

Together for Greenwich:
**Co-operation
for the future**
February 2025



Contents

Introduction by Councillor Mariam Lolavar	3
Executive summary	6
Background	13
Why co-operatives?	16
1. Supporting new and existing co-operative start-ups and businesses	18
Key findings for new and existing co-ops	19
Recommendations	20
Case studies	22
2. Social care	24
Key findings in social care	25
Recommendations	26
Case Studies	28
3. Community energy	30
Key findings in community energy	32
Recommendations	34
Case studies	36
Governance	38
Conclusion	38
Contributors	39

Introduction by Councillor Mariam Lolavar



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

In early 2024, the Co-operative Party invited a dedicated group of individuals with expertise in the co-operative movement to form the Commission 'Together for Greenwich: Co-operation for the future'. Under the leadership of The Rt Hon. the Lord Bassam of Brighton, the Commission was tasked with developing a long-term vision for the future of co-operative collaboration within the borough. The team of independent commissioners has spent over a year crafting a set of recommendations aimed at growing collaboration and co-operative businesses. The driving mission is to empower our communities, and foster community-led, co-operative solutions to the significant challenges facing our residents and businesses.

The Commission's focus has been on implementing co-operative principles in three key areas:

Co-operative business support

Social care

Community energy



Our three areas of focus

To inform its work, the Commission hosted more than 10 evidence gathering sessions to identify best practices in co-operative development and examine how applicable they are to the unique context of Royal Greenwich. Insights were gathered from both our commissioners and external specialists, offering learning from innovation at local, national, and international levels. These discussions highlighted the unique benefits co-operatives offer while also surfacing key barriers and opportunities for co-operative growth.

The Commission was also keen to hear from the wider community, launching an open submission process inviting individuals and organisations to share their views on our three priority areas. A total of 63 responses were received.

This evidence has helped inform the recommendations outlined in this report. Our goal is to build, through growing the co-operative business sector, a sustainable and inclusive future for our social care, local enterprises, and community energy sectors, benefiting the borough and beyond.

1. Supporting new and existing co-operative start-ups and businesses

Co-operatives play a crucial role in local economic development by creating good jobs and strengthening retail and financial services.

By supporting existing co-operatives and promoting the creation of new co-operative start-ups, we aim to strengthen our local economy and provide staff with a greater stake in the work they do. Our goal is to create an environment that enables co-operative businesses to develop and flourish across the borough.

2. Social care

The current adult social care system is in crisis, due to record demand and historic underfunding, often leading to poor outcomes. The care market is dominated by private providers where focus on profit can lead to poor quality of care, unfair wages and lower staffing rates. Pivoting the focus from

profit is a long-term goal, however, a solution being explored the commissioning local, small, ethical, or third sector provision while also building up publicly owned capacity¹.

By providing a clear path for how social care co-operatives can grow and contribute to a robust social care system, we're backing alternative options that empower everyone.

3. Community energy

Community energy projects empower local communities to generate and own renewable energy, from solar, wind, or hydro energy generation to broader energy initiatives. These projects not only contribute to a more sustainable future but also address critical issues like fuel poverty by providing affordable energy options to households struggling with high energy costs.

The goal is to strengthen the infrastructure that allows community energy to thrive, promoting sustainability and generating funding for projects that directly benefit our communities.

Our membership

The Commission is made up of the following members:



Lord Steve Bassam of Brighton
Chair of the Commission



Cllr Mariam Lolavar
Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and Borough of Sanctuary and Ward Councillor for Blackheath Westcombe



Cllr David Gardner
Ward Councillor for Greenwich Peninsula



Cllr John Fahy
Ward Councillor for Kidbrooke Park



Cllr Maisie Richards Cottell
Ward Councillor for East Greenwich



Dr Giovanna Speciale
Co-founder and CEO of South East London Community Energy (SELCE)



Emma Back
Founder of Equal Care Co-op



Claire Pritchard
Director of Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GCDA)



Nick Plumb
Director of Policy and Insight at Power to Change



Rich Mason
Senior Project Officer at London Ownership Hub



Ed Mayo
CEO of Pilotlight, formerly Secretary General of Co-operatives UK

The Commission would like to thank all contributors for their role in developing our recommendations, and for advancing co-operative values.

¹ Hudson B. "Commissioning for change: a new model for commissioning adult social care in England", *Crit Soc Policy*, 2019.

Executive summary

This report outlines a roadmap for embedding co-operative principles across Royal Greenwich, focusing on three key areas: co-operative business support, social care, and community energy. By integrating these values, we aim to tackle the borough's challenges and foster a fair, sustainable, and resilient economy.

Each section of the report provides context, identifies sector challenges and opportunities, and offers practical recommendations for real change, supported by best practices and case studies. It emphasises rethinking economic development to prioritise people and ensure community-wide benefits.

Overview of recommendations

Supporting new and existing co-operative start-ups and businesses

1. Explore opportunities to collaborate with local universities and other anchor organisations to raise awareness and support the growth of democratic and co-operative business models across the borough.

- Collaborate with the University of Greenwich (UoG) and the Co-operative College to look at supporting curriculum development and how democratic business and co-operative models can be embedded into existing business management courses and future programmes. Similarly, expand collaboration efforts with other universities, colleges and education providers locally.
- Explore hosting graduate paid internships and apprenticeship placements in co-operatives and social business settings within the borough and through targeted apprenticeship levy transfer programmes.
- Building on the success of hosting the 2025 Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN) Conference, the council should develop an annual awareness programme and host events, leveraging national campaigns such as Co-operative Fortnight to showcase the importance of co-operative business structures.
- Work with UoG and other universities to develop opportunities for knowledge exchange and an annual 'Co-operative Hackathon' Programme. This event would bring together co-operatives, students and key stakeholders to explore specific themes such as identifying opportunities for co-operative action to support direct payments for individuals with disabilities.
- Explore and identify opportunities to develop new co-operative businesses across our anchored networks, including where possible the creation of incubation space. For example, space within local universities, where mutual model spin-out companies could be supported, or by learning from the example of the Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GDCA) incubation at the Kidbrooke Community Hub.

2. Ensure local businesses utilise existing co-operative business support programmes and consider the local offer to grow the pipeline of co-operatives and democratically owned businesses.

- The council should develop a communication strategy to effectively signpost support to both existing and prospective businesses, through council platforms, as well as local business support teams and agencies. This includes tapping into existing regional and national support such as Barefoot or Stir to Action, where local expertise does not exist.
- Review the council's existing pilot generative business support programme, to ensure the learnings gained inform future initiatives and identify potential opportunities for converting existing businesses to co-operative models or employee ownership. This includes ensuring future grant-making business support programmes consider options to ring-fence support for co-operative business models, where eligibility allows.
- Ensure the council is best positioned to maximise opportunities presented by the new government's promise to double the size of the co-operative sector. This includes the government's creation of the Mutuals and Co-operative Business Council which aims to foster collaboration between the government and the co-operative sector, providing technical expertise and innovative solutions for embedding mutual ownership and control into the UK economy.

3. Invest in training and capacity-building for officers to embed a co-operative mindset within the council, ensuring it informs decision-making. This includes equipping key officers with specialised knowledge of the co-operative business model.

- Appoint Co-op Champions within the council to support with the adoption of a co-operative mindset informing decision making. This includes ensuring key council officers have sufficient specialised knowledge of co-operative business models to identify where co-operative solutions can add value and benefit council services or service users.
- Provide training to key council officers on the newly launched Co-operative Development Toolkit, equipping them with the practical tools to support the expansion of the local co-operative sector.
- To accelerate this work, the council should make full use of GCDA and South East London Community Energy (SELCE) to grow the number of co-operatives. Also, through other co-operative specialists make full use of bespoke training for senior leaders, lead members and business engagement teams on co-operative and democratic business models. This work should strengthen links with the council's Community Wealth Building Strategy and between the council's Anchored in Greenwich Partnership and the Greater London Authority's (GLA) - London Anchor Institutions' Network (LAIN), particularly around procurement and social value.

4. Explore opportunities to establish a London co-operative network, for cross-council collaboration and building a knowledge exchange forum, with a focus on increasing procurement opportunities with community businesses and co-operatives.

