

Stanstead Parish Council

Stanstead Village Community Centre,
The Hill, Stanstead, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 9AP
email: clerk@stansteadparishcouncil.gov.uk

To: Mr Colin Warne
[The Chair]
Stanstead Village Community Centre
The Hill
Stanstead
Sudbury
Suffolk
CO10 9AP
By email to: stansteadcommunitycentre@gmail.com

Date 11th June 2026

Dear Colin,

Negotiations relating to the request of a new lease for the Stanstead Village Community Centre (SVCC)

The Parish Council values SVCC and appreciates the time and effort that the Management Committee (MC / SVCCMC) has put into the management and organisation of the Community Centre. The Parish Council hopes to come to a mutually acceptable agreement and to further support the SVCCMC and protect this valued community asset.

SVCCMC has expressed a need to have a long lease in order to move forward with obtaining grant funding and making improvements. The PC acknowledges that a new lease should be put in place. SVCC has also asked the PC to take on responsibility of external aspects of the building (and certain other costs such as fire protection, electrical safety, and drainage) and pay the buildings' element of the insurance.

The PC wants to support the Community Centre but is very limited on funds. Last year the PC had a budget deficit of £2592 and for the current year (in spite of a 13.07% increase in council tax precept) the budget is for a £2201 deficit (on income of £13,992) which will have to be taken from reserves. Hence the PC cannot take on any significant additional financial obligations.

Following several working group meetings, either with the MC or alone as Councillors, the PC has come to the following possible options. Another option that was considered was separating the bar and club from the hall, but due to the cost of such work this was dismissed. If the MC has an option or variation on one of the options below, please suggest it to the PC, being mindful that we would all like to move forward swiftly.

Whatever option is selected, the PC would be happy to be more proactive in looking at funding for repairs/improvements for the community centre and would very much like SVCC and the PC to work more closely together.

Option 1. No Change to current terms, with a new rolling lease put in place.

The PC will help with finances / repairs where possible and assist with grant applications.

Option 2. A new five-year lease, with a low rent to be agreed, this would be more than the current peppercorn rent, but less than market rates, and with tenant repair and maintenance terms similar to those currently in place, to include the PC to pay a sum to the SVCC to cover the cost of the building insurance. The rent would be sufficient to allow the PC to meet the insurance costs and to set aside amounts each year to use towards maintenance etc that would bring the community benefit.

The rental income to be earmarked to be used by the PC only for spend required on the Community Centre and not absorbed elsewhere.

- a. The PC to have free use of the building for events with net proceeds being earmarked for SVCC
- b. Private bookings by casual users to have the option to book the whole building (other than the bar) for an event, with club members being excluded during the event. In such cases the bar would remain locked and the hirer would take on responsibility for any supply of alcohol they require. For casual users there should be an option to use the club bar if they wish, but to be organised with the SVCC
- c. An agreed calendar of events which both sides mutually allow
- d. An emphasis on working together for the community
- e. A shared forward plan and vision for the Community Centre

Option 3. A new 5-year fixed commercial lease with proportionate rent. The PC would take responsibility for external structure repairs and insurance, excluding solar panels and battery. The rental income to be earmarked to be used by the PC only for the community centre. This allows SVCC MC to apply for grants.

- a. The PC to have free access for community events such as sale trail etc and in exchange there still be no charge for SVCCMC's use of the playing field i.e. for the beer festival etc.
- b. As option 2 b, c, d, and e

Option 4. For the SVCCMC to give 12 months' notice to terminate their existing lease and thereafter the PC to take control of the Community Centre or look for a new Management committee.

Option 5. As option 4. The PC could take over the management of the community centre and rent it back to the community centre management committee for a fee (likely an hourly rate), in a similar way as they would do with casual renters would book the premises. The MC would have priority over casual bookings.

Option 1, 2 or 3 could be seen as giving breathing space for discussions for a longer agreement.

On any of option 1-3, the PC would need to be assured prior to lease renewal and at least annually as the building owner that all necessary regulations are being complied with (e.g. electrical safety, fire regs, PRS licenses) and the site is safe and fit for purpose. Any material changes to the site would need to be agreed with the PC or in an emergency, notified to the PC.

Please take some time to consider the suggestions and if you would like to meet to discuss a preferred option please let me know, equally a written response is acceptable if you are in a position to do so. We will then be able to move forward and agree specific terms together.

Regardless of moving this forward, the PC would like to request a further working group meeting to look at the current compliance issues and make sure we are both doing what we should be doing to ensure that the community centre is legally compliant.

We would ask that your communication comes directly to the Parish Clerk to avoid any mixed communications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Howard', followed by a period.

Mrs Julia Howard
Stanstead Parish Clerk
On behalf of Stanstead Parish Council