

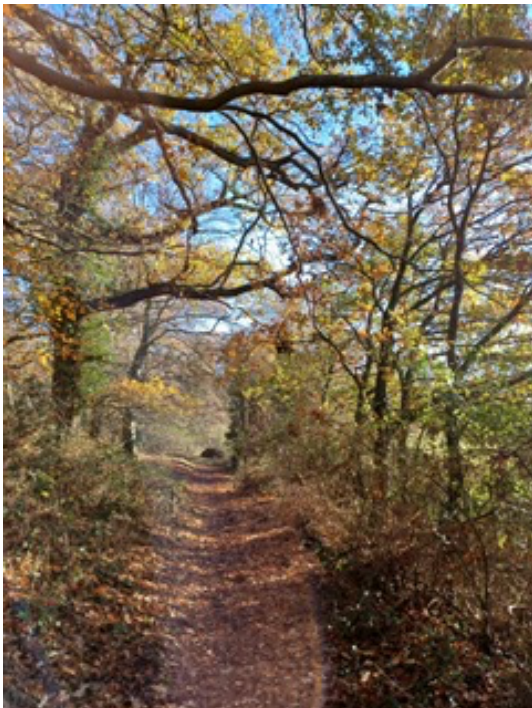
Coddenham Parish Council Newsletter

A warm welcome from your Parish Council. Working for You. January 2024

Welcome to our newsletter which aims to keep you in touch with the work of the parish council so that everyone in the community feels involved and connected. There are contact details at the foot of this newsletter. Please do get in touch.

Green Spaces

Thank you to all who attended the October work mornings, giving 32 volunteer man hours to digging and cutting back brambles, cutting the hedge at the bottom of the grass slope and repairing the “pocket park” sign near the kissing gate. Coddenham is fortunate that so many are willing to donate their time and labour to the upkeep of our beautiful green spaces. The next work morning will be in February and all are welcome. These are sociable mornings with coffee, cake and a little bramble clearing.



On a winter walk through Broom Hill with the trees bare of leaves so much more of the pocket park, usually hidden by dense undergrowth, can be seen. The various habitat mounds created using the hedge cuttings and bramble clearing of the volunteer working groups are clearly visible. Following Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) advice, the parish council decided not to burn cuttings as has happened in the past. Bonfires contribute to poor air quality and the resulting ash (over) fertilises the ground. Building a habitat mound provides shelter and a food source for many invertebrate and insect species. SWT visited Broom Hill in November to advise on future

management of the hedgerow at the bottom of the wooded slope. There is potential to restore some of the existing hedge with gaps being filled by new saplings. SWT also recommended that the suckering elm tree should be retained as elm is a food source of the white letter hairstreak butterfly. This is a rare priority species which has been recorded in Coddenham.

The parish council has purchased the materials to replace the broken post of the Broom Hill kissing gate, the steps on Mill Hill and to weatherproof the benches on Mill Hill and in the churchyard. Councillors will complete this work in the new year.

Allotments Water Supply

The first of two rainwater collecting and storage facilities has now been constructed for the allotments. Each collector can store a maximum of 300 litres of rainwater and they will be installed in the allotments in time to fill before the onset of the 2024 growing season. It is hoped that the water supply will be adequate to cover dry periods so that allotment holders will just need a watering can to keep their produce on track to fulfil their expectations.

Role of Parish Council in planning matters

Mid Suffolk District Council is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for this area. For planning applications in our parish, the parish council is a consultee in the planning process and must be informed by the LPA of all planning applications within the parish. The parish council can only comment on these planning applications in the same way as any member of the public, but any comments by the parish council must be agreed during a properly called council meeting. Members of the public can attend those meetings and comment in support or against any application during the ‘open forum’ segment at the start of the meeting but not during the council’s deliberations later in the meeting. Comments agreed in the parish council

meeting are then submitted in writing to the LPA by the parish clerk. In representing local views, the parish council can provide local knowledge, raise areas of concern and thus add value to the planning process but, as a consultee, the parish council just counts as one opinion on any application.

Budget and Precept 2024/5

At its meeting held on 3 January 2024, the parish council approved its budget for the next fiscal year starting on 1 April 2024. This is summarised below. The finances remain in good order, with reserves held for future specific eventualities (itemised reserves) and for unforeseen demands (the general reserve). The general reserve held is just over 50% of the annual budget. The budget has increased by about 10% compared with the previous year, principally from inflation in relation to the cost of grounds maintenance, street lighting and bin emptying, tree surgery and integrating and training a new clerk.