- Explore establishing a regional multi-borough officer group, using a 'community of practice' model either as a potential sub-group of the national CCIN or linked to the GLA London Anchor Institutions' Network. This group could explore business support to local co-ops in writing procurement bids or look to identify future funding opportunities to grow local co-operatives.
- Work with the GLA and London Councils to encourage the promotion of co-operative models, enabling the sharing of knowledge on a wider regional level.
- Ensure the council, alongside anchor partners, have the technical support to make best use of their social value and procurement levers to remove barriers around the commissioning and procuring of co-operatives. This is particularly important in relation to the new Procurement Act, where technical support is being provided by Anthony Collins Solicitors.
- Explore establishing 'peer to peer' co-operative networks and strengthen connections with the London Ownership Hub, which is developing a procurement concierge type service, which helps match co-ops with suitable procurement opportunities and assist them with the bidding process.

Social care



5. Create a Co-operative Care Compact to embed co-operative principles across the borough.

- Collaborate with residents, carers, care organisations, workers, and unions to create a compact that outlines how we will work together based on co-operative values.
- To ensure collective agreement of the shared mission, the compact will clearly define its objectives, articulate the co-operative principles we aim to uphold, and commit to co-production to deliver the best outcomes.
- To facilitate this, the council should leverage its existing networks across South-East London, as well with regional and national organisations such as Social Enterprise UK, and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

6. Undertake a review of future commissioning to identify opportunities for adopting the co-operative model and elevate the status of co-operatives and democratically owned business models within the commissioning and procurement processes within health and adult social care.

- Clearly signal our needs for care and support to partners and work with current and potential local partners, with a focus on those with co-operative values.
- Review our priorities for commissioning care to identify areas where we can have the greatest impact. This assessment will consider need and/or service gaps, geographical location, specific adult cohorts, and budget, drawing insights from similar models tested elsewhere. This will include positive action with consideration of a service currently delivered by the council, such as home care, which may be suitable for adapting to being delivered in line with co-operative approaches. It requires exploring opportunities across social care and health in partnership with the NHS.
- Building on recommendation four, Commissioners will work with the council's Procurement Team to leverage the rules set out in the new Procurement Act, ensuring we look to remove barriers for local enterprises, encourage partnerships with democratically run businesses and reward commitments to social value when procuring services.
- At a national level, work with the DHSC to provide feedback on their planned consultation on social care provision, advocating for the adoption of a co-operative based service provision model.



7. Encourage the growth of micro-businesses in health and adult social care.

- Run a range of development initiatives to support the set-up and development of existing small local enterprises in health and care which embed co-operative principles from the start, building on the work already started. This includes supporting local people to set up small businesses to provide care and support to older or disabled people in the community, alongside promoting an understanding of co-operative ways of working and business structures.
- This initiative links to our second recommendation, which focuses on providing tailored business advice to new and existing businesses, and aims to provide high quality and sustainable offers of care that balance choice and sustainability concerns.
- The goal is to promote and support the delivery of co-operative ways of working, and different forms of ownership such as community or employee ownership, while identifying the best ways we can support businesses as they adapt or grow.

8. Establish a local health and social care workforce board, and a local care workers network.

- Develop and facilitate a network to enable co-operation, including health and care provider organisations, colleges and further education institutions, the council, the Integrated Care Board and other relevant partners. The council should work with care providers and trade unions to support the establishment of this network, building on the success of existing provider forums.
- The purpose of the network is to:
- Promote better communication across community networks of health and care workers and nurture existing relationships.
 - Provide spaces both in-person and online where workers can openly share their experiences, particularly if they feel undervalued or treated unfairly. This will empower workers to call out bad practice and foster a supportive community.
 - Share best practice and explore opportunities to join-up training or other shared resources.
 - Encourage co-operation rather than competition and spaces where providers can come together without the need for the council to be present or intervene.

Community energy



9. Launch a Community Energy Fund (CEF) to enable communities within the borough to apply for funding to support and/or deliver community energy projects that deliver carbon reductions.

This has been undertaken in other London boroughs and we are reviewing these schemes to consider lessons learned and how best to structure the proposal for Royal Greenwich. The overall strategy for the CEF is to plan an initial one-year pilot programme. Subject to the success of this pilot, there is the potential to continue with a further three years of funding opportunities.

The precise details will be announced separately to the report; however, the expectation is that communities will be able to apply for funding to support

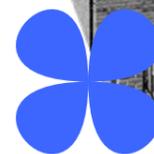
- feasibility and business case development,
- project implementation and delivery,
- innovation and pre-feasibility development,
- training and capability building.

The potential for housing retrofit to be included should also be considered.

10. Ensure the council and the community energy sector understand and is ready to deliver the vision and objectives set out in the Great British Energy founding statement.

The statement sets out a vision for a Local Power Plan, which will provide funding opportunities to help implement community energy schemes. The council and the sector need to get ready for this. To achieve this, the Commission is recommending:

- The council engages with the community energy sector to highlight the opportunities and ask for interested parties to nominate themselves to work collaboratively with a taskforce group to develop a readiness plan.
- The council sets up a taskforce group including stakeholders from across the community, private sector and council to produce a Greenwich Local Power Plan that will assess the borough's readiness and identify projects to be developed to deliver against the governments vision.
- The council works with SELCE to develop their role and capacity to ensure that they are ready to support the community with delivery and spearhead the boroughs response to GB Energy.





Background

11. Create a Community Energy Partnership Board to collaborate and bring people together across the borough who are working towards a common community energy goal.

The board will play a lead role in strengthening the role of co-operative and community action around energy and heat and determining how to create an environment for organisations to work in co-operation and provide support and guidance to community groups to access funding, information and advice.

The board would initially lead on the following initiatives:

- Identify a lead Cabinet Member to chair the group.
- Complete a strategic needs assessment with the community to assess what the need is,

how best to work with the sector, and how it links with the council's Carbon Neutral Plan.

- Consider how private housing retrofit might play a role.
- Using this feedback, the board would develop a terms of reference and governance structure to focus its attention and align itself with what the community needs.
- Identify and develop relationships with industry expertise to augment the board to support growth and development of the community energy sector.

Governance

12. Establish a Co-op Commission Board to provide oversight and governance to monitor the progress of the recommendations.

The board will meet every four months during the first year, and will include the Leader and three Cabinet Members. It will also identify a lead officer and Cabinet Member, responsible for oversight of an annual delivery plan to ensure partners and council teams are supported to take the work forward.

As this new structure takes responsibility for delivery, the Commission's current role will conclude, with its focus and functions being absorbed into the new governance framework.

Additionally, progress updates on the delivery of the recommendations may be incorporated into future scrutiny panel work programmes for continued oversight.

A decade of austerity, the cost-of-living crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has highlighted the urgent need for a more inclusive, sustainable, and fair economic system. Across the UK, rising poverty and growing inequalities in wealth and wellbeing are impacting communities. A "two-speed" labour market, with uneven pay rises, has left many stuck in insecure, low-paid jobs², widening the divide between those who benefit from economic growth and those who do not³.

Locally, this trend is evident, with economic growth accompanied by increasing inequality. The borough faces challenges such as pockets of deprivation, in-work poverty, and high rates of low pay and unemployment. Half of households earn less than £35,000 annually, and nearly two-fifths of children live below the poverty line, one-third higher than the national average⁴. Global Majority residents are often excluded from the borough's wealth, being over-represented in low-paid, low-skilled roles⁵. These issues show that many social problems in local government stem not from a lack of wealth but from its unequal distribution.

The co-operative movement offers a compelling alternative, aiming to share wealth and power while empowering communities to control their economic futures. Co-operatives are based on democratic ownership, mutual support, and collective decision-making, ensuring local reinvestment to meet

community needs. This approach creates social value, local jobs, and stronger community resilience. Co-operatives also have the potential to address complex challenges such as climate change, food and fuel poverty, and the social care crisis by bringing people together. Global success stories of worker-owned businesses and community-driven initiatives highlight the potential for co-operatives to build sustainable, inclusive economies with broad social and environmental benefits⁶.

Nationally, co-operatives are gaining momentum. The government has committed to doubling the sector's size supported by the launch of the new Mutuals and Co-operative Business Council. The new Local Power Plan also aims to decentralise energy systems and support local renewable energy projects. These developments provide a fertile ground for co-operative growth, especially in sectors such as community energy and social care, where there is a growing demand for more locally driven, people-centred solutions.

The Law Commission⁷ review, set for publication in 2025, promises a new legislative framework to simplify legal processes for co-operatives and attract investment.

