

# Melbourn Hub Business Plan - presentation to Parish Council 26th June 2017.

## Executive summary

### ***Purpose and Aims***

'A place for the community run by the community'

The Melbourn Hub is a community-driven enterprise which exists for the residents of Melbourn. It provides a range of community facilities including a library access point. Its purpose is underpinned by the founding principle of the Charity Governance Code:

*"To deliver with integrity a vibrant, open, cost effective and trustworthy service for the residents of Melbourn."*

*It has 3 Strategic Aims:*

*Aim one* - Enhance and protect the Hub's reputation

*Aim two* - Provide consistent and appropriate community services

*Aim three* - Value and support our staff and volunteers

These aims will be delivered against effective actions under these key areas which our business plan addresses;

*People*

*Finance*

*Governance*

*Operations*

*Customer*

### ***Structure, operational context and financial position***

The Hub is a company Ltd by Guarantee and also has charitable status. The Hub Management Group has 8 Directors, 5 of which are also Parish Councillors.

The Hub offers a range of local services to the community including; a Cafe, a Library Access Point for Cambridge County Council Library Services, Meeting Rooms and Event Space as well as outreach services such as the Citizen's Advice Bureau and Relate. It serves a wide range of customers from the local and surrounding area such as residents and local resident groups who use it as a community resource, business customers for 'off-site' meetings, community groups and service providers, and passers-by such as tradesmen and people using the church of the local leisure centre.

The Management Group inherited a difficult cash position where monthly cash out flows exceeded the level required to break even. To add to the challenge the Hub will shortly trigger the threshold where VAT registration is mandatory. Limited information was available on historical sales to aid the planning process. The Management Group have therefore taken a conservative approach to forecasting the first 18 months but are confident the cash situation can be improved and returned to break even in the next financial year. There are a number of areas of opportunity which could improve profitability further beyond this level. Given the lack of history and the VAT challenges these opportunities are not factored into the forecast. The Management Group includes a Chartered Accountant non-parish Council Director as well as benefiting from time volunteered by Tax Assist.

All of the recently appointed management group are local to Melbourn as are employees and volunteers. There is nothing similar in the nearby vicinity and The Hub's closest peer is considered to be the Gamlingay Eco Hub which is a well established community 'hub'.

As a new Management Group the initial 3 months have been spent revisiting some key and critical operational matters that were left unresolved and/or created by the previous Management Group's departure.

These have included addressing and improving the menu, the look and feel of the 'customer experience', where supplies are sourced from, staff training and also focussing on the financial position in particular relation to the VAT threshold and making the most of assets where profit margins are high. This is in addition to making sure the proper governance is in place to run the Hub effectively and provide staff and volunteers with a safe, happy and stimulating working environment. There is still some work to do, but the direction of travel is very positive and some success have already been achieved such as a new menu.

### ***Marketing, promotion and sales***

The Hub's USP is '**provided for the community by the community**' as the Hub is a community funded initiative, run by the community.

Marketing in the first 3 months has taken the form of setting up a brand new website, creating new photography, a new Facebook Page and making the most of no-cost 'channels' such as the Melbourn Magazine and the Royston Crow. Launching a new menu that brings all of these changes together has been the pinnacle of some of this work. Alongside focused marketing events which have taken place such as the Cream Tea Day. More of these are planned for the summer and autumn months, to attract particular demographic groups, such lunch clubs and tea parties, children & families, businesses and seasonal events such as Halloween etc.

Marketing & Communication and Business Improvement experience has been enabled by 2 non-parish council Directors who are specialists in these fields of work.

The effective running of the Hub in terms of Governance and day-to-day operational matters relies heavily on the volunteer Directors. Therefore, a decision was taken early on to effectively document processes and procedures to enable continuity of the Hub should a Director have to resign. This includes a standardised agenda, skills audit, key areas of responsibility and key and password logs.

The Hub relies heavily on volunteers and recruiting and retaining volunteers will be an ongoing priority as well as looking after the existing and dedicated small team of staff.

### ***Forward look***

Over the next 18 months, the aim is to promote a better more cost-effective menu, now in place, and revisit the meeting rooms rates and costs and continue to make cost savings where possible - which will aid moving towards the Hub being liable for VAT and start to document and forecast sales more rigidly. The outlook is positive, with more footfall already being monitored, better till and cashing-up procedures and supplier contacts which have improved performance and operational effectiveness and further training for staff and volunteers - without whom the running of the Hub would not be possible.