

Interview conducted on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018 by Marion Webber with Phillip Champness, who was Chair of the Steering Committee which achieved the transition from the Community House Church-run centre to Community House Eton Road (CHER), Charity-run community centre and the first Chair of CHER for some years.

**0 – 1:25 mins**

Phillip describes his role now as a Trustee and his former contribution as past Chair. He outlines the Trustees' role of providing oversight, governance and strategic direction and says the main change that has been made is from the committee involving themselves in day to day management to allowing a manager and volunteers to do much more.

*“And I have been a key player in that change”.*

**1:25 – 6:24 mins**

Phillip speaks of his meeting with Brian in 1968 in Africa where they were both teaching and of Brian describing Community House to him. When he settled back in Cardiff in 1995 he re-connected with Brian.

He speaks of his background and career biography

Phillip describes his career change to self-employed facilitator and consultant. Helping with the transition from church to charity was helpful to both himself and to the church. He describes parallels in his experience.

**6:24 – 9:00 mins**

Establishing the Charity and transitioning to CHER: challenges and resolution.

**9:00 – 10:31 mins**

Phillip's perception of the Church's approach to the Charity: *“a duality of functions”* – his opinion: *“I actually think the Church should join the Charity”.*

**10:31 – 11:43 mins**

*“One of the things that I learned working in housing and for the regulatory body (the housing corporation also did funding) was that if you were a housing association you had to be truly independent of all other bodies. So that even if you were started by a church or by a building society or whatever - however you were started, you had to be completely independent of that organisation. And I believe that's also true of charities. A charity should be an independent, free-standing*

*body able to make up its mind about what it does and I am still sometimes frustrated by the absence of independence*". The Church has a perspective which, while being supportive of CHER, is different.

**11:43 – 12:35 mins**

Philip goes on to speak about the difficulties of these different approaches e.g. one person, a member of the Church with "*fantastic strengths..... phenomenally good at administrative systems*". "*I'm bored by systems by and large. I am much more interested in policy, strategy and how the future works out.*"

**12:35 – 13:10 mins**

Phillip expresses his sadness that Yvonne is leaving after seven years of doing a fantastic job.

**13:10 - 15:00 mins**

MW asks about the strengths of Community House. "*By and large Community House has done really well in creating a warm, accepting space*". He feels many of the Muslim users of the building welcome the fact that there is a faith element to the centre.

**15:00 – 16:10 mins**

Phillip speaks of other activities which the church has initiated and particularly talks about the Coffee and Laughs women's group and is complementary of Marilyn Priday and the achievements of the group. "*It is a responsive organisation.*"

**16:10 – 17:25 mins**

Phillips describes his initial doubts about the youth work which goes on and acknowledges its importance: "...[it]enables them to have a better life". Other strengths include working with the community, being generous with food, Flexibility and warm, generous ways of contributing to the local community e.g. the carnival (Maindee Festival").

**17:25 – 21:50 mins**

Mr. Champness gives a political background to funding shrinkage for urban regeneration. He speaks about inner-city area riots. He talks of many projects to help deprived areas over the decades. But in the last ten years, he says "*...there's been a steadily diminution [of funding]*". "*Local Authority and Government engagement has steadily declined over my life-time.*"

**21:15 – 25:15 mins**

Challenges: Phillip describes how Community House in the past received substantial funding for refurbishment which now needs to be repeated and one of his jobs is to ensure the building as a “*new lease of life*”. He lists all the elements needed going forward. We need to get more Trustees “...*the core of people working hard is growing smaller*”.

**25:15 – 28:20 mins**

Current strengths: more flexible and innovative with building use, more dynamic with a willingness to take on more projects. He speaks appreciatively of Yvonne and acknowledges the quality needed in the new manager. CHER needs 4 or 5 new board members who understand organisations like this as well as major work in improving the building. He details the various improvements which could be made to the building and garden. He describes a current bid being made for design and development.

**28:20 finish**