These national developments present an ideal opportunity for local councils, such as the Royal Borough of Greenwich, to embrace co-operative models and address local challenges in a more inclusive and sustainable way.

² Khan M.M. & Blavo Y., "How the rising cost of living is widening inequality and affecting the most vulnerable", LSE Business Review, 2022: [Link](#).

³ New Economics Foundation, Co-operative Unleashed: Doubling the size of the UK's Co-operative sector, 20: [Link](#).

⁴ Royal Borough of Greenwich, Community Wealth Building Strategy: [Link](#).

⁵ Runnymede Trust, Runnymede Report Greenwich – Race Equality Scorecard, 2019: [Link](#).

⁶ World Co-operative Monitor, Exploring the cooperative economy, 2023: [Link](#).

⁷ Law Commission, 'Co-operatives and community benefit societies' webpage. Accessed 2024: [Link](#).





History of Royal Greenwich

The first co-operative corn mill was reportedly established in Woolwich in 1760, predating the births of Robert Owen (1771-1858) and George Holyoake (1817-1906), both of whom are recognised as the founders of the British Co-operative movement. The mill thrived for over 80 years, setting the stage for future co-operative initiatives in the borough.

In 1868, the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS) was founded, named after the nearby Royal Arsenal munitions works in Woolwich. Its motto “each for all and all for each”, reflected its commitment to community welfare. By 1975, RACS had over 500,000 members and sales exceeding £60million, operating a range of businesses, from grocery stores to hairdressers, and even acquiring farms. In 1919, RACS purchased Woodlands Farm on Shooters Hill, where they farmed pigs, barley, and hay.

The community-run farm became known for its successful pig production before being leased to the Woodlands Farm Trust, which now run the farm with a focus on conservation, sustainable farming, and education.

Importantly, RACS also became a large-scale housing developer, developing the Eltham Progress Estate and the Bostall Estate in Abbey Wood, providing

over 2,000 homes. The co-operative housing model empowered residents to take an active role in the management and upkeep of their community.

In 1985, RACS merged into the national Co-operative Wholesale Society – now known as the Co-operative Group, operating across the UK as a leading convenience retailer.

Royal Greenwich today

This tradition of co-operative entrepreneurship continues to grow in Royal Greenwich today. The borough boasts a thriving ecosystem of over 600 generative businesses – organisations that prioritise creating community, environmental and social impact. Generative businesses represent 2.9% of the borough’s business base (compared to 1.6% average for London) and provide over 8,200 jobs⁸. While only about 20 of these are formally recognised as co-operatives on the Co-operative UK directory, the existing infrastructure provides fertile ground for growth⁹.

Among the most notable of these is the Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GCDA), one of the few local co-operative development agencies in the country. Established in 1982, GCDA is a charitable co-operative dedicated to nurturing community owned, democratically run local services. Since forming, they have supported the establishment of over 400 businesses, including the Local Credit Union, GLL, South East London Community Energy

(SELCE), and the Ferrier Food Co-op. Notably, GLL (Better) which originated in Royal Greenwich, now manages over 250 sports and leisure facilities and 115 libraries across the UK.

Additionally, the borough works in partnership with other innovative community-led models such as the London Community Land Trust (CLT) which focuses on providing genuinely affordable homes and community space. For instance, in collaboration with Greenwich Citizen Housing, the CLT are working on a project on Susan Road in Blackheath, set to begin construction in 2025, creating seven homes and improving the public realm¹⁰.

The Commission’s commitment to co-operative development is reflected in the council’s strategic priorities. Mission 14 of the Our Greenwich Annual Plan¹¹, which outlines the council’s key objectives, highlights its commitment to delivering the Commission’s recommendations. In addition, the Community Wealth Building Strategy¹², Anchored in Greenwich Network, and the Inclusive Economy Strategy¹³ are further testament to the councils’ focus on fostering co-operatives, supporting community interest organisations, and promoting equitable local economic development.

The council is also an active member of the CCIN, a national platform that connects local authorities

with a shared belief in the power of co-operatives to address local challenges. In February 2025, the annual CCIN Conference will be hosted in Woolwich Works, an opportunity to share best practice and knowledge across the sector.

Throughout this report, you will find further explanations of how our recommendations align with the council’s ongoing initiatives.

A note on the recommendations

The recommendations include realistic, actionable steps intertwined with the existing work already being done and acknowledging wider market forces. They will be delivered over a five-year period, guided by a collaborative and phased approach in partnership with key stakeholders. The Commission has prioritised quality over quantity, ensuring projects are impactful and deliverable within local government budgetary constraints.

By leveraging the borough’s strengths, the recommendations outlined in the following pages aim to drive meaningful, lasting change. It’s hoped this work will lay the foundation for a robust, co-operative economy that delivers tangible benefits for residents and businesses today and for generations to come.

⁸ Generative economy is a new term which describes a collection of business models including employee-owned businesses, co-operatives, community interest companies, social enterprises, charities, mutuals, not for profit organisations and ethical businesses. These figures were collected in June 2023.

⁹ Co-operatives UK, ‘Co-op Directory’ webpage. Accessed 2024: [Link](#).

¹⁰ London CLT Greenwich, ‘Susan Road & Felixstowe Road’ webpage. Accessed 2024: [Link](#).

¹¹ Royal Borough of Greenwich, Our Greenwich Annual Plan, 2024: [Link](#).

¹² Royal Borough of Greenwich, Community Wealth Building Strategy: [Link](#).

¹³ Royal Borough of Greenwich, Inclusive Economy Strategy, 2024: [Link](#).





Why co-operatives?

What is a co-operative?

Co-operatives, often referred to as co-ops, are businesses or organisations that are democratically owned and controlled by their members to meet their shared needs. The members can be customers, employees, residents, or suppliers, who have a say in how the enterprise is run. This means co-operatives are owned by the people closest to the business, rather than distant investors focused only on financial returns and with no stakes in the local community. This unique ownership structure means co-operatives consider how profit is made and how it is distributed to bring value to their members and community.

Co-operatives can be found across a diverse range of sectors, from energy suppliers, pubs, and bookstores to community gardens, healthcare providers, housing, and sports clubs. They're also found among artists, musicians, tech workers, and farmers. The diversity reflects the adaptability of the co-operative model to various community needs and aspirations¹⁴.

¹⁴ Co-operatives UK, 'What is a co-operative' webpage. Accessed 2024: [Link](#).

¹⁵ Co-operatives UK, Co-operative and Mutual Economy, 2023: [Link](#).

¹⁶ Co-operatives UK, 'Quick facts about co-operatives' webpage. Accessed 2024: [Link](#).

¹⁷ Co-ops UK, Co-operative and Mutual Economy: [Link](#).

¹⁸ Co-operatives UK, 'Benefits of a co-op' webpage. Accessed 2024: [Link](#).

Why are co-operatives important?

The UK's democratic economy is thriving. In 2023, it comprised 9,113 businesses, provided employment for over 410,000 individuals and generated a remarkable combined annual income of £87.9 billion. Co-operatives represent 83.2% of this sector, contributing £40.9 billion¹⁵.

More than 14 million people are members of a co-op, representing about one fifth of the population¹⁶. The number of co-ops has also grown by 1.1% since 2022, while the overall number of businesses declined by 1.7%¹⁷.

Research shows that co-operatives have unique strengths, providing a range of benefits for businesses, workers, members, the wider community and the UK economy¹⁸. Some of these benefits are detailed in the table on the facing page.



Benefit	Description
Productivity	Co-operatives, mutuals and employee-owned enterprises with 75 employees or fewer have been shown to outperform conventional businesses, generating higher profits ¹⁹ .
Resilience and longevity	Over 87% of co-operatives survive their first three years of operation compared to 61% of conventional businesses. New co-operatives demonstrate 80% survival rate over five years, almost doubling that of other start-ups ²⁰ .
Frontline commitment and innovation	Shared ownership offers stronger emotional and financial business ties, promoting greater engagement and interest in the long-term interests of the business. It can also encourage greater innovation ²¹ .
Local empowerment	The power to determine the direction and strategy of business is in the hands of those who live in the communities directly affected. Co-operatives are rooted in their local community, providing a service that the community otherwise would not have ²² .
Workforce wellbeing	Co-operatives have been found to experience a lower level of staff turnover compared with the average business, alongside lower pay inequality and lower absentee rates. Workers also report much higher levels of job satisfaction and economic wellbeing than those in privately owned firms, highlighting the model's positive impact on employee morale and engagement ²³ .

