



CALNE COMMUNITY  
AREA PARTNERSHIP

# Calne Community Area Hub Pilot Project

## 1<sup>st</sup> Year Report

1<sup>st</sup> November 2010 - 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011

### Issue 1

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## 1. Executive Summary

The concepts of 'localism' and 'Big Society' appear to be fundamental to the way in which Wiltshire Council is attempting to deliver local governance through its Community Area Boards. As the focus of decision-making shifts away from Whitehall to the local councils then voluntary organisations, such as Community Area Partnerships, can be utilised to deliver this governance.

If Wiltshire Council does assume a greater role in managing their areas, they will be looking for organisations, such as the Calne Community Area Partnership (CCAP), that has more local knowledge about the local community, its priorities and characteristics to inform the delivery of its services. The Community Hub could be central to the facilitation of ideas and schemes that are being discussed widely at the moment and are likely to evolve to include encouraging and rewarding volunteers engaging in community work/activity

CCAP provide an opportunity for the people who live and work in the community area to discuss issues of common concern and to influence the way in which these public services are provided locally.

This document reports on the 12 months project which tested the viability of creating a community hub for the Calne community area. It details the aims and objectives as well as reporting progress against these objectives.

## 2. Background

It was recognised that, in order to facilitate opportunities for the CCAP to engage with the Community more widely during the preparation of their review of the Community Area Plan, it was necessary to have a visible presence within the community. As a consequence, in January 2009, the CCAP approached the North Wiltshire District Council and was given access to and use of a vacant shop unit in the High Street, Calne on a temporary, month to month basis.

During 2009, opportunities had also been extended to other partner community groups and agencies, including Age UK (Wilts) and the Police, The arrangement has evolved to embrace the concept of a 'Community Hub' in which a wide range of services, groups and organisations run public surgeries, consultation events and community activities. The arrangement has continually been endorsed by Members of North Wiltshire District Council, the 'One Council' Implementation Executive (Scrutiny) and, since June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 the newly formed Wiltshire Council.

An 'issues sheet' and a draft business plan were given to the Area Board and the prospect of a pilot Community Hub in the Calne Community Area was discussed. It was decided that a formal Area Board Task Group should be formed to consider the concept of the Community Hub. The Community Area Manager and Councillor Christine Crisp were tasked with forming this group and reporting back to the Area Board on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

Feedback suggested that this had been a valuable arrangement and that there was a desire to pilot, over a longer period of time, a more structured approach to running a facility that moves towards the 'Community Hub' concept, which has proved successful in other areas of the country.

In November, 2010, Wiltshire Council agreed to provide the facility on a more formal and financially based arrangement which allows the CCAP to pilot an exhaustive test of the viability of a vibrant town hub for a continuous period of 12 months.

However, the CCAP is mindful of the fact that the location of the Hub is strategically and economically of significant importance to Wiltshire Council who have inherited ownership of the site following the establishment of Unitary Status in regard to the income that it could generate from a commercial tenant.

In February 2011, the Wiltshire Council Cabinet approved the implementation of the Campus and Operational Delivery Programme. The programme seeks to work with local communities to develop, facilitate and deliver community campus buildings across Wiltshire which seek to co-locate existing Council and partner services in one (or more) accessible location(s) in a community area. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to rationalise properties within the Council's operational estate in order to provide fit-for-purpose accommodation for services.

**(Note:-** The rationalisation of the operational estate can best be described by the development of community campus buildings. A campus is best defined as a building or collection of buildings, in a community area that provides all the services communities need in easy to access location/s. 'Services' is defined as all encompassing and includes services delivered by the Council, its partners, other public service providers and service provided by the voluntary and community sector).

This campus definition easily fits within the scope of the Community Hub project that was intended to develop an inclusive and welcoming venue where people of all ages and abilities can become positively engaged in the community and enjoy informal learning opportunities, overcome isolation, develop their community group, and access public services locally, eliminating the need to travel.

During the second half of the Hub pilot phase, the project aims were extended to build on the successes of the initial phase of the pilot project to provide data to the Calne Shadow Community Operations Board (SCOB) on the concept of community organisations using a multi-use community facility.

### **2.1. Supporting Documentation**

2.1.1. Calne Community Hub - Business Case – iss 2

2.1.2. Calne Community Hub – 6 Months Progress Report – iss 1

## **3. Management**

The project is led by a Community Hub Working Group, which is a sub-group of the CCAP Steering Committee.

