

Coddenham Parish Council (Vice) Chair's Report

Coddenham's Annual Parish Meeting, 18th May 2023

The past year has seen a number of changes within your Parish Council but, notwithstanding it has been a period of relative calm, re-establishment and achievement. After many years as a stalwart of the Council, Cllr Fawdry resigned in March 2023, having moved from the Parish. During the last year she was the Council's Chair, steering Council through a turnover of councillors and steadying the ship. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Fawdry for her contribution and service to the residents of Coddenham.

Just prior to the beginning of this Council Year, Council welcomed 5 new councillors. They had joined to assist harmonious re-engagement with other Parish organisations and many residents who had lost faith that they were being properly represented. Having worked hard to achieve this objective, four of these councillors stepped down as their personal or changed working commitments made it difficult to perform as councillors to the extent they would have liked. They were joined by Cllr Groom who did not seek re-election this month, having spent many years as a very effective councillor. I thank all of them for their support and help in re-establishing Coddenham Parish Council as a full member of the Coddenham community. In replacement, during the year we welcomed Cllr Gregory and, more recently, the return of Cllr Burton and the addition of Cllr Whitehead, one of our District Councillors, who is now a Coddenham resident.

We start the 23-24 year with 6 councillors. Although Council had unanimously approved a resolution to limit councillor numbers to seven in January 2022, a later rethink based on the work that Council wished to undertake, agreed that the current limit of eleven councillors should be sustained. Council therefore has 5 open positions and it will seek to fill some or all via co-option over the next 12 months. As stated in last year's Chair's report, a complement of 11 parish councillors is high relative to an electorate of c.500. We'll continue to reflect on what the right number of councillors is during the year, in the knowledge that having 11 positions provides Council with flexibility.

The current Council members are as follows, with their specific areas of responsibility listed:

- **Cllr Burton:** Green Spaces and Footpaths.
- **Cllr Denning:** Planning, Roads, The Day Foundation liaison.
- **Cllr Gregory (Chair):** Finance/Precept, Newsletter, Planning, Energy Conservation and Recycling, SALC.
- **Cllr Mills (Vice Chair):** Finance/Precept, Green Spaces and Footpaths, PC Website (interim), Ten Village News, Energy Conservation and Recycling, The Coddenham Centre liaison, Coddenham Community Response Group.
- **Cllr Soanes:** Green Spaces and Footpaths, Energy Conservation and Recycling.
- **Cllr Whitehead:** Finance/Precept, The Community Shop liaison, Gardemau Trusts liaison.

All councillors will have responsibility to lobby in terms of Public Transport.

Throughout the past year, Council has played its part as a full member of the Coddenham Community Response Group (CCRG), working alongside all other Parish organisations for the benefit of residents. Council contributed to the Parish Survey in the summer of 2022 and in the drafting of the Parish Plan. The

list of responsibilities mentioned above captures many Plan themes, which Council intends to play its full part in helping deliver, working with Suffolk Council and Mid-Suffolk District Council.

The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) debt resulting from the building of what is now The Community Centre, when it was owned by the Council remains its main financial liability. Annual reductions and the payment of interest amount to £13,135, with the sum outstanding amounting to £68,995 as of 31st March 2023. The debt is made up of two separate loans which are due for repayment in 2028 and 2030 respectively. Repayments are now fully accounted for in the precept, following years when they were covered either with support from The Day Foundation or a generous anonymous gift from a parishioner. During the year ahead Council will look to see if a way can be found to reduce the impact of repayments on the precept, in part to provide greater financial capacity to support other initiatives, whilst seeking to reduce the precept burden in real terms.

An area that Council wishes to continue to champion and where a little financial headroom would be helpful is reducing the Parish's carbon footprint. In the past year Council has given its full support to the trustees of The Coddendam Centre to make the facility carbon neutral, a goal they are very close to achieving. This is no small feat and the Trustees should be congratulated.

Council is working with Suffolk County Council to move all Parish street-lighting to LED and, through the CCRG and with both County and District Councils seeing what can be done to assist households in moving from oil and/or solid fuel heating solutions to renewables. A key area highlights in residents' responses to the Parish Survey. Aside this and as a contributor, Council is keen to encourage further planting of native hedgerows and trees across the Parish, whilst looking after what we already have. During the past year, Council has been a driver to a report of the Parish's green spaces by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and had a full tree survey undertaken of Broomhill, Mill Hill and Three-cocked Hat, which are in Council ownership. It has also re-established regular working parties, which have been well supported by residents.

Councillors look forward to another productive year in 2023/4 and being at the heart of all that is good about Coddendam.

In closing, Council is here for all in the Parish. It is easy to become Village-centric. Just under a third of households are outside the Village envelope. During the past year councillors have attempted to reach out to 'more remote' residents, be it delivering and collecting Survey Forms, being there when residents have issues and/or encouraging other Parish organisations to think consciously what can be done to include non-villagers when planning events etc. This will continue to be a priority area for Council. Council is here for all 280 households and 625 residents.

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