

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL**Community Pantry****1. Background**

- 1.1 The Parish Council has been keen to support the cost of living for local residents by facilitating and widening access to food. Local churches have already been proactive in participating in food banks and warm spaces initiatives in support of local residents.

2. Detail**Working Party Observations:**

- 2.1 The Community Growing/Food Pantry Working Party met on 29 June 23 to review options for progressing access to surplus food. It was noted that access to community-led food supplies comes in many forms including
- a) Freshbrook Church – affordable food club
 - b) Food bank via vouchers
 - c) Community drop ins eg. Toothill Church Friday Club
 - d) Unsupervised access (none known locally)
 - e) Supervised access with visiting times posted (none known locally)
 - f) Organised food drops (none known locally)
- 2.2 The Working Party has considered options and would like to propose two trials – one in a staffed environment at the West Swindon Library and possibly one outdoors.
- 2.3 Since the meeting of the Working Party, enquiries to the Council's insurer (Zurich) have indicated that the insurer would expect to see specific guidelines/rules setting out the type of product being distributed, controls on food quality/expiration, and, how it would be managed.
- 2.4 Swindon Borough Council's Housing Services has recently been in contact with the Parish Council to indicate that it is interested in revisiting its Street Reps scheme in Toothill with a view to setting up a Surplus Food café session again. Previously the costs of the room hire were covered by the Parish Council.
- 2.5 Swindon Borough Council's Library Service has indicated that it would be open to discussion and approval of a food pantry within the library space subject to availability of space and appropriate guidelines being established. It would need to be self managing and similarly to the feedback from the Council's insurer, steps would need to be in place to ensure a degree of organization and quality control.

- 2.6 Consideration would need to be given to how food might be collected, community drop off points and who would be responsible for organizing and checking on the pantry.

3. Financial Implications:

- 3.1 The Parish Council has no budgets set aside for community projects but does have a budget of £1,000 for community celebrations which could be used for this purpose. Alternatively start-up funds could be taken from the Clean and Green fund. Material costs to build a pantry costs would be minimal. Staffing resources would need to be considered if Parish Council staff are responsible for collection and checks on pantries.

4. Recommendations:

- 4.1 Councillors note the information in the report and give feedback on the potential progression of access to surplus food/community pantries.
- 4.2 There is scope to progress the initiative with the West Swindon Library in the first instance as there is a reasonable likelihood that this could be set up for the Autumn.

Paula Harrison
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