

Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff, his worshipful Mayor of Chelmsford, deputy Mayor, Mrs Ford, ladies and gentlemen.

As a Community we came to live in Melbourne from New Hall 16 years ago and were looking for a place to start up some activities on the estate – a place which would draw people together, build community, give people a sense of their value, - and somewhere where they could feel safe.

Schools and churches were ruled out very quickly – people often had negative experiences of failure or inadequacy related to both. We actually tried to rent a shop on the Melbourne parade but were turned down by Chelmer Housing as they thought we would attract too many undesirables into the area. Ironically, the shop we bid for quickly became a betting shop!!

And then we met Steve Hugh of the scouts who is sadly not able to be here today. He showed us the hut and welcomed us with open arms and he caught our vision of the hut as a safe place for the community as well as the home for the 8th Chelmsford scouts.

We soon became the main users of the hut and dozens of people every week have found a home here on this site over the last 16 years with us.

A couple of stories – we were visited by Nick Hurd MP who was responsible for the Big Society back in the day and he spoke to many of our friends here. Some of their comments stick with us

When everything in your life is going pear shaped you come here and It's sanity – bloody sanity!!

Another

You can just feel the love here – it hits you as you walk in --- totally accepting and undemanding love for everyone.

In addition to being scout HQ that's what the old hut became for local people and our dream was to give them not only the essence but also the structure. And so our part in the work began to enable a real partnership between the scouts and the local community – allowing the scouts to rebuild their old hut as their own home but also create a state of the art community facility wherein the local people aren't just hirers but feel that this is their home too --- and that is what we hope we have today.

So many thank yous to everyone who caught the vision and got us to where we are today.

Of course we must all thank Pauline Mc Aloone who has made all the arrangements for today so meticulously ---- thank you Pauline

And thank you too to our young helpers who have served us so well this afternoon.

And moving on to those of you who have enabled this project to come into being. As we have heard the scouts began fundraising for this project 10 years ago. We added our efforts to theirs about 3 years ago – and began to persuade people that this wonderful building could be a real community facility for the people of Melbourne as well as a scout hall. so a big thank you to all of you who gave the money which was of course the first basic essential – some huge anonymous donations – we know those donors are here today. And many many smaller ones. Your donations for a real community facility contributed over 75% of the funds needed. And then the council bought into the dream and were as supportive helpful and flexible as they could be. Very special thanks to Mike Holoway here who quickly became our friend and worked tirelessly to secure the remaining funds from local and county coffers to create this community facility. Also special thanks to those who designed, donated and equipped a specialist kitchen to carry on the cookery

classes we have been running in the local community which are considered to be a flagship project in this area.

And then there were our friends who gave so tirelessly of their time and expertise to make this real. Their advice on VAT – on legal matters and the like saved huge amounts of money for the project. We particularly want to remember our friend Graham Murray who was passionate about this project and worked on the main building group and also on our own steering group. Graham's untimely death last December means that he is sadly not with us but we are very pleased that some of his family are here.

But the final word has to go to Tim Glass. We casually asked his wife Juliet if she thought he might look over some plans for the build. That casual question has probably scarred the family for life! Tim has worked day and night voluntarily on the build for nearly two years and has been a key person in making this the beautiful building that it is today. Something not only for the scouts and local people to be proud of but also something for Chelmsford to rejoice in.