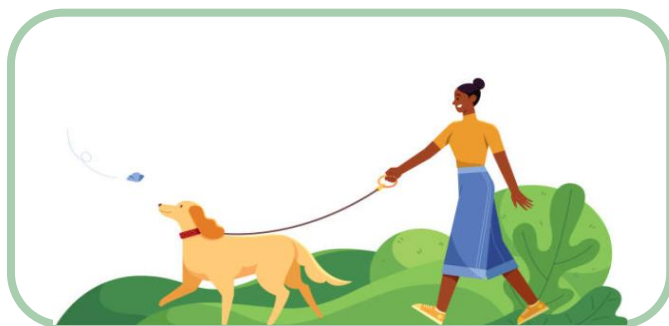
4 clearing and bulb planting sessions have taken place with 5 volunteers per session and will continue

A growing location has been identified and cleared ready for implementation in the Autumn





Ideas are being progressed by GCDA to reduce dog fouling - 1) a children's art competition for a sign, 2) to stencil hotspots. 3) Dog stencilling and dog toilet areas to be brought back to small gardening



"I helped with rubbish clearance days and felt it made a big difference to the area"

"I've noticed improvement in estate such as it being a cleaner environment makes people seem happier, it's created a positive effect, I've also noticed benches that have been added, where it's nice to take a break."



O2 & Interlink litter picking days have taken place with a total of **20** volunteers over both sessions.

Celebration Event at Woolwich Common Community Centre

On 20 November 2024, the Woolwich Common Community Centre hosted a vibrant celebration event to mark the progress and achievements of the Woolwich Common Estate Improvement Project. The event brought together local residents, children and representatives from the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere that showcased the positive changes taking place on the estate.

The event began with an energetic opening by TARU and the Nepalese community, featuring live drumming that set a celebratory tone. Interactive stalls provided valuable advice on crime prevention, recycling, waste management, and addressing fly-tipping. These resources emphasised the project’s commitment to fostering a safer, cleaner, and more connected community.

A highlight of the celebration was a presentation of the project's milestones and achievements. Attendees viewed compelling "before-and-after" images of the estate, which illustrated the transformation in both appearance and community spirit. From clearing rubbish to enhancing green spaces, the improvements reflected the cooperative efforts of the residents, GCDA, Royal Borough of Greenwich and other local partners.

The event served as a platform to reaffirm the ongoing commitment to the estate’s improvement. The celebration was not just a recognition of past accomplishments but also an inspiring step forward, laying the groundwork for future developments.



Conclusion

The Woolwich Common Estate Improvement Project represents a significant step towards revitalising the community and enhancing the quality of life for its residents. By leveraging the expertise and established relationships of the Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency (GCDA), the project has successfully engaged residents in meaningful ways, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in their environment.

The cooperative approach has not only addressed immediate concerns such as anti-social behaviour and environmental maintenance but has also opened up new avenues for employment and skill development through partnerships with organisations like Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB).

The establishment of the Woolwich Common Estate Improvement Steering Group has ensured coordinated efforts and consistent communication, further strengthening the project's impact. Resident involvement in decision-making processes and hands-on activities has been crucial in building a more connected and resilient community.

The continued commitment of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, evidenced by substantial funding and planned physical improvements will sustain and expand these positive changes. Future initiatives will focus on increasing community engagement, enhancing green spaces, and improving overall safety and well-being on the estate.

Ultimately, this project serves as a model for community-driven development, demonstrating how cooperative efforts can lead to substantial and lasting improvements. The alignment of CCIN's financial contribution with its values and principles highlights how cooperative approaches not only address immediate community needs but also create a framework for long-term resilience and empowerment. By building on the momentum gained, the Royal Borough of Greenwich aims to replicate this success across other estates, fostering a broader sense of community solidarity and empowerment.



