

Coddenham Parish Council Chair's Report

Coddenham's Annual Parish Meeting, 15 May 2024

The current council consists of six councillors and, therefore, we find ourselves with five vacancies. Whilst this is in common with the national trend, we would welcome any approaches from parishioners who would like to join us. Training is available and encouraged.

We have also welcomed the addition of our new clerk, Maggie Burt, who lives in the Parish and who joined us in October 2023.

The current Council members are as follows, with their specific areas of responsibility listed:

- **Cllr Burton:** Green Spaces and Footpaths.
- **Cllr Denning:** Planning, Roads and Day Foundation liaison.
- **Cllr Gregory (Chair):** Finance/Precept, Newsletter, Planning, Energy Conservation and Recycling and SALC.
- **Cllr Mills (Vice Chair):** Finance/Precept, Green Spaces and Footpaths, Ten Village News, Energy Conservation and Recycling, The Coddenham Centre liaison and Coddenham Community Response Group.
- **Cllr Soanes:** Green Spaces and Footpaths and Energy Conservation and Recycling.
- **Cllr Whitehead:** Finance/Precept, Roads, Planning and liaison for both the Community Shop and Gardemau Trust.

The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) debt resulting from the building of The Community Centre (TCC), when it was owned by the Council, remains its main financial liability. Annual debt reductions and the payment of interest amount to £13,135, with the sum outstanding amounting to £58,866.83 at 31 March 2024. The debt is made up of two separate loans which are due for repayment in 2028 and 2030 respectively. The repayments amounts are fully budgeted in the precept. From 2028, the demand imposed on the precept from loan payment will diminish and, after 2030, this will be material.

In finalising the Council's budget for the current financial year, the Council sought to strike a balance between having adequate funds to meet its obligations and to support those amenities that are so important to our community on the one hand and, on the other, keeping the precept as low as possible given the current financial climate. Ultimately, the Council managed to achieve a reduction in real terms in the total amount of precept to be levied. This was partly achieved by a reduction by more than 50% of the ongoing financial support provided to TCC as the Council has now agreed with the trustees of TCC that this will be limited to support for the Recreation Ground which does not provide an income stream. We are grateful to the trustees and management team of TCC for their diligence in achieving this reduced demand on the public purse.

The Council finances remain in good order, with reserves held for future specific eventualities and for unforeseen demands in a general reserve. The general reserve held at the start of the current financial year is approximately 54% of the annual budget in line with best practice.

The Council has now (recently) moved all Parish street-lighting to LED and, as a consequence, the street lighting can and is now being turned off overnight. This helps us achieve our carbon reduction target as well as representing a significant saving to the Council in energy costs for the current and

future financial years.

The Council received a relatively-compared to some local parishes and districts- modest amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) last year and used some of this to purchase a commercial dishwasher for TCC for use by trustees, management and volunteers at local events and also is in the process of purchasing some new picnic benches for the Recreation ground. The Council is also considering whether there are other projects in the parish which might be funded by District CIL Funding which is a central pot of CIL for which it is possible to bid to fund specific projects.

The Council has had a busy year looking after its green spaces which has included -apart from the annual grass cutting-significant tree safety works following the full tree survey undertaken of the Council properties, Broom Hill, Mill Hill and Three-cocked Hat. The Council has also planted a number of new oak trees on Mill Hill and Broom Hill and is planning to restore the hedge at the bottom of Broom Hill with native hedging plants. The Council working parties have also installed water collection facilities on the Council allotments, mended the steps on Mill Hill, the kissing gate and signs on Broom Hill, filled holes in the churchyard path, installed wildlife signs on Three-cocked hat and re-installed an owl box on Broom Hill. The Council has also re-established regular working parties to undertake the clearing of brambles on Broom Hill which have been well supported by residents. The Council has also installed a number of new litter bins in an attempt to reduce the littering in the Parish-unfortunately mostly by car occupants on the B1078 and Norwich Road.

Councillors have participated in the Parish Plan working groups particularly in relation to energy conservation and recycling with the reduce, reuse and recycle event held in March and continuing to investigate options to assist households in moving from oil and/or solid fuel heating solutions to renewable energy. The Roads working group continues to engage with Suffolk County Council in relation to B1078/High Street traffic.

The Council is here for all in the Parish and is mindful that just under a third of households are outside the village envelope. The Council continues to think consciously what can be done to include non-villagers when planning events etc. Councillors look forward to another productive year.

This report is the Chair's report and does not necessarily reflect the views of the rest of the Council.