

# Coddenham's Annual Parish Meeting 2026

## The Coddenham Centre Chair's Report

The Coddenham Centre's (TCC) fiscal year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, saw a changing of the guard. After their sterling stewardship for the past six years, weathering the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine, Andrew MacPherson and Ray Collins left their posts of chair and treasurer respectively for well earned retirements. John Whitehead and I joined to replace Ray and Andrew, alongside new trustee Rachel Carter and marketing, administration and deputy centre manager, Kathryn Lillingston. Existing trustees Debbie McDonnell and Elaine Thomas and, of course centre manager Gail Abley have provided the experienced heads, to guide the 'new entrants'.

Prior to their retirement Andrew and Ray oversaw the resurfacing of TCC's two tennis courts, which was largely funded via grants from Mid-Suffolk District Council (MSDC), with further support from Sport England and our parish charities, the Day Foundation and Lady Catherine Gardemau's Education Foundation. Now renamed 'the courts', the project has expanded to supporting pickleball and netball alongside tennis and basketball. Permanent lining is due to be undertaken in the next few weeks. We are already seeing regular hiring of the courts for each sport.

The new board of trustees plans to continue Andrew's and Ray's work. In the next few months this includes revamping the children's playpark on the recreation ground and increasing TCC's storage capacity to support parish events and activities. Again, MSDC has stepped in with the bulk of the funding, alongside the Day Foundation and Lady Catherine Gardemau's Education Foundation, a contribution from Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy held by the parish council, the net proceeds of last year's fete and donations from residents. Later in the year we will need to consider what to do with the bowling green, but that project will be something to move forward on in 2027 at the earliest and likely be dependent on how local government reorganisation plays out.

Alongside projects and keeping a keen eye on expenditure, much trustee time is given to ensuring TCC remains relevant to residents but has enough income from commercial activities to remain viable. We believe that we already have a comprehensive and diverse programme of community events scheduled for the remainder of 2026. This includes a summer community party to be held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July, in place of the summer ball. Its open to all (adults) and includes a live band, a full bar and eats. Please support our events. There is an element of use or lose. We remain open to new ideas, especially if suggestions come with an offer to run an event. Alongside functions there is an extensive calendar of regular classes, with tai chi, seated yoga and hula hoop fitness added recently.

TCC remains incredibly grateful to its volunteers, including the trustees who, alongside the centre team and its regular patrons ensure that it continues to be used daily to support community.

Weddings, parties and gatherings of remembrance, together with organisational use of the hall and/or the meeting room and commercial use of the kitchen are important income earners for TCC. Having lost two regular users of the kitchen in 2025 due to their business success meaning they could secure their own premises we are redoubling our efforts to attract new business. This includes a wedding fair in mid-February 2027 and the promotion of the hall for large family gatherings over the Christmas/New Year period.

In terms of financials, turnover dropped by 11.4% to £39,275 and we made a loss of £3,517. The loss wasn't unexpected and improved on the budgeted loss of £5,920. This year's budget assumes break-even, hence our need to control costs and, more importantly improve our income. It will remain a challenge!

Nick Mills

Chair, The Coddenham Centre