
Report To:	Planning, Leisure & Environment Group	Date:	11 November 2024
Contact Officer:	Paula Harrison		
Subject:	Library of Things Report		

1. Introduction

1.1 **A Library of Things:**

A library of things (LoT) is the facility to borrow 'things' from a central place. The things can be literally anything but is often tools, machines, equipment and items that people might find helpful to borrow. Established in the early 2000's Library of Things is an established brand operating multiple locations, particularly in London neighborhoods like Crystal Palace, Hackney, and Lambeth. [Library of Things | Borrow useful Things for your home, projects and adventures](#) Other UK towns with community-run LoTs include Edinburgh, Bristol, and Oxford. LoTs can offer multiple benefits to communities, starting with increased access to useful items without the need for ownership. Residents can borrow items like tools, kitchen appliances, or recreational equipment for one-off or infrequent use, which can reduce clutter and the financial burden on individual households.

1.2 The ability to borrow items promotes sustainability by reducing waste and the overall demand for manufactured goods. It provides access to useful items without the need to fund full purchase eg. Seasonal items such as birthday cake tins, Halloween costumes or gardening equipment This can be particularly helpful to people Additionally, a LoT can encourage skill development and be linked with a repair café type offer.

2. Setting Up

2.1 The initial setup of a LoT requires stock either through purchase or donation and a place to store/hire. Some traditional book libraries also offer a LoT. Some operate through a membership scheme and items may be borrowed for a small fee. The types of schemes can be tailored to what will work best locally.

2.2 The process of setting up a LoT can vary depending on the scale and type of items offered. A modest startup might expect initial expenses to establish a core set of high-demand items, shelving, signage, and possibly securing storage space. Recurring costs could involve item maintenance, insurance, and promotional materials. A digital inventory system would be useful for tracking borrowing. Volunteer involvement, donations or partnerships with local businesses could offset some of these expenses.

2.3 One of the primary issues to address is item maintenance. Ensuring fair access is another consideration—without a booking or waiting system, popular items may be hard for some users to access.

- 2.4 Liability and insurance are also essential factors; the LoT would need coverage in case of accidental injury or damage during the use of borrowed items, which would entail additional cost and administration. West Swindon Parish Council's existing insurer would not cover any loaning of tools, machines or equipment to a third party.

3. Considerations

Financial & Budgetary & Practical

- 3.1 The Parish Council's premises are not well located to operate a project that requires public pick up and drop off. The Parish Council existing insurance will not cover this type of activity. A consideration for the Council is to set up an entity with charitable status that would be better placed to be the lead organisation for this type of project.
- 3.2 The Parish Council has not set funding aside to create a new project, however the practicalities of the location, storage and administration would need resolving in the first instance. This type of project is a good illustration of the art of the possible when there is good public access, flexible staff resources and community space. It could also be a project supported to be run by another organisation.
- 3.3 If the Parish Council is minded to prepare a way forward for community projects, initiatives and access to grant funding, it would be useful to consider the creation of a Community Interest Company for the Parish. It is possible that a number of existing volunteers might be willing to be Directors. It would require the completion and approval of an application. Details required would include
1. Directors' personal details (full and former names, address, date of birth). The form appended can be used to gather this information.
 2. Company's proposed address (which will be on the public record).
 3. The information needed for your Community Interest Statement:
 - A clear picture of the community you intend to serve.
 - The activities you are going to do and how they will benefit the community
 - A declaration that you are not a political or campaigning organisation
 - Each person who will be a first director of the company must sign

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 That the Committee notes the value of the initiative and considers the best route to create a similar project in West Swindon including the option for an alternative lead organisation or the progression of a charitable entity.

Paula Harrison