When the previous clerk to the parish council, Sue Frankis, resigned, the council sought an experienced replacement. We were not alone. There were many other Suffolk parishes seeking someone to take on the role and several had been looking for an extended period. The council, therefore, appreciated that there was only a small pool of experienced candidates and understood that it was likely that any potential clerk would require to be trained in the role. Accordingly, the council considered applications from Coddenham residents with an administrative background whom the council could train. This does have a cost to the parish but it also means that Coddenham benefits from having a clerk who lives in the parish.

Thanks to the diligence of the trustees and management team of The Coddenham Centre (TCC), it has been agreed that parish council support be restricted to paying for the maintenance of the recreation ground, which is non-income generating. Councillors recognise that this is something that the council should continue to fund going forward. Overall, this means a 50% reduction in the council's spending in the fiscal year 24/25 from the prior year in providing financial support to the running cost of TCC. Notwithstanding this agreement, the council remains contracted to provide support beyond this to TCC in case of unplanned real financial need and its reserves acknowledge this contractual obligation.

Against this background and continued wider fiscal uncertainty, councillors have requested a 3% rise in the total amount of the parish precept (which does not necessarily equate to that percentage rise per

household). This is consistent with last year's increase and represents a cut in real terms. This will help maintain a healthy financial position pending repayment in 2028 of the first of the two loans taken out to finance the building of TCC. At this point, other eventualities aside, it is envisaged that the total amount of parish precept should reduce.

Audit fees	£575
Insurance	£420
S137	£200
Bank charges	£72
Clerk's salary	£8,213
Clerk's training	£674
Postage, telecoms, consumables	£350
Subscriptions	£450
Software licences	£200
Training fees	£571
Web fees	£160
Newsletter	£300
Data protection registration	£35
Grounds maintenance	£1,200
Waste management	£650
Street lighting	£1,250
Tree surgery	£3,000
Info box	£50
CIO/TCC contingency	£1,075
Payment to CIO/TCC – Recreation Ground	£4,000
Public Works Loan Board repayment	£13,152
Hall Rental	£120
Total	£36,717

Storm Babet and Flooding

Storm Babet brought approximately 80mm of rainfall over large areas of Suffolk in 24 hours in October which was more than a month's worth of average October rainfall. This is the most widespread flooding event to impact the county for a significant number of years and over 850 properties were internally flooded including some local households. The parish council has agreed that it is sensible to put a formal emergency resilience plan in place (based on the District Council template) which means that the parish would have a structure to support those in the community who require assistance in the event of future disasters. The plan has been discussed with other community organisations in the parish (which would largely deliver the plan in the event of a disaster occurring) and the emergency resilience team at Babergh and Mid-Suffolk for final changes prior to sign-off at a future parish council meeting.

As a reminder, key public safety advice in the event of flooding includes:

- Do not drive through flood water.

- Keep alert for surface water, drive according to the conditions and increase distance from the vehicle in front and be prepared to back off if visibility gets worse
- Be aware of debris left on roads by flood water
- Return to abandoned vehicles and retrieve them, where safe to do so
- Avoid playing or swimming in flood water, because it can contain hidden dangers such as lifted manhole covers, sharp objects, sewage and chemicals.

Following Storm Babet, Suffolk County Council (SCC) has provided immediate and resilience grants and is undertaking post-flooding investigations to ascertain the probable causes of flooding, identify options to reduce future flood risk and increase property resilience and make recommendations for actions by relevant responsible organisations, landowners or homeowners.

Useful Information can be found at:

- Flood recovery: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk> provides useful information about flood recovery for impacted residents.
- Link to further information about Flood Risk Management in Suffolk: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/flooding-and-drainage/flood-management-in-suffolk>
- Know your long term flood risk: <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>
- Check your short term flood risk here: <https://www.gov.uk/check-flooding>
- Link to the Suffolk Riparian Ownership Guide (responsibilities for managing ditches and other watercourses): <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/2018-12-07-riparian-ownership-in-suffolk-booklet-final.pdf>
- Find out about what Flood Risk Management is planned in your area: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/flood-planning/explorer/cycle-2/home>
- Owning a water course: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse> (also includes section about permissions/permits)
- The National Flood Forum provides independent advice about protecting your property from flooding: <https://nationalfloodforum.org.uk>

Littering Good News!

