

Stanstead Village Community Centre & Social Club Annual Report 2025

Achievements and improvements since the last Parish Meeting

Over the past twelve months the Management Committee has made several improvements to the Community Centre including:

- Decoration of the Community Centre including the bar has been completed.
- A change of suppliers to Woodforde's & Nethergate and a new Cellar system has been installed.
- Nineteen solar panels and a storage battery have been installed to save on electricity bills and decarbonisation of the building.

There have been several successful social events including:

- Summer beer & music festival, Children's Halloween Party, Monthly Bingo sessions, Charity Quiz nights, Christmas Party, New Year Party, BBQs, Food Vans, Casino evening, Country & Western evening, Pilates exercise classes & Macmillan Charity Coffee morning.

The Committee has also been successful in achieving the following:

- Grants from Babergh District Council, Suffolk Climate Action Partnership & the Parish Council to the value of £18,200. This has paid for Solar panels, bar alterations, Living Well in Winter Scheme, plumbing repairs, new entertainment system, new TV in the lounge and a replacement shed. The Car park has also been resurfaced from existing funds.
- The Community Centre has been accepted as part of the Suffolk wide 'Meet Up Mondays/Sunday' Scheme to tackle social isolation in conjunction with The Rural Coffee Caravan Charity.
- Several policies have been introduced including an updated Constitution to improve it's Governance and ability to secure Grants. Amelia Ward has completed Safeguarding training to become the Safeguarding Lead for the Community Centre.

The Committee has attempted to introduce other schemes however these were not successful for different reasons:

- Installation of two EV charge points, initially this scheme was approved by Suffolk County Council's 'Plug in Suffolk' scheme however, remedial work was required to the electricity supply at a cost of £35,000 therefore the proposal was withdrawn by Suffolk County Council.

- Introduction of a food pantry. This was discussed with the Community food partnership Officer from Community Action Suffolk. The limited opening times of the Community Centre and physical layout unfortunately mean this scheme was not viable.
- As part of the Solar Panel project Members and residents were canvassed for volunteers to establish a 'Keep the Heat scheme' in the Village <https://www.greensuffolk.org/what-we-do/projects/keep-the-heat/> Unfortunately there were no expressions of interest to run this scheme from Members.

Challenges and Risks regarding the future

The Community Centre has improved its Governance over the last twelve months to reduce its financial and liability exposure however, there are risks which remain and threaten the future viability of the Community Centre:

- The absence of a formal lease agreement between the Parish Council and the Management Committee particularly relating to financial and managerial responsibilities for the building and land.
- The Centre is currently financially viable with reserve funds but, it cannot continue to rely solely on trade from the bar to fund maintenance and operational costs due to an ongoing decrease in income from the bar. There is a requirement to diversify revenue including Grant funding for any future projects, operational costs and maintenance. The Community Centre has registered with the 'Your Hall' website to promote the Centre as a place to hire as another means to raise funding.
- The Committee does need new Members to meet these challenges and ensure the Centre can continue for the benefit of the residents of Stanstead Village however, the Committee has recently been unable to recruit any new Members. This is putting a greater burden on the smaller number of volunteers that remain with little resilience left in the current Management Committee.

The Management Committee are making every effort to address the different challenges that currently face the Community Centre.

Unfortunately, should it not be possible to address all of these challenges the Committee will have no other option but to dissolve the Community Centre & Social Club returning the management and control of the building back to the Parish Council.