

Community Pantry

The Community Pantry in the Church is still being well used by people who are struggling to make ends meet. There are normally at least three visits a day to collect both essential food and non-food items. To prevent abuse, I don't put out more than one or two of each item at a time, so I normally restock at least twice a day. This isn't a problem as I live so close.

In the past year Suffolk County Council has supplied around half of the food and almost all the non-food the pantry offers. The problem with this system is that we never know when or even if we will get supplies and we must drive into Ipswich and fill our cars with what Suffolk decides we should have rather than what we need. Then we have the supplies in large quantities (that are to last for many weeks or sometimes many months) which are very heavy to transport and a real problem to store. The Council has stopped using Community Action Suffolk to order and distribute these supplies and has now employed a company called Vertas. We have tried to communicate with Suffolk to explain that this system is not easy to use and is, above all, very wasteful of Council taxpayers' money as the Council is paying significant sums for the ordering, storage and distribution of supplies. However, we are told that a change to providing organisations with a budget will not be considered. We have had just 3 collections of food since last August. The last non-food delivery was made on 3rd October 2024. Vertas provided a non-food collection from Ipswich on 9th April. It was a disappointing trip. Small projects like Leavenheath were offered very limited supplies, sometimes involving split cases so, for example, I was allowed just three tubes of toothpaste. Vertas advises that there will probably be further supplies, but they don't know what form they will take or when they will be. Communication with Suffolk is very difficult as emails do not get answered. Maisie at Babergh emails with offers of courses and social events and occasionally items, but these are of no real use.

In addition, I shop at least once a week for items that are not supplied by Suffolk, such as eggs, juice, bread and cheese and everything else when the Council supplies run out. The money for this is provided by the benefice Community Pantry and Hardship Fund which relies on donations from individuals and parish councils. We are very grateful for the donations that Leavenheath Parish Council has made in the past. I give my time, petrol etc. Donations to the Pantry are always welcome, although it is more helpful to donate to the Fund.

Tuesday Get Together

Vivian Cowell, Jacqui Rose and I held a Tuesday Get Together every second and fourth Tuesday of the month between October and 8th April in the Village Hall. We provided hot dogs, soup, hot drinks and cakes and half an hour of gentle Pilates as well as games of cards, Cribbage and Rummicubs. As Ladybirds has finished, we changed the time of the event from the afternoon to the morning, 10.30 – 13.00. On balance, I think the morning slot is preferred. Attendance has been mixed but overall quite good and it has been much appreciated. It is funded by the Community Pantry and Hardship Fund. (I obtained a £1000 grant from Babergh last year.) Stoke by Nayland Golf Club kindly provides the sausages. Funding permitting we intend to restart the event in October

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