

Hollesley Annual Parish Meeting

Thursday 2nd April 2026

Thank you for asking me to speak about the Good Neighbours, Meet Up Mondays and Peninsula Shed Hollesley.

The Good Neighbours for Hollesley, Boyton and Shingle Street was set up with help from Community Action Suffolk in 2018 to support our villagers. We have a dedicated Telephone number anyone can use to access local advice and information. Our volunteers hold the phone on a rota basis. In practice, our main function is to provide transport for villagers to appointments, including to the hospital, doctors and other visits. We have a number of willing drivers to help those who have no car or who are limited by health or disability. This is especially valued as we have just two buses a day at times which do not fit most peoples' needs. The CATS Demand responsive service is often under pressure too. The cost we charge just covers the petrol, we hope, in these difficult times. We could do with more driver volunteers and phone holders to cover times when people are unavailable or on holiday. Do think about whether this is something you would like to do to help those who benefit from our services. We are always pleased to welcome new volunteers for driving, holding the phone occasionally, or serving refreshments.

Meet Up Mondays started nationwide with the idea of a commercial venue opening their doors to offer a warm space, with refreshments, to anyone with need of company and friendship, especially those on their own. In early in 2019 our Good Neighbours asked the Shepherd and Dog if they could offer this for us, and we met there for several years, with our volunteers serving those who came along. More recently due to changed opening times we now meet at the Bowls Club on Mondays from 1.30 to 3.30pm, where an average of 15 to 20 plus folk meet each week. We celebrate special events like birthdays with delicious cakes cooked especially for us by Les, our local expert. District Councillor James Mallinder supports us financially as we have to pay to hire the Bowls Club. Thanks go to Tony too, who prepares the room and washes up afterwards.

I need to announce that we now have a new name! In the past few weeks we have been informed by the Rural Coffee Caravan, which also supports us from time to time that MUMs should be offered by a business location, like our pub used to. Now we are independent and have to pay for our venue, we can come under the Rural Coffee Caravan umbrella, and we have chosen the name **Hollesley Meet-Ups**. Look out for the new logo which you will see in next month's Village Voices!

Peninsula Shed Hollesley is a new venture started just over a year ago. The Shed idea started in Australia, and has spread worldwide. Where-as it is more often, though not exclusively, the ladies who come along to Meet Up Mondays, older or retired men, in particular, can often feel isolated at home after leaving their regular employment. The Shed offers a place to talk informally whilst engaging or learning about a particular project. It is not exclusively for men, and several women have shown interest, and I hope others will join me at The Shed where I enjoy going along most weeks. We have a temporary venue where an average of 12 or so meet, some twice a week, and are engaging in a variety of projects. Men come from our neighbouring villages too, Alderton and Bawdsey, hence the name **Peninsula Shed Hollesley**.

A variety of amazing tools and equipment large and small have been given to us, by those who can no longer use them, and we are so grateful to all of them. We have experts who understand all about Health and Safety when these tools are used. Some men work on their own projects and other items can be made for the community, helping each other if needed. Anything the Sheddors make can be offered for a reasonable donation. So far they have made bird and bat boxes, hedgehog homes, and waist high planters which are just the right height for working, perfect for summer flowers or herbs. The men have also installed a new welcome seat outside the Village Hall and have refurbished a large vestment lid for Hollesley church.

This is not a Repair Shed (there is one in Woodbridge), but the men are keen to do any suitable community projects for the village. Shed details are available on their new Website, www.peninsula-shed.org.uk . A purpose built venue is planned for the future, but this will take time and grants will be required.

A couple of times a year the Good Neighbours volunteers, Meet Up Mondays, and Shed folk join together for a Celebration Lunch in Hollesley Village Hall. Once again our thanks go to James Mallinder for his support for this too.

Finally we thank all our volunteers for the support they offer, whether driving, serving refreshments, or befriending in any other way. All of them contribute to making Hollesley the friendly and vibrant village it is. Thank you, everyone!

Helen Lewis

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