### **3.1. CCAP Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee has been integral to the development of the Community Hub Project. However, the responsibility for the delivery of the Community Hub was transferred to the Community Hub Working Group, which was formally established by the Steering Committee meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010.

### **3.2. Hub Working Group**

This group has been established specifically for the delivery of the Calne Community Area Hub Project. The Community Hub is seen as fundamental to the work of the CCAP hence the development of a group specifically to support the implementation of the Community Hub. The Working Group has the remit to set-up and to deliver the Calne Community Hub in line with the Calne Community Area Hub Project Business Plan and in consultation with the CCAP.

#### 4. Aims and Objectives

The aims of the Hub pilot project were to test the viability both from a community and economic standpoint, of converting an empty retail outlet into a community building to facilitate a variety of activities for the people of Calne and its associated parishes.

These activities, as well as promoting the health, well being, intergenerational activity, will provide data on the social cohesion of the local community within a single facility to the Campus concept.

In addition, there are three underpinning requirements to these aims and objectives that were the (a) condition of the existing building; (b) the recruitment of sufficient volunteers; and (c) the financial viability of the project, from its start-up costs to the longer term running costs. Unless these requirements were secured, then there would be no possibility that the rest could be achieved.

#### 5. Progress against the Aims and Objectives

##### 5.1. Building

The building has not been designed as a community facility and is built on two floors with no passenger lift capability. As such, there is no disabled access to the upper floor area, although there is now a disabled toilet downstairs. Equally, there are no allocated public parking facilities around the building other than 3 disabled parking bays to the front of the building.

Before the Community Hub could commence community operations it needed to be refurbished. Fortunately, Wiltshire Council and CCAP jointly funded the necessary refurbishment of the property. The refurbishment included converting the toilet into a disabled facility, improving the rear exit and fire escape routes, creating an open plan area to the ground floor, improving the radio room on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, installing new heating systems and the installation of a new fire alarm system.

The recent closure (for refurbishment) of Trowbridge County Hall resulted in the acquisition of much needed furniture including a conference table and chairs that can accommodate about 15 people. This has proved to be invaluable in giving the room a very professional feel that helps to attract more usage.

##### 5.2. Volunteers

Perhaps the most significant achievement over the past months has been the establishment of a 'volunteer Hub Manager' and a growing voluntary support team to run the Community Hub and ensure that it is open Tuesday – Friday from 10am until 4pm each day. These volunteers are invaluable to the successful running of the Community Hub and often provide multiple tasking whether it be providing tuition or running the community activities.

Volunteers join community organisations for numerous reasons, as denoted by the stories from two of these volunteers, namely Tom and Cheryl, as to why they chose to help out. When Tom was asked why he decided to volunteer, he replied:-

*"I was looking for something to do, so I came in and said 'are you looking for a volunteer?' And I was taken on most readily and anything I've done in here has been largely based on my own experiences. I'm ex-Air Force, travelled round different places and learned a few things..."*

When Cheryl was asked the same question, she replied:-

*“I’ve been living in Calne since March 2011. I’d just come back from Antigua, where I lived for 17 years. I’ve been looking for work since I’ve been back. In my working life I’ve done most things really and did a lot of secretarial work. The problem with me is that I left school when I was 15 and I’ve got no formal qualifications. I left school when you were able to start at the bottom and work your way up.*

*The reason I’m here is because I was going backwards and forwards to Chippenham Job Centre and they try and encourage you to do different things like voluntary work... I thought ‘well, if I’m doing voluntary work, I don’t really want to be travelling to Devizes or anywhere else. If I can, I’d rather find voluntary work here.’ So, talking to Tom and introducing myself, I said to him, ‘do you have any idea of any voluntary work I could do in the area?’ and he looked over his shoulder at JR (Hub Manager) and said, ‘can you fit one more in?’ and he said, ‘yeah, I think so!’ and I’ve been here ever since”.*

### 5.3. Financial Viability

Obtaining sufficient funding was always going to be one of the biggest challenges to the sustainability of the Hub project and so it proved. Even though a funding consultant had been engaged to direct this funding operation, the results can only be described as moderately successful. One of the reasons for this moderate success was that obtaining grants to cover ‘running costs’ proved to be extremely difficult as most grant providers are reluctant to fund this area.

Primary funding for the Community Hub is provided by Wiltshire Council in the form of a 100% rent and rate reduction whilst supplementary funding is provided by the CCAP through its Area Board funding allocation to cover the Hub’s running costs.