¹⁹ Welsh Co-operative and Mutuals Commission, Report of the Welsh Co-operative and Mutuals Commission, 2016: [Link](#).

²⁰ Co-operatives UK, Co-operative Business Survival, 2019: [Link](#).

²¹ Co-ops UK, 'Benefits of a co-op': [Link](#).

²² Co-ops UK, 'Benefits of a co-op': [Link](#).

²³ NEF, Co-operatives Unleashed: [Link](#).

1. Supporting new and existing co-operative start-ups and businesses

Co-operatives represent a more democratic and equal alternative to traditional business models, redistributing wealth while delivering wider social and environmental benefits. The New Economics Foundation²⁴ advocates for a new economic approach, one that embraces co-operative principles to create a more inclusive and dynamic economy and moves away from the mainstream, growth-focused economic model.

In other words, a more diverse blend of ownership models, including co-operatives can foster resilient, sustainable, and community orientated businesses. That's why the Commission has focused on supporting both new and existing co-operative businesses in the borough, including helping those interested in transitioning to a co-operative business structure.

Context

In London, the co-operative economy benefits from targeted support from the Greater London Authority (GLA) who invest in business support programmes to develop democratic business models. This is particularly important as co-operatives often require specialised guidance, such as legal and financial support, in the early stages. At a local level, the council funds the 'generative business support programme' to encourage the formation of new co-operatives and social enterprises. This service offers bespoke advice, training, market intelligence, and a micro-grant scheme. The council have also worked with Co-operatives UK and other partners to develop a Co-operative Toolkit to provide local authorities with a framework to better understand the role co-operatives play in the local economy.

Royal Greenwich is well placed to lead the expansion of the co-operative sector, building on the foundation laid by the council's Inclusive Economy Strategy. The strategy aims to distribute wealth and opportunity equitably, creating more affordable business spaces, championing fair employment practises and providing grant funding to help local businesses. The council's Community Wealth Building Strategy, and the Anchored in Greenwich Network, further support these efforts, collaborating with local organisations to create a more inclusive, sustainable local economy.

Already established is GCDA, an instrumental supporter and incubator of co-operatively managed enterprises in the borough. They deliver free training programmes, including courses funded by the council's Adult Skills programme supported by the Mayor of London alongside other business support programmes. GCDA focuses on promoting economic, social, and environmental wellbeing for local communities.



Key findings for new and existing co-operative start-ups and businesses

As part of our evidence gathering, the Commission consulted with various experts and reviewed case studies from a range of organisations. The key themes that emerged were as follows:

Key challenges:

Establishing a co-operative is a lengthy process involving various stages and inputs. Key challenges include securing long-term financing, limited access to loans from mainstream banks, and a widespread lack of awareness about the co-operative model among policymakers, funders, businesses, residents, and council staff. Furthermore, poor integration of co-operative models into public procurement hinders their growth.

Specialised support for existing and new co-operatives:

Co-operatives need sector-specific support, including financial and legal guidance. Organisations such as Co-operatives UK, and the London Ownership Hub can provide valuable resources to help co-operatives thrive locally. Training and mentoring programmes, like those offered by the GLA, Stir to Action, and Barefoot, also play a key role. Indeed, the "barefoot approach," where experienced founders and staff act as mentors, helps promote diversity in the sector. Locally, Kidbrooke Community Hub host an Enterprise Connect networking group, which provides free business development services for small businesses looking to expand their network or advice for those thinking of starting a business.

Awareness raising:

Raising awareness of co-operatives' economic role is key to the sector's growth. Initiatives like Co-operative Fortnight have improved visibility but continued public and stakeholder engagement is needed. Although co-operative models are rarely included in university business programmes, some specialised courses exist at institutions like Queen Mary University of London and Cardiff Institute for Co-operative Studies. There is an opportunity to learn from these specialist programmes and explore integrating this approach with universities in the borough. Local efforts, such as GCDA's business start-up courses, also promote co-operative business models.

Collaborative approaches and networks:

Co-operatives could benefit from more collaboration at borough and regional levels, as well as peer-to-peer support. Existing networks can be better utilised, such as the London Anchor Institutions' Network, which brings together some of London's biggest organisations to work collaboratively to address long-standing social and economic inequalities and the growing climate emergency.

Business development and finance:

Finance and targeted support are vital for all stages of business development, not just start-ups. Public-philanthropic partnerships, like those in Oxford and Preston City Councils, show how to attract match funding for the co-operative sector.

These themes collectively reflect a strategic focus on leveraging co-operatives to address economic and social issues, while also identifying the structural support and awareness needed to realise their potential.

²⁴ NEF, *Co-operatives Unleashed*: [Link](#).

Recommendations



1. Explore opportunities to collaborate with local universities and other anchor organisations to raise awareness and support the growth of democratic and co-operative business models across the borough.

- Collaborate with the UoG and the Co-operative College to look at supporting curriculum development and how democratic business and co-operative models can be embedded into existing business management courses and future programmes. Similarly, expand collaboration efforts with other universities, colleges and education providers locally.
- Explore hosting graduate paid internships and apprenticeship placements in co-operatives and social business settings within the borough and through targeted apprenticeship levy transfer programmes.
- Building on the success of hosting the 2025 CCIN Conference, the council should develop an annual awareness programme and host events, leveraging national campaigns such as Co-operative Fortnight to showcase the importance of co-operative business structures.
- Work with UoG and other universities to develop opportunities to deliver knowledge exchange and an annual 'Co-operative Hackathon'. This event would bring together co-operatives, students and key stakeholders to explore specific themes such as identifying opportunities for co-operative action to support direct payments for individuals with disabilities.
- Explore and identify opportunities to develop new co-operative businesses across our anchored networks, including where possible the creation of incubation space. For example, space within local universities, where mutual model spin-out companies could be supported, or by learning from the example of the GCDA incubation at the Kidbrooke Community Hub.

2. Ensure local businesses utilise existing co-operative business support programmes and consider the local offer to grow the pipeline of co-operatives and democratically owned businesses.

- The council should develop a communication strategy to effectively signpost available support to both existing and prospective businesses, through council platforms, as well as local business support teams and agencies. This includes tapping into existing regional and national support such as Barefoot or Stir to Action, where local expertise does not exist.
- Review the council's existing pilot generative business support programme, to ensure the learnings gained inform future initiatives and identify potential opportunities for converting existing businesses to co-operative models or employee ownership. This includes ensuring future grant-making business support programmes consider options to ring-fence support for co-operative business models, where eligibility allows.
- Ensure the council is best positioned to maximise opportunities presented by the new government's promise to double the size of the co-operative sector. This includes the government's creation of the Mutuels and Co-operative Business Council which aims to foster collaboration between the government and the co-operative sector, providing technical expertise and innovative solutions for embedding mutual ownership and control into the UK economy.

3. Invest in training and capacity-building for officers to embed a co-operative mindset within the council, ensuring it informs decision-making. This includes equipping key officers with specialised knowledge of the co-operative business model.

- Appoint Co-op Champions within the council to support with the adoption of a co-operative mindset informing decision making. This includes ensuring key council officers have sufficient specialised knowledge of co-operative business models to identify where co-operative solutions can add value and benefit council services or service users.
- Provide training to key council officers on the newly launched Co-operative Development Toolkit, equipping them with the practical tools to support the expansion of the local co-operative sector.
- To accelerate this work, the council should make full use of GCDA and SELCE to grow the number of co-operatives. Additionally, through other co-operative specialists, make full use of bespoke training for senior leaders, lead members and business engagement teams on co-operative and democratic business models. This work should strengthen links with the council's Community Wealth Building Strategy and between the council's Anchored in Greenwich Partnership and the GLA's London Anchor Institutions' Network (LAIN), particularly around procurement and social value.

4. Explore opportunities to establish a London co-operative network, for cross-council collaboration and building a knowledge exchange forum, with a focus on increasing procurement opportunities with community businesses and co-operatives.

