



Member's Referral – Cllr David Ellis

Library of things/ renew project

Birchwood Town Council has significant space available in the barns in the part which is not accessible to vehicles or larger objects. This facility, is owned by the community but has never really had any significant use to provide them with any benefit.

The current referral is to seek agreement from councillors IN PRINCIPLE to use the room for the establishment of either a Library of Things or a Renew Centre, or possibly both which would bring significant benefits to our residents as well as contributing to the climate emergency by helping to reduce the number of items which are purchased by the public. It can be especially helpful for those residents who have less disposable income and therefore cannot buy new items and hence plays a role in the alleviation of poverty.

This referral is "in principle" as there is significant background work required before setting up an operation of this type, so it is important to gain this approval first before doing any work. Any approval at this stage does not imply definitive approval.

A Library of Things is a community-run lending service where people can borrow practical items instead of buying them. It typically offers tools, household equipment, leisure gear and other occasional-use items. The aim is to save residents money, reduce waste, and strengthen local connections by making shared resources easy and affordable to access. This can bring huge advantages to the local community. Items can be purchased or can be donated by members of the public and repaired/serviced.

A Renew Project is a community space where unwanted household items are repaired, refurbished and resold at low cost instead of going to waste. Skilled staff and volunteers fix furniture, appliances and bikes, giving them a new life. The model cuts landfill, provides affordable goods for residents, and creates opportunities for training, volunteering and local connection.

One of the biggest obstacles to setting this type of operation up is the need for a suitable space and the availability of volunteers to run it.

Birchwood Youth & Community Centre has a unique opportunity to run something of this nature. The centre has almost 30 volunteers involved with the Repair Café which was the first of its type in Warrington, and has given rise to several others across the town as its service has become known. The volunteers we have, often want to do more things and both the proposed projects would provide such opportunities. The Library of Things will undoubtedly require the repair and servicing of equipment hired out, and the renew project would also provide these opportunities as well as potential to repair/modify furniture items, giving it many

of the same kind of activities that are available in Mens Sheds. Repair Café already carries out refurbishment of bikes.

If this type of project were run by Birchwood Repair Café, this is a part of the community centre, which is a fully registered charity with the Charity Commission, which opens up a lot of opportunities for seeking grants.

If councillors give the go-ahead in principle, this would allow the community centre to put together a strategy document. Once this work is completed, the centre would be in a position to put forward definitive proposals for approval and then access the level of funding which would be required to facilitate a successful operation