The Hub’s running costs for the pilot phase are broken down as follows:-

- Electric - £1,980
- Phone / Broadband - £702
- Water rates - £110

As beneficial as this financial assistance was, there was still a funding shortfall. The shortfall concerned the lack of equipment, (i.e., computers, software, tables and chairs etc) that would be required for the Community Hub to be used as a community facility.

In order to address this shortfall, the Hub WG identified two different strands that needed to be progressed. The first was to apply for community grants and the second was to seek sponsorship. There was an added complication in that the terms of the lease agreement forbid the possibility of charging for using the Hub, instead donations had to be asked for.

#### 5.3.1. Community Grants

A total of 62 funding bodies were identified as being potentially applicable for the Hub. Most of these were speculative, but two were identified as being major possibilities. These were the Big Lottery, which would provide total funding for 5 years and the Tudor Trust which would provide total funding for 3 years. Unfortunately the initial concerns about the economic climate and its effect on funding providers proved correct as both these applications failed at the first hurdle. However, there have been some grant successes:-

- £1000 was granted from the Community Foundation (for Wiltshire and Swindon) which was used to offset the contribution required from CCAP.
- £1793 was granted by the Co-op Group that was used to purchase training equipment (software, projector + screen + stand, display boards etc)
- £300 was granted by Haine & Smith that was used to purchase children’s equipment for use by some of the voluntary groups.

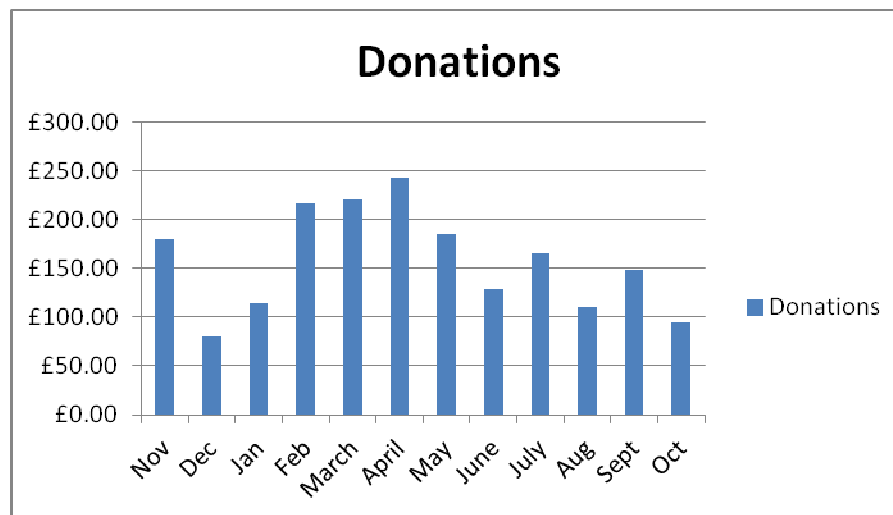
**5.3.2. Sponsorship**

What was very much more successful was the amount of sponsorship that was received. To date, £5,759 has been received in the form of sponsorship from both national and local companies. The sponsorship included the pro-bono work by a local solicitors during the negotiations on the Hub lease; free design and printing of the Hub leaflet and posters and finally, the provision of 4 laptops, 2 notebooks, 2 mobile phones, 1 computer hard drive and 3 PS3 games from Samsung.

**5.3.3. Donations**

Every community group that used the Community Hub was asked if they would like to give a donation. These donation amounts have fluctuated over the course of the year to produce a final figure of £1887 (see Table 1). This money is used to supplement the Community hub’s running costs.

**Table 1 - Donations received in the Hub**



**5.4. Community Engagement**

Consultations within the community area have been on-going since 2003 with the most recent one taking the form of a Community Plan update in 2010. These identified the following issues which, through the Community Hub, are in the process of being addressed:-

**5.4.1. Lack of learning venues and opportunities to raise basic skills of local residents**

It was a prime function that the Community Hub would provide an easily accessible central location where members of the public could enquire and engage in activities that would improve skills. In order to be able to provide this learning environment, over the past 12 months, a considerable effort has been directed at bringing the technical aspects of the Community Hub up to modern standards.

The Community Hub has been equipped with a phone line, broadband and free Wi-Fi is available on both floors of the building. There are two desktop computers one by the front entrance for the volunteers to use and one at the Community Hub Manager's desk, as well as a printer / scanner / fax machine and as mentioned earlier. In addition, there are 6 laptop computers available for general use as well as for training purposes. To support any training provision, there is a projector, projector screen and a number of flip-charts available.

