SOMERLEYTON, ASHBY & HERRINGFLEET PARISH COUNCIL

Report of the Warm Hub Working Group

Parish Council Meeting – 2nd July 2026

Season 2025–26

1. Background

The Warm Hub was established four years ago with government funding, originally to provide support to residents facing the cost-of-living crisis. Over time, it became clear that those the scheme was intended to reach did not engage for perfectly understandable reasons. The Warm Hub has therefore evolved to fulfil a different but equally important purpose: addressing social isolation during the winter months, bringing neighbours together through a regular programme of events and activities.

Funding in recent years has been provided by our local councillor, Paul Ashdown, and East Suffolk Council, for which we are extremely grateful.

2. The Working Group

The Warm Hub is led by Claire Diggins (Parish Councillor) and supported by a dedicated team of volunteers, two of whom are parish councillors, and the Parish Clerk:

- Jenny Anderson
- Claire Diggins (Parish Councillor)
- Julia Griffith (Parish Councillor)
- Jenni Livingston
- Neil Livingston (Parish Councillor)
- Sue Read (Parish Clerk)
- Deborah Reed

3. Funding for 2025–26

Following the Parish Council meeting in September 2025, Sue Read and Jenni Livingston applied to the East Suffolk Council Enabling Communities Grant Scheme. The full amount of £775 was awarded and paid into the Parish Council account. The group wishes to record its thanks to Councillor Paul Ashdown and East Suffolk Council for their continued support.

4. Programme of Sessions 2025–26

The Warm Hub ran for six monthly sessions, held on Monday mornings from 10am to 12pm at Somerleyton Village Hall. Each session offered tea, coffee, cake and a warm welcome alongside a varied programme of activities. Publicity leaflets were delivered to all households in the three parishes and posters placed on all notice boards.

Monday 3rd November 2025 – Cookery Demonstration

The season opened with a cookery demonstration by Nanna Ley, who showed attendees how to make Danish Kiss Cakes and Cheesy Snaps. This proved a popular and lively start to the winter programme.

Monday 1st December 2025 – From Lowestoft to the World

More than 28 people came to hear popular local historian Ivan Bunn talk about his new book, From Lowestoft to the World. Ivan told the remarkable story of Joseph John Adams (1866–1944), a Lowestoft man who began as a fisherman and went on to become a long-distance mariner, keeping detailed diaries of his extraordinary adventures – from mundane shipboard life to being caught up in a Chilean coup and prospecting for gold. Ivan's grandson joined him to talk about the process of transcribing the handwritten diaries. Many attendees purchased copies of the book, which also contains fascinating appendices.

Monday 12th January 2026 – Desert Island Discs

More than 28 people attended this session, which invited everyone to share one of the first records they had ever bought, explain why they chose it, and reflect on whether they still liked it today. The result was a fascinating selection of 17 pieces of music, ranging from heavy metal and rock to music hall, Scottish music and classical. In a departure from tradition, the music was projected as YouTube videos on the big screen rather than played as audio tracks, which brought the performances wonderfully to life. The session ended with everyone on their feet dancing along to Tutti Frutti by Little Richard. Refreshments on this occasion were provided by Jenni and Deborah.

Monday 9th February 2026 – Helping Wildlife in Your Garden

37 people signed in for this session, at which the Parish Council's Green and Environment Group shared information and advice on supporting wildlife in gardens. Topics covered included creating a small pond, making wildflower 'seed bombs', which plants deer tend to avoid (not many!), and how to manage bird feeding. The Men's Shed also presented their handmade bird boxes and hedgehog houses.

Monday 9th March 2026 – You Be the Judge: Introduction to the Magistracy

Magistrates in the Community delivered an engaging presentation on the role of magistrates and the justice system. Attendees were given the opportunity to sit as magistrates themselves for a case study, gaining a real insight into how magistrates work together. This proved to be one of the most interactive sessions of the season.

Monday 13th April 2026 – Pablo Fanque and the Golden Age of the Circus

The final session of the season attracted 25 sign-ins, with a few additional attendees. Local historian Gareth Davies gave a presentation on nineteenth-century circuses, focusing on the life of Pablo Fanque. Born William Darby in Norwich to parents of African descent, Fanque became a celebrated equestrian and circus owner. He is immortalised in The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album and has a blue plaque on the John Lewis building in Norwich.

5. Attendance

Attendance was consistently good throughout the season, with sign-in figures recorded as follows:

Session	Sign-ins
3 November 2025 – Cookery Demonstration	23
1 December 2025 – From Lowestoft to the World	28+
12 January 2026 – Desert Island Discs	28+
9 February 2026 – Helping Wildlife in Your Garden	37
9 March 2026 – Introduction to the Magistracy	30
13 April 2026 – Pablo Fanque and the Circus	25

Note: Sign-in sheets were available for all sessions but it is felt that not everyone signed in; so actual attendance may have been higher in some cases.

6. Financial Report

The following is a summary of income and expenditure for the 2025–26 season, drawn from the full Income and Expenditure record:

Item	Income	Expenditure	Balance
Enabling Communities Grant (East Suffolk Council)	£755.00		£755.00
Flyers & Posters (RDP Printers)		£42.60	£712.40
Refreshments – Tesco (November)		£22.49	£689.91
Nanna Ley – Cookery Demonstration fee		£50.00	£639.91
Refreshments – M&S Gluten Free		£7.00	£632.91
Refreshments – Tesco (December)		£14.00	£618.91
Ivan Bunn – Speaker's fee		£75.00	£543.91
Refreshments – Tesco Milk (January)		£2.50	£541.41
Refreshments – Claire (February)		£6.85	£534.56
Refreshments – Tesco Milk (March)		£2.50	£532.06
Refreshments – Waitrose Gluten Free (March)		£4.00	£528.06
Magistrates Association – presentation fee (March)		£50.00	£478.06
Gareth Davies – Speaker's fee (April)		£75.00	£403.06
Village Hall Rent (6 sessions × £30)		£180.00	£223.06
TOTAL	**£755.00**	**£531.94**	**£223.06**

The closing balance for the 2025–26 season is £223.06. The working group will consult with Councillor Paul Ashdown on the best use of these funds going forward.

7. Conclusion

The 2025–26 Warm Hub season has been another successful one. Attendance has been consistently strong, the programme has been varied and engaging, and the atmosphere at every session has been one of warmth and community spirit. The working group is grateful to everyone who has supported the Hub – speakers, volunteers, the Men's Shed, the Green and Environment Group, and of course the many residents who come along each month. Special thanks are also due to the cake bakers whose delicious contributions added so much to every session, and in particular to Jenni Livingston as Chief Baker; and to Deborah Reed and Jenny Anderson who mastered the considerable art of serving tea and coffee to a very long queue.

The working group will meet in due course to consider the way forward for the Warm Hub and to decide whether and how to continue into the 2026–27 season. The Parish Council will be informed of the outcome of those discussions.

Finally, the working group would like to place on record its warmest thanks to Sue Read, who has been an unstinting source of support to the Warm Hub since its inception. Sue is moving on to pastures new and will be greatly missed by the whole team. We wish her every happiness.

Submitted by the Warm Hub Working Group:

Jenny Anderson

Claire Diggins

Julia Griffith

Jenni Livingston

Neil Livingston

Sue Read

Deborah Reed

July 2026