

Leisure Events & Environment Committee

Tuesday 4th March 2025
Agenda Item LEE1887/25
Establishment of a Community Shed in Croxley Green

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to recommend that Council allocates funds and establishes a Community Shed in Croxley as a facility to counter loneliness alongside other initiatives that already exist locally. The paper is limited to the principles behind establishing a shed – there are many practical aspects that will be dealt with as part of the next steps.

BACKGROUND

Loneliness is a common, growing and serious issue that affects many people, especially older individuals who may face various challenges and losses in their lives and can have a negative impact on physical and mental health, as well as social well-being.

Interventions to address the problem have been tried by national and local governments, and by charities and community help groups. Each achieves some success but there are always people who fall through the gaps. Overcoming loneliness requires an approach that recognises the diversity and complexity of older people's experiences and preferences

The establishment of a Community Shed in Croxley Green, affiliated to the UK Men's Sheds Association (UKMSA) has the potential to be a further tool to address the scourge of loneliness in the village.

DISCUSSION

POPULATION METRICS

The population of Croxley Green is increasing and ageing in common with the whole of Three Rivers. Estimated population is now 13,536 (2021) up from 12,562 (2011). Further information about the population structure is as follows:

Gender	Persons	%
Males	6,600	48.8%
Females	6,936	51.2%

Age Groups		
0-17 years	3,189	23.6%
18-64 years	7,825	57.8%
65+ years	2,522	18.6%

EXISTING PROVISION

There is provision of a social nature for the target population and examples include:

- Local pubs/coffee shops;
- Clubs such as the Royal British Legion, the Guild of Sport;
- Organisations such as U3A;
- The free bus service to Watford operated by the Parish Council;
- Watford & Three Rivers Trust (W3RT);
- A Probus club based in the Chilterns; and

There are some opportunities for active pastimes, for example:

- Local allotment sites;
- Croxley Bowls club;
- Croxley Tennis club;
- Walking football and other sports groups
- Walking groups facilitated by the district council
- Environmental groups (including volunteering with Friends of Croxley Common Moor)

However, none of these options, with the exception of W3RT, has the specific objective of addressing isolation, loneliness and depression among the target group – a key ambition of Community Sheds.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY SHEDS

Community Sheds offer five key benefits and purposes, which have positive impacts on physical and mental well-being, social connections, and personal development.

1. Health and Well-being:

Community Sheds contribute significantly to the health and well-being of their members. Regular physical activity has been linked to reduced risks of chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Participating in shared projects and conversations offers an outlet for self-expression and emotional support, promoting mental resilience and a sense of belonging.

2. Transition and Support:

Community Sheds offer support during challenging life cycle events, such as retirement, death of a loved one, unemployment, or relationship breakdowns. These transitions can sometimes leave individuals feeling adrift, lacking purpose, or struggling to adjust. Community Sheds provide a safe and understanding environment where individuals can find support, advice, and encouragement from fellow members who have gone through similar experiences.

3. Social Connections:

Community Sheds are an excellent platform for building and strengthening social connections. These spaces break down the barriers of isolation and loneliness that some may experience, particularly in older age groups or after significant life changes such as retirement, death of a partner or periods of ill-health. Community Sheds create an inclusive environment where individuals can connect with others who share common interests and experiences.

4. Skill Development and Lifelong Learning:

Community Sheds are dynamic places where individuals can acquire new skills, expand their knowledge, and engage in lifelong learning. These spaces often feature workshops equipped with tools and materials, allowing members to explore various trades, crafts, and hobbies and can learn traditional as well as contemporary skills.

5. Community Engagement and Contribution:

Community Sheds play an essential role in community engagement and contribution. Through collaborative projects, members contribute to their local communities by creating and repairing items for charitable causes, schools, or community organizations, positively impacting their surroundings.

WHAT WOULD A COMMUNITY SHED IN CROXLEY DO?

Sheds are democratic structures and therefore the main activities are determined by members. However, aside from the social content (tea and talk, coffee and chat), typically sheds are known to do the following:

- Manual crafts such as carpentry
- Repairs/fixing stuff
- Community maintenance
- Community projects
- Health & wellbeing events
- Gardening
- Teaching/learning new skills
- Participating in local events (fetes, shows, open gardens)

Given its peri-urban nature, a local shed might consider adding walking, rambling, cycling, bird watching, supporting local sites of scientific interest, water-based activities around the canals and rivers, to that list of possibilities.

Recommendation

That the Council

- Establish a Community Shed in Croxley Green
- Fund the Shed for an initial period of three years at a cost of £6,000 per year reviewable after each year
- Aims to make the Shed independent and self-financing by the end of three years.

Cllr Nigel Cole
February 2025