Once this infrastructure was in place, it was necessary to identify potential training providers. This is being addressed on 2 levels:-

**Structured**

The first is by a structured 'class room' type approach. Discussions are ongoing with training providers such as the Wessex Community Action (WCA) and the Workers Education Authority (WEA) to provide adult education training in the Hub. Both the WCA and WEA fully fund this training to those adults over 18 years old and in receipt of benefits. Equally, discussions are on-going with Westlea Housing Association about providing this training for their residents.

As a result of these discussions, the Hub WG took the decision to open this training avenue to the wider community area. The Hub WG is now being represented at a meeting of local school representatives to provide the adult training syllabus which was originally provided at Calne College prior to its closure. It is intended that the Hub will be considered as a venue for certain courses.

To date, there has been an initial BBC 1<sup>st</sup> Click course run by a qualified tutor that attracted 14 participants, a 'Digital Photography' course and a 'Self Esteem' workshop run on this more structured approach

**Informal**

The second is by an informal approach that is delivered for free by two of the Hub's volunteers, Tom and Cheryl. People can learn at their own pace and receive guidance tailored to their individual needs. Whether it's help with turning their machine on, using the mouse and keyboard, setting up an email address or surfing the web, the volunteers are there to give them a guiding hand.

Again referring to Tom, when asked how he helped people, his response was:-



*"I started with BBC First Click, teaching people how to use computers... We give them a manual and they can take the manual away with them and the manual covers everything... it takes you through it step by step.*

*You can log on to this BBC First Click on your own computer at home and you can do exactly the same as what's in the manual, because the manual is presented as an e-book".*

Sometimes, Tom even found it necessary to extend this service by providing house visits. Again, in the words of Tom:-

*"They're more comfortable in their own places and they're more relaxed. You can show them on their own machine, which is basically what they want. Some have desktops, some have laptops and you can start them off doing the basic things, and then leave them to develop. If they need any more instructions, we always give them a manual anyway because they're free from the BBC.*

*We have a customer who comes in and Cheryl's been showing him how to get into Google Maps, because he's interested in looking at street views of his house and his relatives' houses "*

As part of the Hub's plan to increase the scope of this training, contact was made with Ian Baker, Wiltshire Council's Digital Inclusion Programme Manager, in reference to the 'Digital Unite' programme. Part of this programme is to "ensure that everyone has the opportunity to become digitally literate and confident users of technology".

Ian visited the Community Hub where the work that was on-going was explained to him. In response, Ian stated that *"I was very impressed with the range of activities that you are providing and the plans for the future; I look forward to being able to work with you as the Council's Digital Inclusion programme begins to get underway"*. Subsequently, Ian and his colleague, Jenny Wilcockson, who is the Digital Literacy Coordinator have revisited the Community Hub and have agreed to write a Calne Community Hub case study, which will be published on [www.wiltshireonline.org](http://www.wiltshireonline.org).

#### **5.4.2. Provision of activities for young people and children**

A number of meetings have taken place with Barnardos about providing training activities for both young mums and children. A workshop was held to determine which activities/training was required, and an attempt was made to prioritise them. This dialogue, unfortunately, is still on-going and will now form part of the wider Calne area training provision.

#### **5.4.3. Lack of support for the unemployed**

The Hub has now been appointed as a Work Club by the Chippenham branch of Job Centre Plus. This event is run every Thursday afternoon and provides a place to meet, exchange skills, share experiences and generally get support. In addition to friendly volunteers being in attendance, laptops with internet access are provided as well as local newspapers. Partnership arrangements are in place with the Calne branch of CAB to provide any 'confidential' type advice.

Tom and Cheryl, two of the Hub's volunteers, run this event and, although the numbers coming through the door haven't been massive, the enthusiasm

shown by Tom and Cheryl has been incredible. This is aptly demonstrated by Tom's own words:-

*"We got involved in running a Job Club. The only experience I had of job clubs was when I was searching for a job myself. People come in and say 'I'm looking for a job' and we say, 'do you have any letters, any CVs? Let's have a look at them' and we take it from there. If they have a letter and a CV, we try and improve on it, you know make them focus, get them to target what they're actually aiming for... We've had a couple of people who have got jobs after coming here and we suspect that some others have also had jobs, but they haven't come back and reported to us"*

#### 5.4.4. **Lack of community interaction**

The Hub is used for many different community events and activities. For example, local groups and service providers use it regularly to hold meetings and advice surgeries. These include surgeries for the Police, Town and Wiltshire councillors and the Council Dog Warden. In addition, the Calne Community Transport group are now based in the Community Hub and other organisations such as the Keyring charity, Newlife, Connexions and the Richmond Fellowship regularly use the Community Hub as a meeting point.

