**8. Coddenham Community Plan – for advice**

Councillors’ attention is drawn to an update of progress with the Coddenham Community Plan which appeared in the November edition of the Ten Village News which was published on behalf of the Coddenham Community Response Group.

As there remains some comment about the validity of the current plan, the summary which was drafted to explain why a Neighbourhood (Development) Plan was not pursued and why the plan took the form it did, is attached. In future should councillors conclude that production of a Neighbourhood Plan is desirable and supported by residents, then it is something that can be done. In the meantime, Coddenham should be able to take forward the collective wishes of residents replying to the 2022 survey without the need of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Mills

***Ten Village News article***

It is now just over four months since the Coddenham Community Plan was published. If you want to refresh your memory of its contents a copy is available on the Coddenham Parish website at <https://www.coddenham-parish.uk/shape-the-future/>.

A full report of progress is intended at the end of the year, likely to coincide with the distribution of the next Parish Council Newsletter. However, given the progress made we felt that an interim update is appropriate. You will recall that the Plan proposed the establishment of five distinct working groups to take aspects of it forward. A big thank you to all those residents who stepped up to join one of the groups. Consequently, four of the groups are now well established: The Alternative Hub, Energy Conservation and Recycling, Green Spaces and Footpaths and Roads.

*Representatives of the current community hubs, the Coddenham Centre, the Community Shop, the Country Club and St Marys Church have accepted that the Dukes Head is unlikely to ever re-open and therefore closer collaboration is needed to meet the gap this represents.*

*Energy conservation and recycling is working with both county and district councils through the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership (SCCP) and directly to improve our local recycling options, better understand the domestic energy challenge and to improve the carbon footprint of all community buildings. At the direction of SCCP and the experts they are working with Climate Energy South (CES) we have sought representation from other local parishes and commenced the establishment of Central Suffolk Community Energy. The current membership of the group is: James and Vicki Gascoyne-Cecil, Sarah Gregory, Andrew MacPherson, Nick Mills, Jane Soanes and Elaine Thomas. We have recently been joined by representatives from: Debenham, Mickfield and Stonham Aspel.*

*The focus of the Green Spaces and Footpaths group, comprised of Donald Burton, Brenda Hudson, Ian Jeffrey, Jane MacPherson, Nick Mills, John Pelling, Jane Soanes and John Woodcock (The Green Team) is one of playing maintenance catch-up following the pandemic, acting on the recommendations of the recent Suffolk Wildlife Trust Report. Alongside, the group is updating and extending footpath maps and signage including that for The Natural History Trail and providing more information to residents and visitors.*

*The Roads Working Group currently comprises of Cllrs Rob Denning and John Whitehead and residents Ian Burton, Roy Groom, Ian Jeffrey, Madge Pelling, Peter Thomas and David Ward. Two Hemingstone residents who live on Rectory Road will hopefully have also joined the Group by the time you are reading this. The Group met again on 11th October and determined which options to include in the residents’ survey. It is anticipated that this survey will be delivered towards the end of November with a ten day return period*.

Working group 5 is Housing. It was always regarded as a slower burn, but it is a group we are looking to establish early in 2024. Cllrs Sarah Gregory and Rob Denning have already put themselves forward, but we need at least two residents to join them. As survey responses highlighted the need for starter homes, we are looking for at least one of members to be someone seeking their first home or the parent of someone in that position. If you are that person or you know someone who is and who would be interested please let Sarah cllrsarahgregory@gmail.com and Rob coddenhamcllr.robdenning@gmail.com know.

**Neighbourhood (Development) Plans**

1. Neighbourhood Plans is short form in the Act for Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP). They are a product of the Localism Act 2011. The relevant section of the Act is unchanged since enactment, as far as I can see.
2. Page 12 of the Plain English Guide to the Act issued by Communities and Local Government sets out the background to and summarises Neighbourhood Planning. It states that “Neighbourhood Planning will allow communities, both residents, employees and business, to come together through local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like”. Provided due process is followed and the community votes in favour of the plan in a referendum, then the local authority will bring it into force. Funding and advice will be provided.
3. As MSDC has set out, there are alternatives to an NDP, including Parish or Community Plans, where an NDP is regarded as inappropriate. Choosing an alternative does not preclude it being turned into an NDP later if circumstances change.
4. Research was undertaken of NDPs when deciding on the format of the Coddenham Plan, with that for Walsham-Le-Willows being the main one of reference, as it was the most recent in Suffolk at the time. There are currently 16 NDPs on the MSDC website, all of which are, unsurprisingly driven by housing development, with many for communities alongside the A14, where the bulk of MSDC’s housebuilding is taking place.
5. With no pressure from MSDC or from the community at large, through Survey responses (response rate was almost double that at Walsham at just over 50%), for ‘development’ in Coddenham Parish, an NDP offered no benefits over a Community Plan. Coddenham is not designated a Neighbourhood Planning Area.
6. Progressing areas of importance to residents could be achieved, including access to grants, without the need of a NDP. Renewable Energy, for example is open to grant funding using a vehicle such as a Community Benefit Society and the support of SCC/MSDC, a path we are now going down, having been selected as one of the Suffolk projects. Help with ‘traffic’, on the other hand is unlikely to benefit from any NDP financial assistance unless it is linked to ‘development’. It’s quite possible we will receive some funding for traffic measures notwithstanding the lack of an NDP, given the long-standing issues in Coddenham, provided the community can settle of a practical and cost-effective scheme. This is ‘work-in-progress.’ (Questionnaire drafted. Awaiting Rob’s return and the re-establishment of the Roads Working Group. Lots of interaction with SCC and the Police).
7. As the Localism Act had been in place since 2011, in the absence of being able to have proper dialogue, given the ill feeling between many Coddenham residents and some former councillors, by dint of the lack of evidence that previous Councils hadn’t sought to produce a NDP, we assumed that they had drawn the same conclusions as we had.
8. The discord between community and the Parish Council had a distant secondary bearing on the decision of NDP vs Community Plan. NDPs are Town/Parish Council led, albeit that they draw in the wider community. Conditions weren’t right for the Council to lead on anything. At that stage, better we were involved (and rebuilt relationships) and indeed we ended up doing much of the heavy lifting, but it was clear to the community it was being done with them, not to them.
9. Much of the community Plan and the work to develop it can be used to convert it to an NDP, if that is something that the Council and the community desire.
10. Whilst drafting the Plan, Babergh and MSDC made us aware of a new plan type, the People and Places Plan that it was trialling alongside six other councils for the Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). We were at final draft stage by then. Rather than await the outcome of a national pilot and the drafting of formal guidelines/amendment to the Localism Act, we proceeded with what we had. Again, a conversion would likely be straightforward. However, it maybe sometime before this becomes an option.