

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	6 th February 2024
Report Title	Men's Shed
Agenda Reference	14
Author	Councillor Paul Park

Councillor's Recommendations:

1. To note the report.
2. To reach out to Renew Swindon and see if there is an opportunity for partnership working i.e. allowing the use of the Community Bus to transport attendees to existing workshops.
3. To continue with research and gauge some interest from the local community.
4. To note the Officers Findings.

Background

As part of the Council's plan to reduce resident isolation the Council has decided to look at the Men's Shed concept to see if it would be a suitable program to bring to the community of Haydon Wick.

The concept of a Men's Shed is rooted in the traditional idea of a garden shed—a place for tool storage, building or fixing things, and an escape from daily life. However, Men's Sheds differ as they focus on social connections, friendship building, and the shared exchange of skills and knowledge. Men's Sheds offer a unique solution to the widespread issue of social isolation among men. By fostering a sense of community and camaraderie, these sheds create an environment where individuals can establish meaningful connections, alleviating feelings of loneliness and isolation. Which allows the sheds to place a strong emphasis on mental health awareness and support. Men's Sheds can also contribute positively to the broader community through projects benefiting local neighbourhoods. Whether through woodworking initiatives, gardening projects, or community events, sheds become integral hubs of community contribution, reinforcing a sense of belonging and responsibility.

Starting a Shed

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to starting a shed, and while guidance is available, each shed is unique. Though most sheds include a space for tools and equipment, not all sheds begin this way (See recommendations). General guidance is as follows:

1. Identifying a Need

Before addressing logistics, assess the local community's needs through conversations with potential members, community leaders, and health professionals. Identify specific challenges faced by men in the area and determine whether a Men's Shed would be a welcomed initiative.

2. Building Community Support

Gain support from the community and local organizations, engaging with businesses, government agencies, and social groups to secure financial, logistical, and promotional support. Establishing partnerships enhances the shed's sustainability.



3. Securing a Space

Find a suitable location, ensuring it is easily accessible and accommodates various activities. Options include repurposing existing buildings, collaborating with community centres, or securing grants to build a purpose-designed shed.

4. Legal and organisational structure

Establish a legal and organizational framework. Form a committee, determine a legal structure, and draft a constitution outlining the shed's purpose, rules, and governance structure.

5. Funding and Resources

Explore diverse funding sources, create a budget, and engage local businesses and community members in fundraising events for financial sustainability.

6. Recruitment and Outreach

Launch an outreach campaign through social media, local newspapers, and community events to recruit shed members. Emphasize the inclusive and supportive nature of the shed, encouraging participation from men of various backgrounds and age groups.

Potential Challenges

There are several challenges ahead for the Council, but the main three questions come down to:

- Independence – Most Sheds are they're own organisation, would the council be happy to fund in the beginning, and possibly hand over the reins at a later point?
- Space – The Council current has no suitable premises for the Shed and tools to be housed in.
- Time – If the Council proceed then consideration will need to be given to the time of the events and how long these will last for
- Mens sheds are not normally run by local councils - When talking to some of the shed runners there was a feeling of; whilst a parish ran shed could bring stability in terms of premises, there was concerns that quite a lot of men could be put off by a possible political aspect.
- Attendees – feedback from some of the sheds has shown about ten years of planning prior to receiving regular attendance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, and feedback that some existing sheds are struggling financially, it would make sense to support the existing sheds rather than create a new one. The Council does not have the capacity or resources to think about this at present but could offer use of the Community Bus or encourage the Men's Shed to apply via the Community Grants programme.

Information can be found by visiting the Men's Shed website:

<https://menssheds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/MENS-SHED-TOOLKIT-FOR-UK-1.pdf>
<https://menssheds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Starting-a-Shed.pdf>
<https://menssheds.org.uk/start-a-shed/>



Officers Findings

On the back of receiving the report from Councillor Paul Park, the Council's Head of Parks & Open Spaces and Community & Youth Co Ordinator have met to discuss ideas to further tackle loneliness and isolation in men within the Parish. Whilst the Haven and Over 60s the attendees are predominately women, there are a small handful of men that do attend.

There is some space and capacity at Ventnor Close site to hold regular gardening sessions and some parishioners have offered to donate tools – such as local retired tradesmen who would be willing to provide some expertise. Councillor Paul Park has also offered some IT circuit workshops and/or CV workshops.

The Community & Youth Co Ordinator also has a lot of experience in sports based activities of all ages.

Regular workshops can be run and grow organically similarly to the Haven and Memory Café. The programme could be developed.