- Explore establishing a regional multi-borough officer group, using a 'community of practice' model either as a potential sub-group of the national CCIN or linked to the GLA's LAIN. This group could explore business support to local co-ops in writing procurement bids or look to identify future funding opportunities to grow local co-operatives.
- Work with the GLA and London Councils to encourage the promotion of co-operative models across London, enabling the sharing of knowledge on a wider regional level.
- Ensure the council, alongside anchor partners, have the technical support to make best use of their social value and procurement levers to remove barriers around the commissioning and procuring of co-operatives. This is particularly important in relation to the new Procurement Act, where technical support is being provided by Anthony Collins Solicitors.
- Explore establishing 'peer to peer' co-operative networks and strengthen connections with the London Ownership Hub, which is developing a procurement concierge type service, which helps match co-ops with suitable procurement opportunities and assist them with the bidding process.

Case studies

The rejuvenation of Woolwich Common

In the summer of 2023, the council commissioned GCDA to support the rejuvenation of Woolwich Common Estate, as part of a pilot community co-operative 'proof of concept'.

This initiative aimed to address anti-social behaviour and breathe new life into the area, beginning with a thorough cleanup of the estate. To achieve this, it brought together local residents to take collective ownership of the local area. This approach served as a powerful demonstration of how co-operation and collaboration can effectively address shared challenges and enhance the overall quality of the area.

Regular cleanups were organised, additional bins were installed, and local community stewards were appointed to monitor waste management. GCDA identified opportunities to encourage community ownership of green spaces on the estate, such as planting and growing food, and introducing additional bin collections. Handy-person services were made available at affordable rates, and dog fouling was tackled through education and the creation of dog parks.

This co-operative approach extended beyond physical improvement. Residents were also supported to consider training and employment opportunities.

As the project unfolded, the estate began to see remarkable changes. One year on, littering and fly-tipping decreased significantly, and the overall satisfaction of residents improved. The community became more engaged, with many participating in the various initiatives. These efforts not only improved the physical environment but also strengthened the social fabric of the community through collaboration and mutual support.

The borough has continued its support, allocating over £200,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for further improvements in the main local shopping parade area, Leslie Smith Square.



Stir to Action

Stir to Action, a UK-based co-op, has been instrumental in fostering the growth of co-operative enterprises across the country since its establishment in 2012. They focus on strategic economic development projects, working closely with local authorities, to provide resources, training, events, and support to communities, allowing them to build resilient local economies and co-operatives.

Recognising the lack of advisors in the sector, they introduced the Barefoot training program, a six-month course designed to equip people with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to support co-operative and community businesses. The online Barefoot program hosts interactive workshops every fortnight, working with individuals that have prior management experience in co-operatives or community businesses that aspire to transition into advisory roles, covering essential topics, such as financial planning and governance.

Since it launched the Barefoot program has trained over 107 practitioners, with many alumni providing advisory services within the sector. By bridging the gap in advisory expertise, the programme continues to strengthen the sector and drive sustainable, community-led economic development.

2. Social care

The social care system is currently in crisis, often leading to poor outcomes for care recipients, their families, and care workers. Many social care services today are run by private companies that work towards making profit.

Social care co-operatives and similar models, like social enterprises, offer a people-focused alternative to profit-driven care. Examples like Equal Care Co-op in Yorkshire show how shared ownership and personalised care can improve outcomes and promote fairness. Unlike traditional platforms, Equal Care is owned by care givers and users, providing users with more control over their care and balancing traditional power dynamics.

Context

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to create a diverse, sustainable, and high-quality care market. This allows councils to promote various models, like co-operatives, to meet social care needs. However, supporting smaller, value-driven organisations and offering real choice locally remains challenging. Few successful examples exist, and no formal co-operative care models currently operate in the borough.

Recently, the council's Health and Adults Services Department adopted a 'strength-based' approach to adult social care, focusing on people's and communities' strengths to improve outcomes²⁵. This strategy was complemented by a new integrated commissioning approach that involves working with residents to design care solutions that maximise social value, support local jobs, and invest in the community.

The council is also supporting community micro enterprises in health and care. These small, resident-led businesses provide personalised care to older individuals and those with disabilities through training, knowledge, and networking. While not co-operatives, they highlight the potential for grassroots solutions and opportunities to introduce co-operative models.

²⁵ Royal Borough of Greenwich, Health and Adults Services Vision, 2021: [Link](#).



Key findings in social care

During our research, the Commission had detailed discussions on co-operative models, and how these can meet challenges, and provide opportunities within the social care sector. Here are the common themes that emerged:



Challenges in social care:

The sector faces significant challenges, including workforce shortages, high staff turnover, and issues around workload, pay and working conditions. Sustainable funding is critically lacking, with councils struggling to meet rising care costs. Co-operatives offer an alternative by ensuring funds are used effectively, and promoting innovation in ways larger, profit driven organisations may not be able to. Experts from Equal Care Co-op, Leading Lives and Be Caring highlighted how these models empower workers and enhance care quality.

Understanding local needs:

To maximise the impact of co-operatives, identifying local needs for care and support is essential. Limited access to service demand data, existing procurement rules and insufficient ongoing support prevent community-focused enterprises working in partnership with the council. Work is being done to address this by completing a borough-wide needs assessment to identify where services are most needed, as well as opportunities for co-operatives.

Quality of care:

Improving care quality requires moving from standardised approaches to personalised, relationship-based care, as well as the use of technology to provide modern care. Co-operative models can strengthen relationships between care workers and recipients, enhancing the overall quality of service.

Collaboration:

Care providers have not always embraced collaboration, but progress has been made locally through the establishment of provider forums. More effort is needed to engage local businesses and workers in fostering sustainable, high-quality care, including creating spaces for care workers to share best practice and share poor experiences faced.

Policy and legislation:

Key policies like the Health and Care Act 2022, Care Act 2014, and the Procurement Act 2023 shape the social care landscape. Staying updated on these frameworks, new government policies and the Law Commission's review of co-operatives is essential for future planning.

Recommendations



5. Create a Co-operative Care Compact to embed co-operative principles across Royal Greenwich.

- Collaborate with residents, carers, care organisations, workers, and unions to create a compact that outlines how we will work together based on co-operative values.
- To ensure collective agreement of the shared mission, the compact will clearly define its objectives, articulate the co-operative principles we aim to uphold, and commit to co-production to deliver the best outcomes.
- To facilitate this, the council should leverage its existing networks across South-East London, as well with regional and national organisations such as Social Enterprise UK, and the DHSC.

6. Undertake a review of future commissioning to identify opportunities for adopting the co-operative model and elevate the status of co-operatives and democratically owned business models within the commissioning and procurement processes within health and adult social care.

- Clearly signal our needs for care and support to partners and work with current and potential local partners, with a focus on those with co-operative values.
- Review our priorities for commissioning care to identify areas where we can have the greatest impact. This assessment will consider need and/or service gaps, geographical location, specific adult cohorts, and budget, drawing insights from similar models tested elsewhere. This will include positive action with consideration of a service currently delivered by the council, such as home care, which may be suitable for adapting to being delivered in line with co-operative approaches. It requires exploring opportunities across social care and health in partnership with the NHS.
- Building on recommendation four, Commissioners will work with the council's procurement team to leverage the rules set out in the new Procurement Act, ensuring we look to remove barriers for local enterprises, encourage partnerships with democratically run businesses and reward commitments to social value when procuring services.
- At a national level, work with the DHSC to provide feedback on their planned consultation on social care provision, advocating for the adoption of a co-operative based service provision model.

7. Encourage the growth of micro-businesses in health and adult social care.

- Run a range of development initiatives to support the set-up and development of existing small local enterprises in health and care which embed co-operative principles from the start, building on the work already started. This includes supporting local people to set up small businesses to provide care and support to older or disabled people in the community, alongside promoting an understanding of co-operative ways of working and business structures.
- This initiative links to our second recommendation, which focuses on providing tailored business advice to new and existing businesses, and aims to provide high quality and sustainable offers of care that balance choice and sustainability concerns.
- The goal is to promote and support the delivery of co-operative ways of working, and different forms of ownership such as community or employee ownership, while identifying the best ways we can support businesses as they adapt or grow.

8. Establish a local health and social care workforce board, and a local care workers network.

Develop and facilitate a network to enable co-operation, including health and care provider organisations, colleges and further education institutions, the council, the Integrated Care Board and other relevant partners. The council should work with care providers and trade unions to support the establishment of this network, building on the success of existing provider forums.

