



THE CODDENHAM CENTRE

Budget 2022/23 & Progress Report 2021

November 1, 2021

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The Report presents a summary for the year to date and informs the precept budget review with Coddenham Parish Council.

Introduction

Like the world over, The Coddenham Centre has experienced an extraordinary year in so many respects.

Despite almost continuous fluctuations in constraints, accessibility and threats to safety, the facility has nonetheless continued to not only survive, but thrive, while playing an important role in providing activity and support for the community.

Community Action Suffolk reported only one in twenty-six community facilities such as the Coddenham Centre, remained open during COVID restrictions. The Coddenham Centre was one of those.

What We Did

Through an aggressive and daily proactive management of the Centre and its surrounding facilities, opportunities were seized to make it available, whenever safe do so. This proved extremely difficult, given that government guidance struggled to articulate itself at times, as did the various governing bodies for our activities.

We are nonetheless proud to have continued to serve the community and surrounding areas. We would like to extend our thanks to Trustees, volunteers, customers and the people of Coddenham for their support. The fact that we have achieved this safely, is a credit to the diligence and the co-operation of all. We are indebted to our benefactors, who were able to help us in this difficult time.

There are nearly twenty activities available in and around the Centre. Alongside our core offers of pilates, yoga, dancing, badminton and tennis, we developed the following additions:

Carpet Bowls launched with the support of Active Suffolk and attracted the addition of Blakenham Bowls Club to the Centre.

The 'boxercise' Tae Bo and new circuit training nights were added.

Our Nordic Walking offer flourished as did the Suffolk School of Nordic Walking, encouraging, and introducing at the latest count, eighty people to this accessible exercise for all ages. The profile of the Centre was further enhanced and supported by the school extending services to NHS cancer patients, through a unique collaboration with the local hospital. We received both local newspaper and radio recognition for the Coddenham Centre.

After an extended closure of classes for mothers and babies, a new baby and toddler group was established. This was one example of collaborations between voluntary and charitable bodies in the community by the Coddenham Community Response Group, with the support of the Centre, the local church, the Parochial Church Council, and the Gardemau Trust. Baby Sensory classes were also a new addition for our most junior clientele!

The facilities for indoor classes continued to be used by training organisations, providing resources for the training of essential personnel during lockdown.

We made use of our open air facilities by regularly hosting a local business, The Coffee Station, and more recently a monthly pizza 'pop up', both of which have proved popular.

Training sessions for the outdoor gym were held, and our Tennis 'Club' went from strength to strength.

We further supported local enterprise by hiring the kitchen to 'Jess Cooks' meals for children, a mum-of-two successfully starting out in business and recently receiving media coverage on her achievements during the last year. We also provided a home for a local bakery for three months during lockdown.

Our role as a charitable incorporated organisation was leveraged in drawing down newly available funds from local authorities and national schemes to mitigate the economic impact of COVID. This has contributed to not only our sustainability, but helped reinforce our reserves to face a continuing fragile future. We are conscious that our limitations in scale of our operations means we remain vulnerable and therefore are continuing to develop strategies to diversify and broaden all activities.

With the help of the Suffolk Pro Help Scheme provided by Community Action Suffolk and others, we will seek ways of developing our available space, indoors and outside.

Community engagement and communication was further supported by several carefully managed brunches and tabletop sales, using the outdoor facilities.

A Christmas Quiz will mark our first return to a public indoor event and in the New Year, we hope to see a series of Country & Western nights booked with the help of surrounding villages.

Children's parties and other celebrations grew, the high ceilings and space in the Centre offering additional assurance. We hosted our first wedding reception and baptism celebrations since lockdown!

Activities in many areas, nonetheless, also continued to be fragile and impacted by the lockdown. We provided support wherever we could to return suppliers to services as quickly as possible, but we have now seen some tail offs, following the initial post lockdown surge. Our yoga offer, for example, has recently been reduced and we are looking to replace and/or diversify. We are also seeking to return a tennis coach to the Centre, particularly for junior players.

Coddenham Athletic Football Club were forced to abandon this year's season due to resource issues. We are liaising with the local FA and the club's chairman, who hopes to resume next year. We are also maintaining contact with replacements who have expressed interest.

Other challenges faced were the failure last Christmas of our hot water system due to historical maintenance issues. A temporary small capacity boiler was purchased for the kitchen, and we used the crisis to successfully raise funds to replace the entire system with an environmentally superior solution. In addition, we were faced with the need to address several items of outstanding maintenance including the resurfacing of the entire floor of the hall.

The pavilion was refurbished with Trustee and volunteer help. We also took over the maintenance, mowing and white lining of the football field, following the departure of CAFC.

The Environment

With a climate emergency declared both locally and nationally, we felt it was essential as a community asset to lead by example, despite COVID demands. At the end of last year, the Trustees committed to an environmental strategy, achieving recognition this year with the award of a Bronze Carbon Charter by Suffolk County Council. We secured funding to replace our fossil fuel (oil) heating system with Air Source Heat Pumps and new insulation for the Centre. Insulation was found to be missing in several parts of the building and now addressed, there is an already noticeable difference. The Centre became the first in the country to install contactless Electric Car Charging units with the help of SCC. Designed to support residents considering the transition to EV, next year we also hope to offer a preferred charging tariff for the Coddenham community.

Wildflower areas were established at the request of residents. With the help of MSDC and the Woodland Trust, we will plant 160 metres of new hedging and trees including a new oak donated by Lord de Saumarez to celebrate the centenary of the bequest of the recreation ground.

We were invited to speak at the local COP26 roadshow and were shortlisted for this year's Greenest County Awards.

