

## The BIG Wish....A 'Proper' Community Centre Hub – Whittlesey.

For much longer than even I can remember!!!! ....dozens of meetings and even more individuals have made it known for a 'proper community centre or hub'.

I am informed that Whittlesey is one of the very few towns in the country **not** to have one.



Fast forward, last year again, I was approached at various meeting(s) on the subject.

In November attended a meeting hosted by 'SEEE (Social Enterprise East of England), some 15 or so local community groups also attended, and the top priority was for a **Community Centre/Hub**.

It was agreed, that even when the new Manor Centre is re-built, it will not meet the needs of many of the groups (why I don't know?).

At that meeting I informed the group that I would arrange a meeting with Professor Brian Ford from Eastrea, to get firsthand knowledge of his project (I was and am familiar as was on the periphery during the whole process) – however the aim was to get permission to use all the documentation, paperwork/financing/planning for the project - Eastrea Village Centre.

In November myself and local Councillor Barry Wainwright made our visit to Prof Ford.

We discussed the project and he agreed to allow us all the paperwork and plans.

The aim of this exercise was to have a ready-made **'Template'** on which to work on.

It is an extremely large file and takes many days to read.

Fast forward to Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Match, when the 'final' meeting of SEEE was taking place at Whittlesey Library, I was invited to return at the very last moment.

I am trying to keep this as short as possible – in essence....

1/ Primarily there needs to be vacant land on which to build on.

That land ideally has services readily available – Gas/Electric/Water and Sewage.  
Ideally Parking and Access.

2/ A **'person'** who has the drive, ambition, resources and time to lead a core group of people, such as Prof Ford had to support him – an architect, an accountant, a planner, a project manager or two, a fundraiser or two and so on.

3/ Using the Eastrea Village Centre as an example (the success and failures along the process) any new project in my research will take between **2 to 4 years**, the estimated costs, at today's pricing around **£4 Million**.

I have approached a number of prominent people in our area, asking them whether they would be prepared to be the lead on such a project – **No one has taken this up** .

So where does that leave us now – I presented the above to the SEEE meeting and was informed that **Cllr Haq Nawaz has as good as promised a 'Community Centre' at the Station Road Recreation Ground.** (RG Note – I have been asked to remove this) If that happens I am and will be very pleased – however that land has a covenant on in, and that in itself would present a very major problem.

I did approach Fenland District Council and unofficially ask whether land at the Manor Centre (to be demolished and used as car parking) could be used and was told no. However there is other land at the Manor that maybe suitable – that said again the ownership of the land would require a lot of negotiation and legalities.

So in a nutshell – I could have made this hours of reading but hope I've condensed it pointing out 'some' of the challenges.

As a footnote – at the SEEE meeting **The Scaldgate Club** was mentioned – as Cambs CC are putting it on the open market. The building needs 'a lot' of work done to it.....

(I am unsure of structurally how sound it is), limited space inside and limited parking, and again would need planning permission and funding – good luck.

I am more than happy to discuss this with anyone and have an open and frank meeting if needed. I would **'love'** a 'proper community centre/hub' but the challenges at present are somewhat vast – however who knows – maybe SEEE will come to Whittlesey's rescue.....

The meeting on Thursday was the final one – as they need to raise £10,000 to carry on?

