

## **The Octagon Community Hub Report for Willingham Parish Council May 2025**

The Octagon Community Hub has gone from strength to strength in the last year. With your generous support we have been able to offer a much more nutritious lunch. When we opened the Hub we were limited to tea, coffee, biscuits and cup-of-soup sachets. Our home made vegetable soups served with buttered toast are now very popular, especially our sweet potato soup and our pea and mint soup. We can also now “ring the changes” and offer beans on toast and also jacket potatoes with beans and/or cheese. We budgeted very carefully during the first year of your grant but since January 2025 when you awarded us a second grant, we have gradually been extending our provision and will continue to do so.

We noticed that some of our attendees on arrival consumed several biscuits which accompany the tea and coffee and it became apparent that some people had not had breakfast. We are now offering buttered toast and jam or marmalade between 10am and 10.30am and have even made some home-made rhubarb, pear and ginger jam instead of using shop bought jam! Mid morning cake and biscuit snacks are still available for those who come later and then we serve a light lunch from 11.30am.

Between 20 and 30 people attend regularly and almost all live in Willingham. In the last 6 months approximately 60 individuals have enjoyed the Hub's hospitality. Some people come every week while others come when they can or need a place where they feel safe, secure and comfortable.

In liaison with Cambridgeshire ACRE, we frequently host visiting speakers and activities. Last week two representatives from the NatWest Bank spoke to our members about Fraud and Scams and they will return in June to focus on The Cost of Living. Other visitors have included Karen Mackelvie who made rose flame candles with all those present and Jem from Jem's Bees who shared knowledge about her bees and the products they make. Two representatives also visited on behalf of the Poverty Commission Project and discussed with some attendees issues linked to “Living with Poverty”. Other mornings are just busy with social conversation and the enjoyment of each other's company.

My colleague and I are also very honoured to have been nominated by Cambridgeshire ACRE, supported by Cambridgeshire County Council, to receive an official invitation from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to attend the concert on Horse Guards Parade to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025. The Community Hub is particularly honoured to accept this invitation as Cambridgeshire County Council only has two tickets to this event. We were selected for all of our volunteering work in our local community. To “get us in the mood” we are planning to celebrate VE Day early with music and songs from the 1940s at the Hub on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May.

We would like to thank you most sincerely for your support again this year. Your grant towards the Hub's refreshments has, and is, making a huge difference to how we can support our village community.

Sue Lines  
Lead Volunteer  
April 2025