Resources

In addition to a Centre Care and cleaning representative Charmian Hall we employ a part time Centre Manager Gail Springett, from ten to fifteen hours a week. Similar weekly hours are provided f.o.c. by the voluntary contribution of each founding Trustee, Chairman Andrew MacPherson and Treasurer Ray Collins, in offsetting the daily costs of administration, marketing, accounting, fund raising and operational costs. We are also indebted to the continued contribution of Debbie McDonnell, who has provided a valuable contribution alongside her other voluntary commitments.

The Centre Management Group has not convened, because of COVID concerns, but the small core of volunteers and friends have continued to support and encourage the Trustees. Local authorities and portfolio holders have also supported and endorsed the Centre. At a recent local COP26 event, Suffolk County Council representatives referred to the Coddenham Centre as 'an exemplar'.

In May 2022, the founding Trustees have the option of stepping down, should they so wish.

Strategic Objectives - Budget

For the Coddenham Centre CIO the main aims outlined by us on the transfer of assets remain the same. We planned to remove the negative or "white elephant" perception of the Centre, engage the community and stakeholder groups, install a stronger control on finances and governance, plus the increased security of the assets and pursuit of a more sustainable future. We believe that we have already achieved many of these aims. With the 2022/23 budget we hope to exceed the original target set by us – that of achieving a 50% reduction in precept funding in four years, by achieving it in just three years, despite the extraordinary operating circumstances.

We have reached this point despite weathering the additional expenses and lockdowns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, several infrastructure failures and legacy challenges.

Additionally, global circumstances have changed to the extent that the need to consider the environment has become impossible to ignore particularly if we are to support our community and play a responsible role in the national and local climate emergency. The aspiration of the current

trustees is to provide a facility that is fit for the next 20 years. To this aim it is our intention to make the Coddenham Centre as carbon neutral as is practical. The changes necessary will not come without cost, although wherever possible we will continue to seek support outside the community, as a charitable incorporated organisation.

Our budget remains aggressive, bearing in mind the parameters we have set and particularly the potential for further Covid lockdowns and a fragile economic recovery. However, with the ongoing essential support and engagement of the community, we believe it is achievable.

Financial Viability

Last year we were asked by Coddenham Parish Council whether we considered it would be possible for the Coddenham Centre to cease relying on precept funding in the future. We have now had a further year to consider this, albeit under less-than-ideal circumstances. As we have laboured on previous occasions, costs can be divided into two components: the building itself and estate management.

The building was originally the sole component envisaged when the asset transfer was considered. Estate management was added later by the Parish Council, during the transfer process and, whilst being an entirely logical inclusion, was recognised at the time to be a cost item removed from the CPC budget and added the CIO budget, with virtually no recourse to offset with additional income.

What has also not helped, when comparing running costs has been the inaccuracy of the 2019/20 Budget compiled by the Parish Clerk during the period. Despite the errors not being the fault of either side but due to the parlous state of the finances at the time, it is critical to understand them, to gauge any financial progress.

The estate management costs, as compiled for 2019/20 were based on a Suffolk Norse contract for the 2017/18 period and totalled £3,500. The transfer budget for the CIO was calculated at 50% or £1,750 - there being no other documentation available at the time. If the quotation is actually studied, it becomes obvious that the true cost of the contract pertaining to The Coddenham Centre was actually £2,385 or £2,862 when VAT is added (and these are 2017 prices – Suffolk Norse quoted us £4,209 in 2020!). Similarly, the other costs associated with the Recreation Field were less that accurate with obvious omissions for tree surveys/playground safety inspections, playground bark refills etc etc. Our experience is that the true estate management currently runs around the £4,500 mark and that the cost was similar in 2019, but understated.

These numbers may appear of minor detail, but if the 2019/20 budget is going to be a marker to gauge financial progress, it at least needs to be correct. Moreover, if estate management is a constant, the only way to plot whether The Coddenham Centre is on the right trajectory to breakeven is to consider the Centre by itself, with the proviso that even in isolation, the building budget itself was not wholly accurate or had considered the full extent of legacy issues.

Precept Funding

2020/21	£13,020	
2021/22	£ 9,395	- 27.8%
2022/23	£ 6,585	- 49.4%

Despite the huge impact of a global pandemic, through sheer effort and support of our community, we have achieved our four year objective of halving precept contribution in real terms, in just two years.

Our infamous comparison that all the benefits of the Coddenham Centre, were available to each resident for the price of a monthly cup of coffee, is now available at that cost every three months.

The Future

We now consider we are approaching the point of diminishing marginal returns. As already discussed, many times, the Centre, as impressive as it is for a village our size, is on a second or third tier when compared to profitable Sports Centres (cf David Lloyd or even Ipswich Sports Centre). We simply cannot command the higher fees charged by better appointed establishments. At the same time, we do not have a 'village hall' in the traditional sense with space to host more than one function simultaneously. It is inevitable, in its present form, the Centre will eventually meet maximum booking potential at rates largely based on providing community access, rather than maximising profit.

To mitigate, our solution post COVID remains to increase the hire space by utilising the dry changing rooms, plus making other adjustments to usable space and provide greater storage potential. This will give more capacity for an increase in commercial hire, flexibility and diversification, thus underwriting the Centre's sustainability and continuing to enrich its offer to the community. It will also help to broaden appeal across more age groups. Finally, we will also continue to develop solutions for a net zero carbon future, an increasing expectation of both the population and the marketplace.

Andrew MacPherson (Chair)

Ray Collins (Treasurer)

November 1, 2021

Attachment: The Coddenham Centre Budget 2022/23