

## CHARLBURY COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

### **Charlbury Community Workshop – how it will carry out its purposes and provide demonstrable benefits**

The objects of the Charlbury Community Workshop (CCW) include in particular:

*To benefit the residents of Charlbury and the surrounding area, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together the said residents and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents.*

*In furtherance of these objects but not otherwise, the trustees shall have power:*

*To establish or secure the establishment of a community workshop equipped for a range of craft, making and leisure activities and to maintain or manage or co-operate with any statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such a workshop for activities promoted by the charity in furtherance of the above objects.*

The CCW is following the model for Men's Sheds and has adopted the form of objects used by other established Men's Sheds charities. However, a decision was made very early on to provide a facility for both men and women, and hence the choice of the name 'Community Workshop.'

The CCW is being set up to provide an affordable facility for repairing, making and training in a variety of practical crafts such as woodworking, needlecraft, electrical/electronic repairs, stained glass, and upholstery. The woodworking will cover small class project items like bird boxes and larger personal projects like chairs and other small pieces of furniture. The electrical/electronic repairs will be on small portable appliances like food mixers, toasters, and hairdryers.

The CCW was registered by the Charity Commission on 30 March 2023 as Registered Charity Number 1202551 in the form of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

There was a 9 strong working group, who in the space of under a year, got the project up and running. The members were a mix of working professionals and people who are retired. The working group are the initial trustees.

The CCW is housed in a new building on a site owned by The Thomas Gifford Trust, and at least initially there will be no charge for use of the site. The Working Group secured funding to build the workshop at a cost of just under £20,000, through a combination of grants and donations. A concrete base was laid on the site and the steel framed building was erected on 24 April 2023. Costs were kept low by having as much as possible of the construction work done without charge by members of the working group and other volunteers. The building is being fitted out and equipped so that the CCW can start operating by the end of May 2023. There is funding available for fit out and many items, including work benches and tools, have already been donated.

The workshop area is 9m by 5m, which will provide one work space for fabric/materials, with sewing machines and an overlocker, and another work space for woodworking and other

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crafts, with benches and various power tools (drills, saws, routers, lathes, milling machines) and hand tools (chisels, saws, files, hammers).

The CCW will be opened on prearranged mornings and afternoons, with supervision by coordinators experienced in the safe use of the equipment. All members/volunteers will have to complete a safety induction training for the area that they are going to work in (dusty area or/and clean area) before they can use the facilities.

Funding for ongoing operations will be from a mixture of annual membership fees (£25 a year), session fees (£1 a session), special fund-raising events, and the sale of items made at the CCW (such as bird boxes and hedgehog houses). There will be no staff costs as everyone will volunteer their time. The CCW has arranged its own insurance which will be in place by the opening on 20 May 2023.

Around 100 people have already signed up to the CCW mailing list and are prospective members of the organisation. A website has been set up:

<https://www.charlburycommunityworkshop.org.uk>

The benefits of the CCW will be numerous and varied. As the UK Men's Sheds Association writes<sup>1</sup>:

For a long time research has shown the negative impact of loneliness and isolation on a person's health and wellbeing. Recently we have seen more evidence come to light that shows loneliness and isolation can be as hazardous to our health as obesity and excessive smoking. Surveys from mental health charities are finding that millions of people report feeling lonely on a daily basis.

Men typically find it more difficult to build social connections than women, and unlike women of a similar age, less older men have networks of friends and rarely share personal concerns about health and personal worries. It is not the case for all men, but for some, when retirement comes, it can feel like personal identity and purpose is lost. Men's Sheds can change all of that.

Sheds are about meeting like-minded people and having someone to share your worries with. They are about having fun, sharing skills and knowledge with like-minded people and gaining a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. As a by-product of all of that they reduce isolation and feelings of loneliness, they allow men to deal with mental health challenges more easily and remain independent, they rebuild communities and in many cases, they save men's lives.

The CCW will be a place for both men and women to pursue practical interests at leisure, to develop and practise skills and to enjoy making and mending. It will foster company and camaraderie, social connections and friendship building as well as the sharing of skills and knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> On its website: <https://menssheds.org.uk/about/what-is-a-mens-shed/>