



Statement Requested to the Coddenham Parish Council Meeting 18th November 2021

The Coddenham Centre has recently passed its second anniversary, following the transfer by the Parish Council to the Charitable Incorporated Organisation, set up at their request.

While it has now achieved its first full financial year, it has been very much a voyage of discovery and continues to be so. It's one that has been set against a backdrop of considerable disruption and distortions, caused by COVID-19.

Inherited incomplete accounts which the Parish Council at the time worked hard to rationalise for the transfer, has meant difficulty in accurately forecasting, plus there have been several legacy issues that emerged, ranging from outstanding repairs to a major catastrophe in the loss of hot water heating, because of a history of poor maintenance. The Coddenham Centre CIO nonetheless have tried not to look backwards and if it has done, it is only for some context to best address the challenges.

In less than two years The Coddenham Centre has moved forward quite considerably despite these challenges and while we are not looking for accolades, the efforts of the founding and current trustees with support of part-time employees, volunteers, and the community at large, has meant the Centre has thrived, rather than purely survived.

While in the past it was effectively managed to 'stand still', it has now enjoyed despite extraordinary circumstances, significant (but fragile) growth in usage and overall public confidence. Only one in 26 community centres remained open during the pandemic. We are proud to be 'one of the one's'.

The Centre has simultaneously achieved an annual reduction in precept dependency of almost 15% and by 20/23 will have achieved its target of reducing that dependency by nearly 50% in real terms, a year earlier than voluntarily projected in 2019.

It has worked hard to maximise opportunities for external funding and government support where available and is grateful to a range of benefactors who have recognised its value and commitment to the community.

In parallel with this progress, it is also made significant advances in developing a community contribution to the local and national climate emergency. It has turned disaster into opportunity with the installation of the air source heat pumps, the establishment of Coddenham 's first vehicle charging points, new planting of new trees, hedges and wildlife areas plus considerable investment in insulation for the building. It is participating in Suffolk's Solar Together program with the view to offsetting the additional electrical costs, towards the latter part of next year. This year we were short listed for an award in environmental excellence.

Above all the Centre has continued to contribute to the health and well-being of the community at a particular critical time and is proud to offer 20 activities for all ages, including the seriously unwell.

Its capacity and configuration currently present constraints for any further expansion. However, it goes into 2022 with robust reserves and an intention to address these constraints through re-configuration, starting to assess the repurposing of 900 square metres of a life expired bowling green, further expanding activity, ensuring a sustainable facility for the community and hopefully, a continued reduction in dependency on precept support.

We hope this progress can be recognised by the Parish Council and the Coddenham Centre be fully supported in the future.

Andrew MacPherson - 18th November 2021

