

Chair's Report

Coddenham Annual Parish Meeting 5 May 2022

The current Council consists of ten councillors with seven of these being recently co-opted on to the council; there is still one vacancy. It is unusual and against the national trend to have a full council in a relatively small village especially when full complement is 11 councillors. The recent co-options followed the resignation of three councillors, including the Chair and Vice-Chair. All three councillors were active members of the Parish Council and contributed a lot of time and effort to the work that they did on behalf of the parishioners.

Going forward the Council will be working collaboratively with various groups in the village and hold surgeries fortnightly in the Community Shop, starting in June 2022. The surgeries will enable parishioners to come and ask questions and raise points with a councillor. The councillors allocated to work with the various groups/who have certain areas of responsibility are as follows:

Cllr Whythe	Community Shop
Cllr Mills	Coddenham Community Response Group (CCRG)
Cllr Mills	Coddenham Centre
Cllr Groom	Broom Hill, Mill Hill, allotments and footpaths
Cllr Soanes	Broom Hill, Mill Hill, allotments and footpaths
Cllr Stanley-Bell	Broom Hill, Mill Hill, allotments and footpaths
Cllr Kenning	Website
Cllr Burgess	Suffolk Association of Local Councils Representative
Cllr Groom	St Mary's Closed Churchyard maintenance
Cllr Denning	Day Foundation
Cllr Stanley-Bell	Gardemau Trust
Cllr Denning	Highways
Cllr Groom	Highways

It is also the intention of the Council to hold an open forum prior to each Council meeting where parishioners can come and discuss/ask questions.

The Parish Council still has the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) debt until 2030, this debt stands currently at £78,678 and was incurred through the building of the Community Centre. Over the last five years, the Council has been able to set the budget without this being included in the precept because of a generous anonymous gift from a parishioner and before this with support from the Day Foundation. The debt is repaid at £13,135 per year for which the Council has sufficient monies in the budget for this payment not to impact on Council Tax, via the precept, for 2023/2024 however in the year 2024/2025 this will have to be added to the precept unless another benefactor comes forward or a Coddenham based charity such as the Gardemau trust can find a way of changing its remit to benefit the parishioners of Coddenham.

Unfortunately, the street lighting in Coddendam is costing the Parish Council significantly more this year than budgeted due to the increase in the cost of electricity; in the budget for 2023/2024 there will need to be a significant uplift to deal with these price rises.

In the previous Chair's report for 6 May 2021 there was an inclusion that the Council had been advised of an historical liability under the agreement for business rates on the Coddendam Centre, levied by MSDC. The Council challenged the levy with the Valuation Office Agency. The total sum of rates due was £11,676, payable in three instalments, the first of which was paid in last year 2021/2022. John Peacock, a past councillor, worked tirelessly to secure a reduction in the rateable value with the VOA. Just before the Council meeting on the 17 March 2022, the Council received the good news from John that the rateable value had been reduced by the VOA meaning that the original charge would fall below the chargeable threshold and so no rates would be due. The £3892 already paid to MSDC can be repaid to the Parish Council and perhaps be put towards the PWLB payment in 2023/2024.

Coddendam Parish Council Governance Review: Governance and Boundary Reviews had been halted due to Covid restrictions. However, the Parish Council, at the meeting held on the 20 January 2022, unanimously agreed that when the Governance Review resumes it would pursue a reduction in Coddendam Parish Council to 7 seats. This is most probably a sensible number considering that there are only 501 electors on the most recent electoral register and sits within professional guidance. A large proportion of the work of the Parish Council is now carried out by the CIO. The Parish Council continues to support the CIO by way of a grant, which is £8,250 for the year 2022/2023.

During the year there have been discussions about yellow lines to improve the safety at the bottom of the High Street with the intention that they had no impact on the Community Shop, the decision on moving the scheme forward now rests with the County Council.

There are on going discussions on Broom Hill signage and upkeep. These will be reported on during the year, at Council meetings.

Finally, the Council continues to work to reduce the dependency on Council funds to the benefit of all parishioners.

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