The ground floor is packed full of information on local events and services and is a great resource for anyone who wants to find out more about local issues and activities. If the volunteers can't answer the specific question relating to a local activity, then they point them towards the direction of the Information Centre at Bank House.

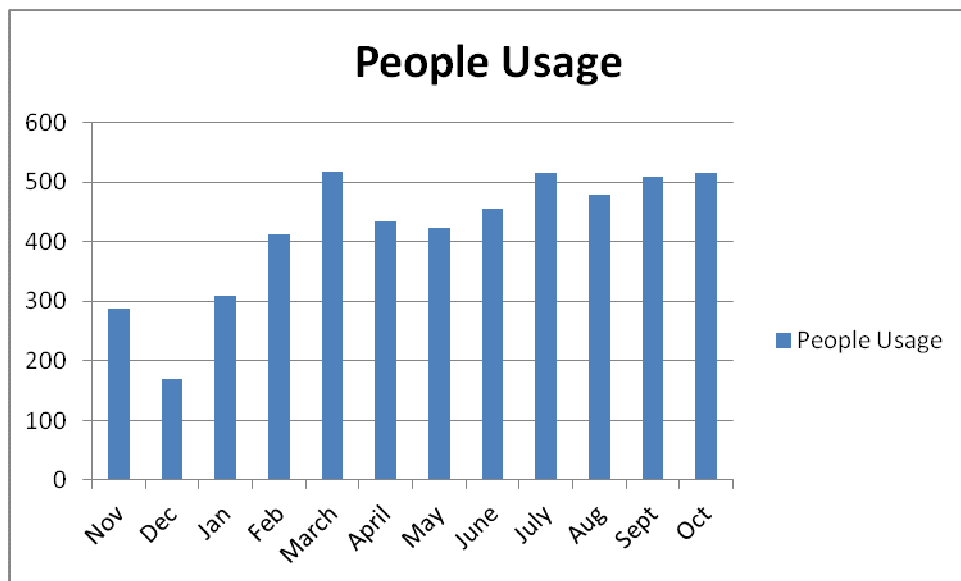
The Hub is used to both promote and signpost local people to current issues. This is achieved, in the first instance, by poster campaigns and as venue for meetings. Each of the CCAP Theme Groups has a large notice board to display their specific issues with contact details. In addition, the Hub provides a permanent display area for Wiltshire Council's Calne Area Board and the Community Area Manager holds a weekly surgery at the hub to meet local people face to face, discuss local issues, potential community projects and offer funding advice.

#### 5.5. **Monitoring the Community Engagement**

The numbers of people and organisations coming into the Community Hub has been recorded since the start of the pilot phase, i.e. November 2010. Analysis of this data shows that the Hub has proved a success with members of the public visiting for everything from a chat to offer opinions for the provision of local services and to seek help on community related issues.

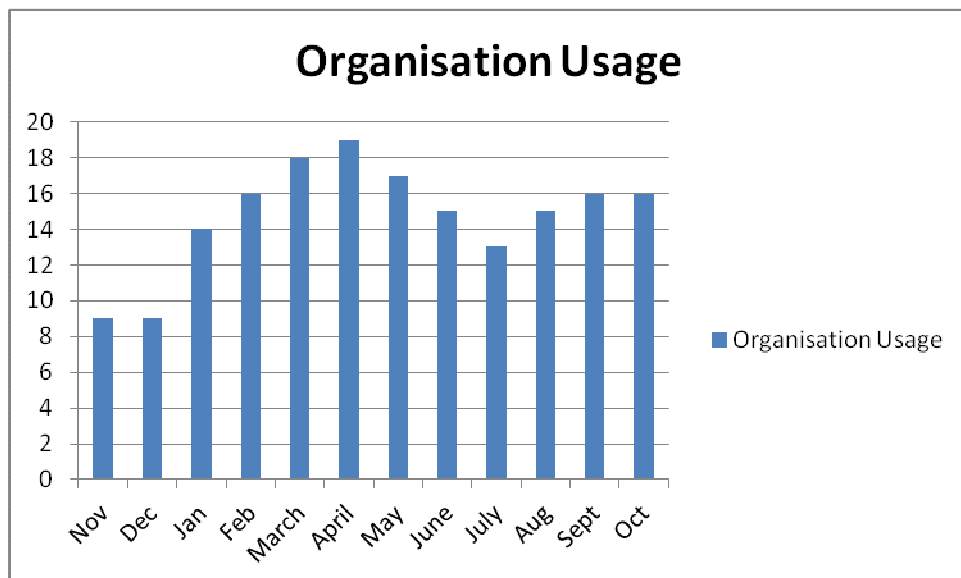
Whilst the 'people' numbers, in the strictest sense, are relatively low when compared with the number of residents in the Calne community area, they do show a steady upward trend albeit with a couple of dips for the Christmas shut-down (December) and the period when scaffolding was erected around the Hub entrance (April), (see Table 2). The graph for the organisation (see Table 3) also shows a steady increase with dips corresponding to the Christmas and summer breaks.