The purpose of the network is to:

- Promote better communication across community networks of health and care workers and nurture existing relationships.
- Provide spaces both in-person and online where workers can openly share their experiences, particularly if they feel undervalued or treated unfairly. This will empower workers to call out bad practice and foster a supportive community they can seek solace in.
- Share best practice and explore opportunities to join-up on training or other shared resources.
- Encourage co-operation rather than competition and spaces where providers can come together without the need for the council to be present or intervene.

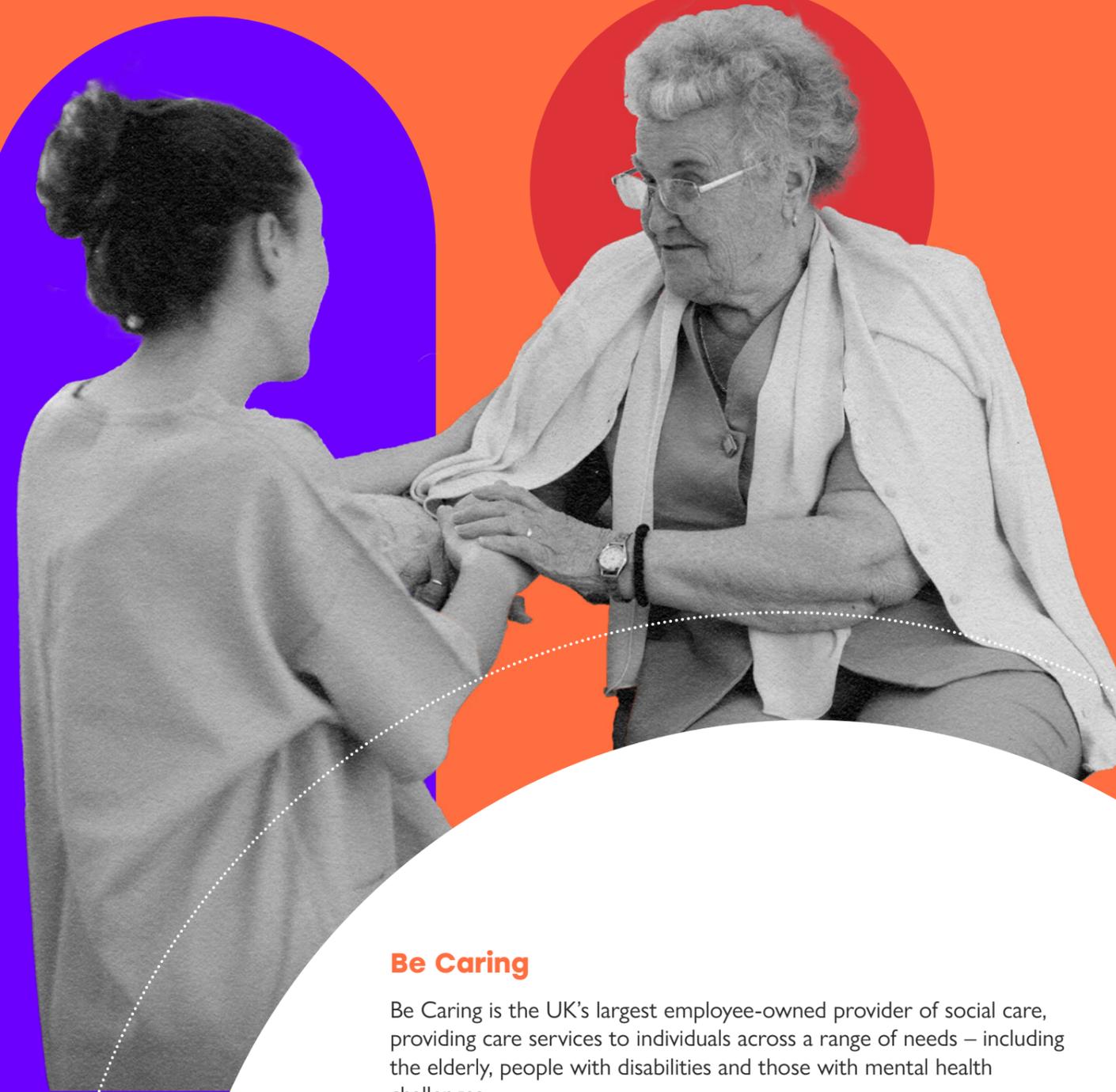
Case studies

Leading Lives

Leading Lives is a Suffolk based employee-owned co-operative, offering high-quality care and support services for people with learning disabilities, autism and other complex needs. Given that 90% of the workforce has a direct stake in the organisation's success, employees care about how the organisation is run and the quality of care that is provided.

Leading Lives specialises in tailoring its support services to meet the unique needs of individuals, with a focus on person-centred planning to empower service users to lead fulfilling and independent lives. For instance, providing support for young people with disabilities to live at home independently as well as providing short breaks away from home for young people with learning difficulties and/or autism.

Using an employee-owned model allows for all staff members with a stake to have a say in the organisation's governance. This approach fosters a culture of accountability, innovation and a shared purpose. Financial surplus is also redistributed to staff as a benefit of their contributions to the organisation's success. Leading Lives have demonstrated how being employee-owned has improved their service, by adopting a whistleblowing policy to empower staff to speak up if they witness poor practice and ensure they provide high-quality care across the board.



Be Caring

Be Caring is the UK's largest employee-owned provider of social care, providing care services to individuals across a range of needs – including the elderly, people with disabilities and those with mental health challenges.

Operating primarily in the north of England, Be Caring provide quality, bespoke care for their service users – offering a personalised service, rather than using a one size fits all approach for those they care for. They particularly place an emphasis on providing care to keep their service users out of hospital and receiving care where they are most comfortable, in their own homes.

Be Caring are currently in the process of building a new technology system to manage their care giving and consider the range of interactions that a person receiving care may have. This in turn will support a more efficient use of resources.

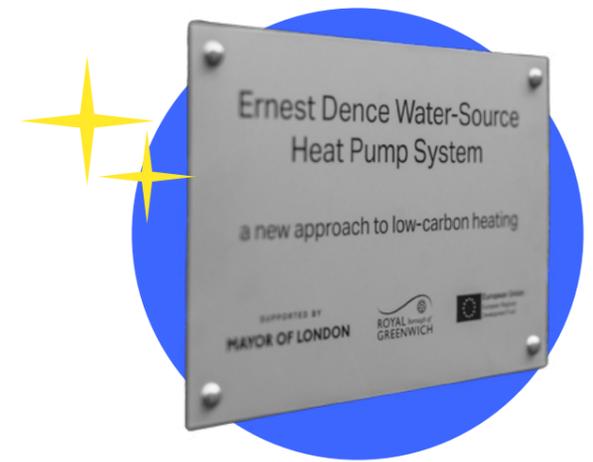


3. Community energy

Community energy involves collective efforts to reduce energy use and produce, manage, or buy renewable energy. It aims to create a fairer, greener energy system, by cutting emissions, reducing fuel poverty, and empowering communities. Guided by co-operative principles, these projects prioritise local involvement and ensure shared benefits for the community.

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. There are many examples of community energy projects across the UK:

- Community-owned renewable electricity installations such as solar photovoltaic (PV) panels, wind turbines or hydroelectric generation.
- Members of the community jointly switching to a renewable heat source such as a heat pump or biomass boiler.
- A community group supporting energy efficiency measures, such as the installation of cavity wall or solid wall insulation.



Context

The UK community energy sector has grown significantly. A 2024 report²⁶ by Community Energy England reveals that 583 community energy organisations contributed £12.9million to local economies in 2023, mobilising over 3,700 volunteers, and directly employing nearly 800 people.

The UK Government's Great British Energy initiative and Local Power Plan represent a crucial opportunity for community energy projects²⁷. These initiatives aim to decentralise the energy system by supporting small and medium-scale renewable projects through partnerships with local authorities and community groups. The plan aims to deliver up to 8GW of cleaner, cheaper power while empowering communities to own clean power projects and reducing pressure on the transmission grid. Community energy will play a key role in realising the Government's vision for Great British Energy. This report is well-positioned to help capitalise on the opportunity.

London has emerged as a hub for community energy innovation with collaboration between community energy groups, the mayor, and an increasing number of local authorities leading to the rapid growth of projects across the city. The London Community Energy Fund (LCEF)²⁸, an initiative by the GLA, has been instrumental in enabling early-stage projects, supporting over 200 initiatives across the city.

