

## Debenham Sports & Leisure Centre Report to the Parish Council – May 2026.

Debenham Sports & Leisure (DS&L) is the trading name of the Debenham Village Hall and Playing Field Trust which is a charitable company. Once again, we have had a successful trading year, generating a surplus of about £61,000 before depreciation, providing more activities, events and fitness classes, whilst retaining the existing service delivery.

For a second year we had to deal with an above inflation pay rise, due to the National Living Wage (NLW) increase. Our Operational staff saw this as a challenge and worked hard at reducing expenditure and increasing income through new innovative ideas and expanding current services.

Our reserves remain healthy and intact. Further detailed financial information can be viewed online soon or at the AGM on Wednesday May 27 @ 7pm. All are welcome to this.

Our staff/trustees and volunteers are our most valuable assets. They, along with our customers and grant providers, continue to ensure we provide a well-maintained facility that is safe and modern, catering for everyone's needs whatever their chosen activity.

We acknowledge the continued, excellent relationships we have with Debenham High School, The Forge Community Church and Zeera, the Indian take away. A big thank you to them all. We are also grateful to those Grant providers who have invested in our facilities over the 2025/26 financial year. Their support is crucial to the success of our Centre. Zeera, have recently advised that they will be expanding and moving to new premises to provide for both a takeaway and restaurant at the end of this month. We wish them every success in their new venture. What will fill their kitchen space is still to be decided.

We have also been successful in being awarded grants, mostly from MSDC for things such as our GP referral scheme and Lottery money for gym refurbishment. We are also very grateful to the PC for their grants, £1,550 for car park surface repairs and £600 towards our very popular Fireworks Night.

We've shared many positive achievements over the past year.

Following the departure of our General Manager, Trevor Coulson, at the end of September, for a job nearer his home in Oulton Broad, existing staff members, Lauren Squirrel and Rachel Keeble stepped into the role jointly, with the support of fellow leads and the wider team. This shared approach has helped maintain continuity and supported the centre's ongoing progress. During this time, the team has been expanded with the recruitment of a new cleaner, two leisure assistants, and additional part-time bar staff.

There have been a number of important maintenance and improvement projects, including car park repairs and the renovation of the kitchen washing up area. We are now looking ahead to the refurbishment of the Sports Hall floor, planned for July, which will be a significant improvement to our facilities.

Our community fundraising events have been particularly successful this year. Highlights include a record-breaking attendance at our fireworks night, a sold-out Christmas dinner and well-attended live music events, including the 4 day Country Music Festival.

There has also been a noticeable increase in private hire of our community spaces, hosting a wide range of occasions such as weddings, birthday celebrations, conferences, meetings, and other events. This reflects the flexibility, quality, and appeal of the spaces and facilities provided.

Debenham Leisure Centre was chosen as the verification and count centre for the Babergh and Mid Suffolk areas for the County Council elections last Thursday. DLC was chosen, not only for the space it can provide for the count to take place, but also the facilities for candidates, agents and the press.

Dine at the Deben, our café / restaurant, continues to grow from strength to strength, while the bar remains busier than ever, contributing to a welcoming and vibrant social atmosphere within the centre after its major refurbishment.

Gym memberships and class attendance remain consistently high, which has enabled us to expand both the number and variety of classes we offer. We have also invested in Pickleball equipment, significantly broadening our racket sports provision and attracting a much wider demographic from the local community. It has been fantastic to see so many new faces enjoying the centre and engaging in additional sports opportunities.

A long-term plan is currently being drawn up to use some of surplus funds to continue to improve the facilities for all in the local area and beyond.