

**Report To:** Partnerships Review Committee  
**Lead Officer:** Council Representative on Outside Body

28 March 2017

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## Emmaus Cambridge (“Outside Body”)

### Purpose

1. To update Members about the Outside Body’s activities since the previous meeting of the Partnerships Review Committee.

### Executive Summary

2. Emmaus in Landbeach is continuing to be the home for about 34 formerly homeless people, offering communal living and voluntary work in our social enterprise, which is based around recycling of furniture, clothes and bric-a-brac. Emmaus Cambridge is one of 29 UK communities providing 765 beds, belonging to the federation of Emmaus UK.
3. The Emmaus movement has been lobbying the government hard to highlight the need for their support, if only through enhanced Housing Benefit, for communities like ours that offer supported living conditions and training. The change to HB has been postponed twice but is still threatened. This would reduce the support for supported housing to the Local Housing Allowance level.
4. In addition we have become aware of the threat to the whole model of easing formerly homeless people back into society and productive work. Companions volunteer to work in the community in which they live. In return they receive a home, and again begin to feel a part of something bigger, while they are often recovering from drug addiction and the negative influences that sent them onto the street in the first place.  
In the future if Universal Credit and the general principles of Welfare Reform were introduced, anyone receiving (housing) benefit would be expected to be available for work. This would mean that our Companions would no longer be able to volunteer for up to 37.5 hours a week in the community: they would be expected to be available for outside work from the start.
5. Without any support from the state through benefits the viability of all Emmaus communities in the UK would be called into question.
6. Our plans for an extra 10 rooms are still likely to go ahead but uncertainties over future government policy makes planning very difficult to do so with any sense of confidence. We just have to have faith that we are doing the right thing and will find a way to support the Companions in the future come what may.
7. Community operation continues with its perennial stresses. The social enterprise relies on paid staff and a very fragile workforce of Companions, and juggling the tasks to provide a stimulating work environment for everyone whilst not pushing people too far out of their comfort zone is always a challenge. Nevertheless the community and

its social enterprise turned over just over a million pounds last year for the first time.

8. Emmaus Cambridge is fully committed to continuing to work in partnership with SCDC to alleviate homelessness and poverty in Cambridgeshire. We also provide furniture at a very reduced price to people (referred from agencies) who could not otherwise afford it.

**Report Author:** Councillor Hazel Smith - Milton Ward