Royal Greenwich stands out as a leading example of local action driving community energy progress. Recently, the Greenwich Green Investment scheme was launched, which encourages residents, businesses and organisations to make low-risk investments into environmental projects in their local area. This builds on the Carbon Neutral Plan²⁹ which was set up in 2019 after the council declared a climate emergency and set an ambitious target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A key player in this effort is SELCE, a member-led co-operative and one of Greater London's largest community energy groups. SELCE has achieved significant scale and impact through its initiatives, developing renewable energy projects and offering valuable advice to individuals and organisations on energy efficiency to reduce carbon emissions. They also help those in fuel poverty and engage in community education and advocacy for sustainable energy policies.

Other organisations in Greenwich complement SELCE's efforts. Citizens Advice provides fuel poverty advice to residents locally and London-wide, while Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) administer the council's Stay Warm, Stay Safe scheme. This programme offers energy efficiency and benefit advice, as well as health resources to residents vulnerable to cold weather.

²⁶ Community Energy England, *Community Energy State of the Sector 2024*, 2024: [Link](#).

²⁷ UK Government, *Great British Energy founding statement*, 2024: [Link](#).

²⁸ Community Energy London, "A Green New Deal for Community Energy" webpage, 2020: [Link](#).

²⁹ Royal Borough of Greenwich, *Our Carbon Neutral Plan*, 2019: [Link](#).

Key findings in community energy

During our research, the Commission explored various aspects of community energy initiatives, their challenges, opportunities and strategies for future development. Here are the common themes that emerged:

Benefits of community energy:

Community energy projects, like solar power and retrofitting, promote a low-carbon future. They empower communities to own energy production, reinvest profits locally, and reduce carbon emissions. Examples such as SELCE and Repowering London highlight their environmental and social benefits.

Sustainability and long-term planning:

Ensuring the long-term viability of projects requires stable funding and strategic planning to adapt to evolving energy needs. The Commission heard from councils like Lewisham, Hounslow, and Camden who have used Carbon Offset Funding to create community energy funds, supporting local community projects that reduce carbon emissions.

Challenges in the sector:

Community energy faces hurdles like financial constraints, a complex energy market, limited funding, and rising energy costs. Other issues include a lack of organisational capacity, difficulty accessing suitable sites for renewable energy generation, and shortages of skilled contractors for retrofitting.

Role of local government and partnerships:

Local authorities are key to supporting community energy. Greater collaboration between councils, community groups, and private companies is needed to overcome the key barriers to growth, with initiatives like the LCEF showing how early support fosters success.

Innovation and workforce development:

Innovation opportunities include expanding to technologies like heat pumps and energy-efficient retrofits. A presentation from Retrofitworks displayed that to achieve this, a skilled workforce is essential, highlighting the need for more training programmes and apprenticeships.



Recommendations

9. Launch a Community Energy Fund (CEF) to enable communities within the borough to apply for funding to support and/or deliver community energy projects that deliver carbon reductions.

This has been undertaken in other London boroughs and we are reviewing these schemes to consider lessons learned and how best to structure the proposal for Royal Greenwich. The overall strategy for the CEF is to plan an initial one-year pilot programme. Subject to the success of this pilot, there is the potential to continue with a further three years of funding opportunities.

The precise details will be announced separately to the report; however, the expectation is that communities will be able to apply for funding to support

- feasibility and business case development,
- project implementation and delivery,
- innovation and pre-feasibility development,
- training and capability building.

The potential for housing retrofit to be included should also be considered.

10. Ensure the council and the community energy sector understand and is ready to deliver the vision and objectives set out in the Great British Energy founding statement.

The statement sets out a vision for a Local Power Plan, which will provide funding opportunities to help implement community energy schemes. The council and the sector need to get ready for this. To achieve this, the Commission is recommending:

- The council engages with the community energy sector to highlight the opportunities and ask for interested parties to nominate themselves to work collaboratively with a taskforce group to develop a readiness plan.

- The council sets up a taskforce group including stakeholders from across the community, private sector and council to produce a Greenwich Local Power Plan that will assess the borough's readiness and identify projects to be developed to deliver against the governments vision.
- The council works with SELCE to develop their role and capacity to ensure that they are ready to support the community with delivery and spearhead the boroughs response to GB Energy.

11. Create a Community Energy Partnership Board to collaborate and bring people together across the borough who are working towards a common community energy goal.

The board will play a lead role in strengthening the role of co-operative and community action around energy and heat and determining how to create an environment for organisations to work in co-operation and provide support and guidance to community groups to access funding, information and advice.

The board would initially lead on the following initiatives:

- Identify a lead Cabinet Member to chair the group.
- Complete a strategic needs assessment with the community to assess what the need is,

how best to work with the sector, and how it links with the councils Carbon Neutral Plan.

- Consider how private housing retrofit might play a role.
- Using this feedback, the board would develop a terms of reference and governance structure to focus its attention and align itself with what the community needs.
- Identify and develop relationships with industry expertise to augment the board to support growth and development of the community energy sector.



Case studies

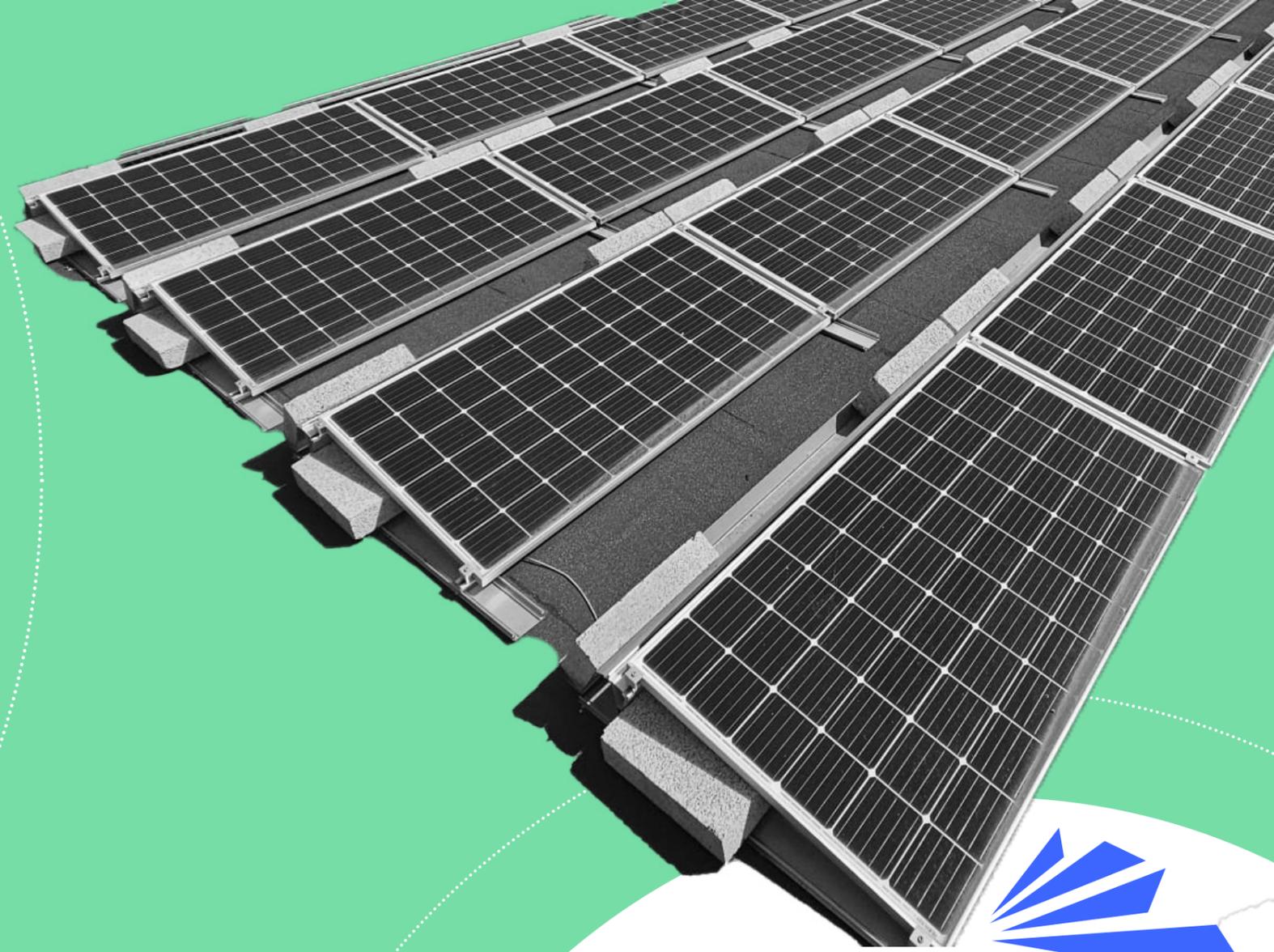
Repowering London

Established in 2013, Repowering London has the goal of developing clean, local and affordable energy for urban communities. Using the local community's expertise of the area, they empower urban communities to create, control and benefit from clean energy, democratising the energy system. Their goal is to ensure communities in every town and city in the UK are empowered with clean energy by 2030.

