

Points from Mr Steve Wells:

*Overall theme: the 're-wilding of Claygate'. Releasing the natural growth from within, without artificial outside influences/constraints.

And:

*The frenetic and a hugely encouraging community activity of the last 9 months has been an inspiring eg. of the exercise of citizen power.

Also:

*'Chaos Theory'...all started with a short FB post announcing the 'good news for Claygate' of an M and S superstore coming to the heart of our village. And look what then happened...

* At the packed meeting of the 21/07.23 it was clear: that the M and S development potentially posed a significant threat to our precious, yet fragile, village shops; that the views of residents must be heard. Yet:

* At that time the PC was effectively disabled by internal conflict and divisions and was not agile enough to take on the role of encouraging/channelling residents' views. So:

* The CVA took on this role, given its constitutional remit, etc.

* CVA Task Force set up to lead/co-ordinate a campaign (CCDB) to pressurise EBC to suspend negotiations with M and S and consult with Claygate residents. So that they were not taken for granted/told what's good for us. Noting:

* The focus of this campaign was not anti M and S, but pro consultation.

*A combination of mass letter writing, social media pressure, media posts and interviews, and most critically a petition signed by over 1.000 residents resulted in EBC deciding to withdraw from negotiations with M and S, and instead comprehensively to engage in consultation with Claygate residents. So:

*All credit to EBC for this about turn...which opened the door to more positive/creative participation by members of the Claygate community. A significant change of gear involving working in tandem with EBC. Partners in an exciting exercise.

*From CCDB we realised WE CAN...so re-named CTWF, and launched:

*At a packed, highly engaged meeting at HTC in November. Celebrated the success of the CCDB campaign and the opportunity presented for the village to come together to plan the future. In common purpose, for the benefit of all. And at this meeting:

*The joy felt at people coming together in this way was palpable. Sharing all that they valued/felt special about Claygate. It was a 'love in', and why not?! Real appreciation of the diversity of people, perspectives, and talent to be celebrated. a big street cafe vibe at the meeting.

*We invited people to get involved in 6 working groups. And 90 were prepared to put their money where their mouth was...amazing.

* The six groups were...etc. Overlaps, with the groups like Lego bricks to be clicked together in the final report. Immediately the groups got to work, generating lots of ideas...whilst:

* Simultaneously, work began on planning a comprehensive survey of attitudes and behaviour in Claygate designed to inform and stimulate idea/insight generation. A means to an end not an end in itself.... the production of high quality yet feasible ideas for developing Claygate.

*Those involved in the survey have done the most amazing job. Producing 1,600+ responses,

a much higher level than generally achieved in this sort of survey. The data generated is of the highest quality and this is already being integrated in the idea generation/evaluation process.

In my experience:

*This survey is of the highest quality, and that this is so down to volunteer Emma C... who has given her high expertise tirelessly. Coming forward initially as a volunteer in the Shops group her role has been critical to the process. Thank you so much Emma...applause...

*The emergent data is now being finessed prior to a report being forward to the working groups in a couple of weeks. As necessary this information will be augmented by data yielded from targeted focus groups.

*The result of this will be a draft overall report which will be presented to Claygate residents in early June. Reactions from residents will be then incorporated in a final report submitted to EBC, which will in turn form the basis of the Council's consultation with residents. We look forward to the full participation of Claygate's three Borough Councillors in this process.

*Overall, it's been the most amazing 9 months. Hugely refreshing and encouraging...as the village comes together, harnessing and celebrating diverse talents and perspective in pursuit of the common good. Not hamstrung by any irrelevant, but potentially toxic, party-political allegiances.

And crucially:

*This presents new opportunities for the CVA and PC to work together complementarily, (and complimentarily!) ... (last August I was asked to destroy this 'splinter group'...some splinter, some group!) With:

*The CPC now re-invigorated, ready to exercise its full remit, without the toxic distraction of party-political divisiveness. Able to protect and promote the physical and mental health of all residents.

And:

*The CVA can focus its energy and expertise on the social health of residents. Volunteers bring the community together...joyfully.

So that:

*Claygate is not just a special place...it's a happy place to live, work and bring up future generations....