Coddenham Parish Council Chair's Report

Coddenham's Annual Parish Meeting, 29 April 2025

As last year, the current council consists of six councillors and, therefore, we still find ourselves with five vacancies. We would very much welcome any approaches from parishioners who would like to join us. Training is available and encouraged.

The current Council members, supported by the clerk, Maggie Burt, remain 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 £48,274.59 at 31 March 2025. The debt is made up of two separate loans which are due for repayment in 2028 and 2030 respectively. The repayment amounts continue to be 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 again 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 uncertainty. Ultimately, the Council managed to achieve an almost flat budget in real terms in the total amount of precept to be levied. While support to TCC continues, and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future, the level of financial support is approximately the same as last financial year (taking inflation into account). The Council is grateful to the trustees and management team of TCC for their continued diligence in the very successful running of TCC with so limited 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 more than 50% of the annual budget in line with best practice and Council policy of holding between 50% and 80% of the precept as a general reserve.

The Council is grateful to the continued support received from Mid-Suffolk District Council (MSDC), particularly through the "pride in your place" and locality grants which have allowed the Council to undertake additional bramble clearing works on Broom Hill, to republish the Coddenham walks leaflet,

hold reduce, reuse and recycle events and to purchase materials to replace the benches on Broom Hill later in the summer. In addition, the Council received a modest amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) last year and used some of this to purchase some new picnic benches for the Recreation ground.

The Council has had another busy year looking after its green spaces which has included -apart from the annual grass cutting-additional tree safety works following the full tree survey undertaken of the Council properties, Broom Hill, Mill Hill and Three-cocked Hat. A further tree safety survey was also undertaken this year of the closed churchyard. In addition, the Council has restored the hedge at the bottom of Broom Hill with native hedging plants donated by MSDC. The Council has also installed additional water collection facilities on the Council allotments and mended the vandalised signs on Broom Hill. The regular working parties organised by the Council to undertake the clearing of brambles on Broom Hill have continued to be well supported by residents

The Council has recently commissioned an engineering survey of the closed churchyard wall which indicates some repair and restoration work is required. The scope and potential significant cost of this is still to be determined.

Councillors have participated in the Parish Plan working groups particularly in relation to energy conservation and recycling with the now regular reduce, reuse and recycle events and continuing to investigate options to assist households in moving from oil and/or solid fuel heating solutions to renewable energy. The Council is aware of the issues, and inconvenience to residents, that can arise in the High Street due to traffic congestion and the Roads working group continues to engage with Suffolk County Council in relation to B1078/High Street traffic. The Council also undertook a housing survey, the results of which are being separately reported upon.

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.