

Community Base participant group meeting 6th July 2010

The meeting was attended by Colin Holden (East Sussex Credit Union), Ann (East Sussex Credit Union), Rob (SCIP), Colin Chalmers (Community Base director) and Annette (Community Base building manager)

1 Director's annual meetings with groups

Colin C reported that he had met every group at Community Base individually over the last couple of weeks, as he did once a year, and found the meetings very informative and useful. He was going through building maintenance issues raised in the meetings with Annette and would email the Community Base email group soon about some of the general building maintenance issues that had come up.

2 Sharing knowledge and skills through the Community Base website

Colin C said he would be putting a page up on the Community Base website where people in the building could share knowledge and skills with others in the building for free.

3 Community Base's identity, partnership working, commercial and council services

Colin C said that Community Base's non-commercial, non-governmental identity was central to what Community Base is and was highly valued by groups in the building. He asked what people thought of the grey areas around this question of commercial activity and providing services on behalf of local government.

Colin H said the world was changing, government funding was being cut massively, there was a move to intelligent commissioning and voluntary sector groups would be expected to be more commercial in future. He said the issue of selling bus tickets had arisen from ESCU being able to supply these to ESCU's growing team of volunteers.

Ann thought the definition of Community Base's identity needed to be broadened rather than just refined.

Colin C said the current position was that groups at Community Base should consult with him if they were planning to carry out a new activity that might compromise Community Base's reputation as a non-commercial, non-governmental building so the Community Base board could make a decision. This had happened recently over the question of police placements at Community Base and a solution had been found.

Rob said that defining commercial activity was not easy but there should be a clear process for how decisions were made. SCIP sold computers and associated products as a core part of its work of providing IT support to community and voluntary groups.

Colin H said ESCU was looking at providing a variety of commissioned services from Community Base and needed guidelines on these from Community Base.

Rob agreed Community Base's identity was important but difficult to pin down and wanted clarification about the principles for deciding things and what the criteria and process would be rather than a legalistic definition of what commercial meant.

Colin C agreed that it was difficult to define what commercial or government activity was as it could be a matter of degree or involve something no one had considered yet, but it was nevertheless central to Community Base's identity that the building was not a commercial or government one and it was important to keep this identity. Colin C said he would take the request for greater clarity over these matters to the next board meeting.