Firstly, thank you to all volunteer litter pickers who joined us in September. Whilst we are fortunate to have only minimal littering in the main village of Coddham, it is still a major problem along the B1078 from the A140. However...now the “good news”, the amount collected from B1078 and Three Coked Hat had reduced by six bags. The siting of a litter bin on Three Coked Hat has significantly reduced littering there. To continue the fight against littering, the parish council will use its “Pride in your Place” grant funding from Mid Suffolk District Council to provide another litter bin in the “layby” at the junction of the B1078 and A140. There are also plans to provide a litter bin on the Old Norwich Road which is the worst area for litter and fly tipping in the parish. Whilst the enthusiasm to “litter pick” this area exists, there are major health and safety issues to overcome.



Highways/Traffic Update

The Roads Group working party determined three options for B1078/High Street traffic to be put out for public consultation. Data recently collected showed 35 unauthorised large vehicle movements (>7.5T) had occurred during the two-week data collection period. The three options were to retain the status-quo, to move to a one-way gyratory incorporating Rectory Road or to impose a 3.5T limit on west-bound vehicles down the High Street. The working party felt the latter was the preferred and recommended option with a 3.5T limit, but to also incorporate caravans and trailers, as being more effective at reducing congestion and blockages in the High Street. However, during a

subsequent meeting with SCC Highways, it was ascertained that there was no scope under national traffic regulations to enable the imposition of a 3.5T limit. Vehicles currently contravening the present 7.5T westbound limit pass four road signs showing the weight prohibition on the approach to the Rectory Road junction. SCC have agreed to look at a redesign of this junction and its traffic signage and a first set of draft drawings and illustrations were received by the working party just before Christmas. The working party is encouraged that a serious dialogue is now underway with SCC and look forward to moving this to public consultation in early 2024.

Energy Conservation and Recycling

Responses to the 2022 Coddendam parish survey included a desire to see more opportunities to recycle locally beyond kerbside collections and bottles/clothing; a request for guidance as to how best to transition from oil-based heating and widespread support for wind and solar based energy generation on the basis of reduced energy bills.

Alongside other parish organisations, the parish council is working on a recycling event at TCC on Saturday 23 March 2024. This intends to be informative and to collect items for recycling which are not taken at kerbside e.g. small electricals, tools, corks, spectacles etc. Details will be published in the next few weeks. The parish council is also, alongside other local parishes – initially Debenham, Mickfield and Stonham Aspal – working on the establishment of a community interest company called Central Suffolk Community Energy (CSCE).

CSCE is supported by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, which has engaged Community Energy South to help CSCE and other similar teams in Suffolk. CSCE's set-up and initial year's maintenance is grant supported. CSCE aims to assist (1) households in moving from fossil fuel-based heating and to improve

their carbon footprint (being a source of information, helping households understand their current and future position/needs, by lobbying and sharing case studies); (2) communal buildings to decarbonise (by sharing best practice, overseeing feasibility studies and through supporting projects); and (3) in identifying and progressing energy generation projects (solar, wind, district heat).

Next steps for CSCE are to promote membership, establish a social media presence and determine a communication strategy including through traditional channels, produce an initial key household Q&A and progress at least one community facility and one energy generation feasibility study. Further details will follow.

Duke's Head Update

Planning application 20/02460 for change of use of the Duke's Head from a public house to a residential dwelling was granted in October 2020 and required various pre-commencement conditions to be dealt with within three years. A member of the public was advised by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) at the end of October 2023 that, as these had not been carried out within that required timescale, the planning permission is considered to have lapsed. Our district councillor, John Whitehead, was likewise advised by the LPA in mid-November that, with no evidence of commencement, the permission was "likely to be expired". However, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has been collected on this development and the parish council has now received its 15% share of the CIL. CIL can only be levied and collected when development commences. Moreover, the applicant has informed the LPA that development has commenced. There is clearly some confusion apparent in this particular case which John has flagged with the LPA and has sought urgent clarification on the matter given the high level of public interest but, as this newsletter goes to print, the lack of clarity remains.

How to contact us

Please contact the parish council through the clerk, Maggie Burt. Email: clerk.coddendampc@gmail.com; Phone: 07548 152181. The parish council website address is: <https://www.coddendampc.org.uk>