**Table 2 - Numbers of People using the Hub**



This graph should also be viewed alongside the following graph showing the usage of the community organisations, (see Table 3).

**Table 3 - Number of Organisations using the Hub**



## 6. Linkage to the Calne Campus

In May 2011, the Calne Community Area Campus Project was launched by the Calne Area Board. A working group was formed made up of local volunteers called Calne Campus Working Group (CCWG). Their purpose was to:

‘To consult the Calne Community Area about Wiltshire Council’s new way of delivering community services through the use of campuses’.

From the onset of this project, it was recognised that the Community Hub could provide very useful community data to this campus model. As has already been demonstrated in this document, the Community Hub has already started to show that a single venue can attract community groups, provide a place for learning and provide an access point for local services.

The Community Hub is also used as a 'shop window' for campus activities providing a venue to meet with the campus WG, a display board to present information and as a post box for the public consultation exercises.

Interestingly, the results of first phase of the Calne community campus consultation that was run during August 2011 demonstrated this linkage. From a total of 897 survey responses that were received, 43% wanted access to meeting rooms, 51% wanted a 'Learning & skills centre' and 52% wanted access to the internet (within a campus). All are currently available from within the Community hub.

## **7. Summary**

The key objective of the Community Hub project has been to develop an inclusive and welcoming venue, where local people from all ages and abilities can become positively engaged in their community. Where they can also enjoy informal learning opportunities, overcome isolation, develop their community group and access public services locally.

The Hub has proved an overwhelming success with members of the public visiting for everything from a chat to offer opinions for the provision of local services and to seek help on community related issues.

Although the Community Hub project is still 'work in progress', there are clear indications that the project has fulfilled its initial aims and objectives of testing the viability of turning an empty shop into a multi-use community hub. As there are also strong linkages to the Calne campus project, the experiences of the Community Hub can be used to help develop the final Calne campus design.

In terms of who benefits from the Hub's presence, primarily, the recipients are those excluded residents who require further education and those who are unemployed and require local support. By partnering with 'training provider' organisations, the specific training requirements of the widest band of Calne residents can be matched with the syllabuses provided by the training providers. These organisations include the local schools as well as organisations such as Wessex Community Action, the Workers Education Authority and Westlea Housing.

The Community Hub also benefits those who seek employment by providing a venue where support can be provided in the form of 'prepare for work' training, where laptops can be provided to search the Internet for vacancies, and specific advice can be given by our CAB partners.

Lastly, the Hub benefits every resident in the community area by providing a venue for meetings and further training. The Hub also allows greater community engagement through its use by organisations such as the police and councillors.

This demonstrates that the key objective is being achieved but there is more work to do.

### **7.1. Testimonials**

*“Having the Community Hub as a base for the Lantern Parade worked well, somewhere warm and friendly to see Santa Claus.”*

*“The Hub is a fantastic centre point for activities in Calne - to meet people and to spread the word about forthcoming events etc.”*

*“The Hub is a brilliant idea for Calne - for meeting people and taking part in activities.”*

*“What a lucky find to walk in here, we have recently moved to the area and it is such a quick way to find out about the community and feel at home. A great way to find new groups.”*

*“I have found the Police surgery good in getting in touch with the ‘Bobby Van’ and for the Health Day.”*

*“Fantastic resource, very welcoming, a much needed place for the people of Calne.”*

*“Great facility for community events. Donation policy is correct policy as it keeps costs reasonable.”*