Their achievements include:

- Supporting the establishment of 10 community solar co-operatives, operating across roughly 40 buildings in London.
- Their co-ops raising £200,000 in community funds to spend on local priority projects, as well as saving over 900 tonnes of Co2 emissions so far.
- Securing a £1.5million facility to accelerate the delivery of rooftop solar.

Repowering London currently has a focus on solar power, however, are working towards increasing the breadth of their work and becoming an integrated energy service, using a range of technologies and processes (such as retrofit) to achieve their goals. They seek to provide clean energy with a range of services and benefits – such as affordable energy, provision of training, jobs for local people and local investment.



Plymouth Energy Community

Plymouth Energy Community (PEC) are a social enterprise with a co-operative ethos instilled in their practice. Founded in 2013, they are dedicated to empowering communities to tackle fuel poverty, reduce carbon emissions and generate renewable energy.

Their projects include offering residents in Plymouth free support if they are in, or at risk of, fuel poverty, to help lower their energy bills. Over the last year, PEC have provided long term one-to-one support to 1,632 households, with 86% of households reporting they feel better able to stay warm. They also run the PEC Renewables Fund, installing and managing community-owned renewable energy installations, and are in the process of exploring proposals for a new community owned solar farm.



Governance

Recognising the importance of effective implementation, the Commission proposes an additional final recommendation:

12. Establish a Co-op Commission Board to provide oversight and governance to monitor the progress of the recommendations.

The Board will meet every four months during the first year and will include the Leader and three Cabinet Members. It will also identify a lead officer and Cabinet Member, responsible for oversight of an annual delivery plan to ensure partners and council teams are supported to take the work forward.

As this new structure takes responsibility for delivery, the Commission's current role will conclude, with its focus and functions being absorbed into the new governance framework.

Additionally, progress updates on the delivery of the recommendations may be incorporated into future scrutiny panel work programmes for continued oversight.

Conclusion

The Commission has crafted a set of recommendations designed to position the Royal Borough of Greenwich as a leading co-operative borough. These proposals aim to embed co-operative principles across three key areas: co-operative business support, community energy, and social care. Our goal is to make these values central to the borough's practices.

Throughout this process, we have engaged closely with a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure that our recommendations are informed by a vast range of expertise and knowledge. This collaborative approach has not only strengthened our findings but will support the council to effectively implement the recommendations together with partners and residents.

We look forward to refreshing and revisiting our co-operative values in the years ahead. Despite

the challenges faced by local government today, we firmly believe that the outcomes of this Commission represent an important step in Royal Greenwich's development, paving the way for a more equitable and resilient future.

We extend our sincere thanks to all those who have contributed to bringing this piece of work to life. We eagerly anticipate the implementation of these recommendations, which embody the collective effort and vision of everyone involved.

Contributors

The Commission would like to thank all contributors for generously sharing their time, knowledge, and expertise in shaping our recommendations:

Anthony Collins Solicitors	North East Business and Innovation Centre
Be Caring	Pilotlight
Camden Council	Plymouth Council
Co-operative Councils Innovation Network	Plymouth Energy Community
Community Energy England	Power to Change
Community Energy London	Preston City Council
Community Ownership London	Ravensbourne University
Coventry University	Repowering London
DG Cities	Retrofitworks
Equal Care	Social Value Portal
Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency	South-East London Community Energy
Greater London Authority	Stir to Action
Hounslow Council	Sunderland City Council
Leading Lives	The Greater London Authority
Lewisham Council	The University of Greenwich
London Ownership Hub	

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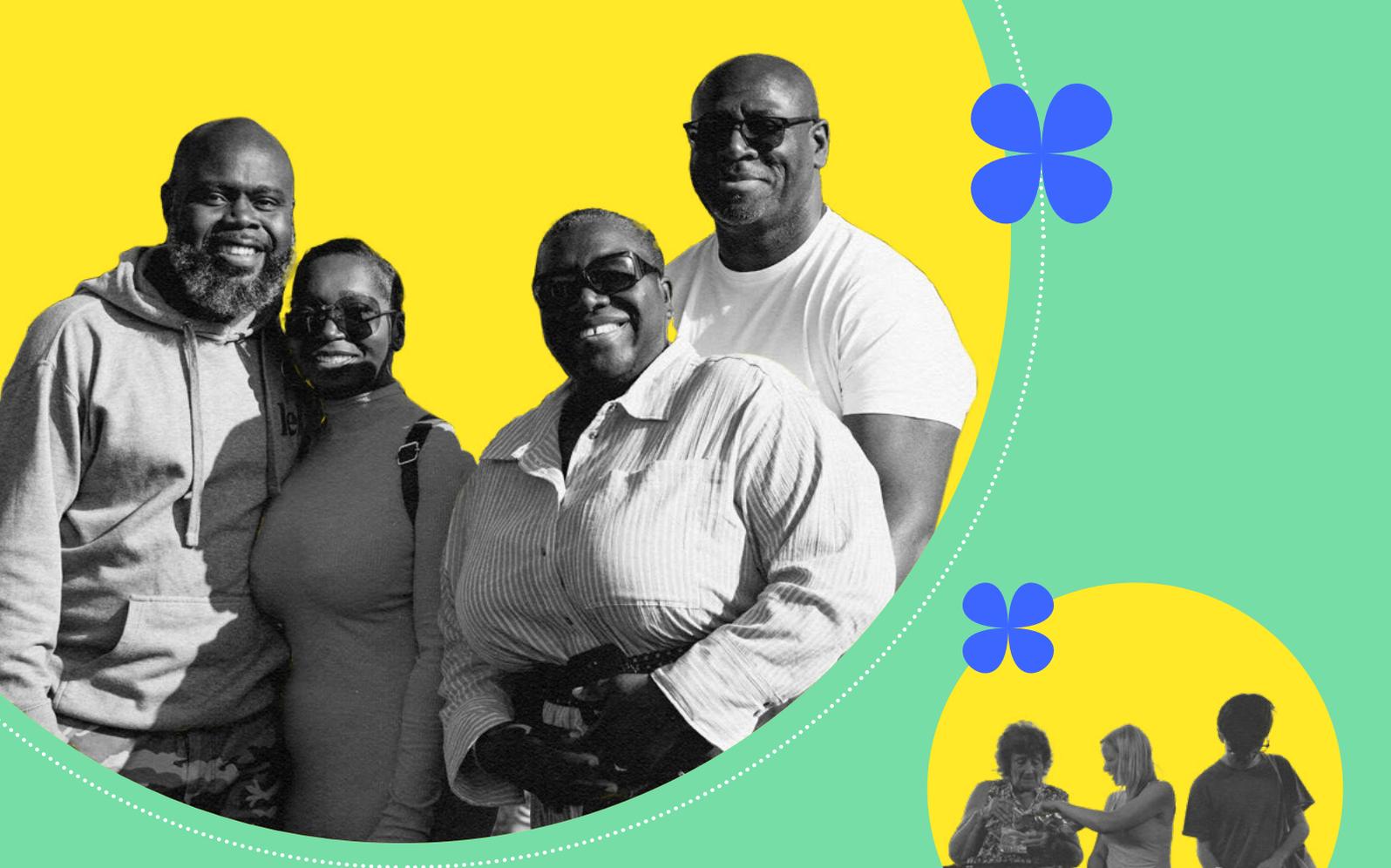
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If you want to view this strategy online or access any links referenced, head to royalgreenwich.gov.uk/coop-strategy

