

Councillor Richard Freeman

Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services

Full Council report – 21 March 2023

COMMUNITY HUBS:

Three of our four UDC Day Centres were closed in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic. All have now re-opened, as “Community Hubs” providing a range of facilities and services more closely matched to the needs of their local population.

Each operates on a different business model to the Day Centre it replaces, which were dependent upon a supporting staff from UDC. The new Community Hubs are run largely by volunteers, but with occasional financial support from UDC in the form of one-off grants.

Most recent of these, in the **GARDEN ROOMS** at **SAFFRON WALDEN**, has been functioning informally as a warm hub for the public and is widely used for town council and social purposes. A lease has this week been agreed between its owners (Uttlesford District Council) and Saffron Walden Town Council (SWTC) for the latter to use the premises as a re-imagined community hub. It will provide a range of facilities and services for the walk-in public. Its central position in the middle of Saffron Walden, adjacent to a car park and several major shops, makes it ideal for this purpose. It will be run by SWTC in collaboration with local volunteer organisations.

THAXTED COMMUNITY HUB has been re-imagined as “Pam’s Place” and has a regular clientele who enjoy meals and social events which take place in a friendly and welcoming environment. It is run by a newly formed **Charitable Incorporated Organisation**. Again, there are no staff paid for by Uttlesford district council, but we own and maintain the building.

CLLR MIKE TAYLER, a Thaxted District Councillor, has kindly provided the following summary:

“The Day Centre is now known as PAM’S PLACE, as part of our wish to widen the scope of the community hub, to be less focused on providing a regular set lunch time menu to those aged 55 plus (and in reality it was providing necessary food to a maximum of 35 individuals who were mostly in their 70s and 80s) and more accessible to all residents, for a wider range of activities.

A manager and manager/cook have been employed, and we have asked if a resident of nearby Vicarage Mead Flats could act as a caretaker.

Bookings are now being taken via e-booking. We are setting up a website.

Regular openings to the public are held on Friday mornings to coincide with Thaxted Market (when visitors come from Thaxted and the surrounding villages). “Coffee and Cake” and social mixing has been very successful; further days are being considered, also providing light lunches.

It is hoped that our cook will be able to provide some more formal lunches from time to time.

Regular bookings have been re-established for lectures and activities such as sewing groups. The Scouts are also interested.

Cllr Foley and I provided funding (via our “new homes bonus”) to equip Pam’s Place with audio visual equipment for presentations and films to appeal to those who want to use the venue for talks, lectures and business use.

Before opening the building new flooring and internal decoration took place, making the whole place much more attractive.”

An approximation of the numbers attending each week for the Thaxted Community Hub, according to officers, are:

Activity	Number of residents attending per week
Cosy Cafe Monday 9:00am-18:00pm	100
Wednesday Lunch Club 12:30-14:30 -	35
Alzheimer/Dementia Lunch	25
Drop In Café – Friday 10:00-13:00	40 - 50

STANSTED COMMUNITY HUB is run by a voluntary organization (Touchpoint; <https://www.thetouchpoint.org>) in a building owned by Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council. UDC has very recently made a grant to upgrade some of the facilities (mainly kitchen and toilets) when the day centre was recommissioned as a community hub.

Approximate numbers of users according to officers are:

Activity	Number of residents attending per week
Tuesday Kids Free Tea-Time	30-40
Thursday Community Café	70-80 (10 free)
Friday Free Breakfast	35 (young families)
Sunday afternoon at the movies	<u>20-25 free toasties</u>

GREAT DUNMOW COMMUNITY HUB is largely unchanged by Covid. It never formally closed but introduced safety measures during the epidemic. It functions within the Rowena Davey Centre, which is supported by Uttlesford District Council and run by volunteers. It continues to deliver a similar range of services to locals as the former day centre.

Approximate number of users according to officers are:

Activity	Number of residents attending
Lunches Tuesday & Thursday	40-50

When the day centres were closed or their activities truncated because of Covid, it was thought that it could be the end of this community service in Uttlesford. The enthusiasm and support of local volunteers and UDC staff has enabled this possibility to be averted.

The new Community Hubs fulfil a worthwhile purpose in their communities and are no longer dependent upon on-going funding from UDC for their existence. They now enjoy a secure future meeting a proven need of the communities in which they function.

Cllr Richard Freeman
Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services
10th March 2023