

## **Transcript Start:**

*Audio: Intro music bumper.*

### **00:00:11 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Welcome to the Updating Colchester podcast, where you can take a deep dive into some of the capital works projects that are in the pipeline for our town. This episode will explore the new Stanway Lakelands Centre and how it will benefit the local community.

### **00:00:27 Cllr Paul Dundas**

My name is councillor Paul Dundas and I'm leader and portfolio holder at for strategy at Colchester Bar Council. Today I'm joined by Councillor Beverly Oxford portfolio holder for communities.

### **00:00:38 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

Hi, I'm Beverly Oxford. Thank you for inviting me.

### **00:00:42 Cllr Paul Dundas**

And Donna Tristram from Stanway Parish council.

### **00:00:45 Donna Tristram**

Hello there, Paul and Beverly. I'm the clerk for Stanway Parish council. Nice to see you.

### **00:00:50 Cllr Paul Dundas**

So, let's get stuck in welcome everyone.

### **00:00:54 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

Councillor Dundas, let's start by asking you a question. What is the new Stanway Lakeland Centre?

### **00:01:01 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Stanway Lakelands Centre used to be known as the new Stanway Community Centre which is on the Western bypass near Lakeland Way it's basically a new community centre, probably what used to be called something like a village hall, but as well as that it's got new function rooms, it's got some new

offices, it's got a new conference suite and is designed to be very much a multipurpose building for Stanway of the 2020s.

**00:01:32 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

I think also that is worth mentioning is that there will be a changing places toilet, so anybody with disabilities will be able to join in. And also with the design of the building there's PVC panels on the roofs so I think that's another good use and good reason for the building.

**00:01:56 Cllr Paul Dundas**

So, moving on. Why was this development needed and who benefits?

**00:02:01 Donna Tristram**

That's essentially the bigger community of Stanway because, as everyone living within Stanway will be aware over the last decade or so, the place has grown in size exponentially really, so there's a lot more people that want to stay local, use local facilities, and although we have a great community centre in in Villa Road at the moment, there's capacity for something new there, there's more people that need to use those facilities.

**00:02:06 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Absolutely yes. I mean... I mean Stanway is quite lucky in some respects that it already has three halls, but the original village hall is just over 50 years old. I think it was built in 1961, then the Tollgate Hall was built in the 1980s and Victory Hall, which was a sort of add-on about 20 years ago. But they are fully booked virtually all the time and with the expansion in population, which is numbering thousands per year in some years in Stanway, it's clear that the community facilities just aren't keeping up, so this adds considerable extra capacity.

**00:03:15 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

I think also if it's a good development, you also need a good community centre to go with it, which I feel that this community centre will be. But it's also been done with the community being involved in it rather than saying "Right, this is what we're going to supply for you. This is what you're going to have." The community have been asked, what do you want? And if they ask what you want, they'll be more wanting to use it because they feel involved in it. But I also think what is, I find really a wonderful thing to do, not only catering for the residents and people, but also for the wildlife. There's going to be a hedgehog house and a kestrel house, and I think that's absolutely amazing. What a wonderful thing to think of. Because normally you think of people first and you forget about

the wildlife that goes with it. But with this it's people first plus animals. I think that's absolutely wonderful.

**00:04:20 Cllr Paul Dundas**

I agree Bev and what is nice about it is it's right next to the new country park as the country park develops, it's going to be probably a great place for people to have a cup of coffee on the way home and there was actually a lot of input from the existing managers of the current village halls because what we discovered is that you'd think that designing a community hall is simple, but it's actually really, really complicated because you have so many conflicting needs from different people who are going to use it. So, you've got to make sure the kitchen is in the right place. The bar area is in the right place. You've got to be able to cater properly. The first designs which came back have changed a lot by people who run current halls, saying actually no don't do that because we tried it and it doesn't work. So, we've ended up with a much better design, I think.

**00:05:09 Donna Tristram**

I think as Beverly pointed out, this is quite unique in so much that the outside space has really been factored into the design and, you know, that I think that's a really positive thing as you say. Particularly in Stanway because there's a lot of loss of outdoor space, so we will be looking at, as the Community Centre is developed, to further enhance that outside space, so it will almost be like another room. You know, it could be somewhere that you would come or you would use after you've been into the community centre, so it will just be quite seamless that you can move from inside to outside. And again, the design has really big sweeping glass windows which look out onto that open space as well, so I think it gives you a lovely feel of the countryside.

**00:06:01 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Absolutely, yes. I agree.

**00:06:04 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

How is the centre being funded and how does it link up to existing capital works?

**00:06:09 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Well, it's been funded by developer contributions that the... we've had considerable numbers of houses built in recent years in Stanway. So, the developers who built them have had to pay nearly £2 million in contributions for the new community centre, so it doesn't actually use any council taxpayers money. It's all come from the developers.

**00:06:37 Donna Tristram**

Which is a very positive thing, you know, that a contribution is taken towards providing facilities that are that are needed as a result of those developments.

**00:06:49 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Yeah, and I think in terms of how it links up to the other capital projects we we have to accept that we have an expanding population not just in Stanway but in Colchester Borough as a whole. So as a Council we have to ensure that we are expanding our Community facilities. The new Highwoods centre is another example. Another area where there has been and going to be a a lot more development, throughout the borough, because we have to actually ensure that when people come and live here, they join a community, not just a housing, estate, off a ring road.

**00:07:26 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

I do think it's a quite a nice change that developers are willing to assist and help because I've said for quite a few years. If you build houses, houses mean families, families mean children, they have to have somewhere to go. Something to do because that way it creates a community, and the community is there from day one rather than to retrofit, a few years later, a community that basically hasn't been a community from the beginning. You need to start from the beginning, not from the end.

**00:08:08 Cllr Paul Dundas**

I think that's a very good point, Bev. Very good indeed.

**00:08:12 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

The centre has a distinctive design. Can you tell us a little more about the overall vision for the centre, and how the design plays into this?

**00:08:23 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Well, I think one of the things the design tries to take account of is the fact that it is on, on or right next to, a Country Park.

So, as Donna mentioned earlier, you have a terrace which goes out and looks over the Country Park, which hopefully in the summer, when we get one, will be a pleasant place to sit and I think as we spoke about earlier that the fact that we have, they have really tried to think about the environment and how the whole centre will fit into it.

**00:08:55 Donna Tristram**

Yes, I mean to that end they have put in electrical charging points. There's a focus on electric charging points also for bikes, push bikes, which is becoming more relevant and perhaps scooters will be able to be charged from that as well, so there's been a real conscious decision to make this as ecologically as possible, from actual the facilities that are put in, down to the actual build materials as well.

**00:09:30 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Indeed, so I suppose the next, the next question is what facilities will the centre have?

I think this is a good one for Donna to jump in on.

**00:09:40 Donna Tristram**

The internal facilities will be a large hall which will be similar to a sort of sports facility. There's no stage there. So, it's the size of badminton court, and it has a vaulted ceiling, so you'd be able to use that quite successfully for a lot of indoor physical activities. And then there's a really lovely welcoming foyer area, stairs up to some offices which will be private for the Parish council, but obviously open to the public, and so that we have that outward facing line of communication. There will also be a conference room up there, disabled access obviously to the first floor. And downstairs another similar sized conference room which can actually be segregated as well, and another meeting room. Toilet facilities obviously and the changing facilities which are fully disabled, accessibility will be provided there and a fully commercial kitchen, so it's been designed with as many different variable options as possible. There's many differently sized rooms, they can be divided, opened out. And so, looking at you know what it might be used for. It could be anything from private functions through to regular Yoga classes any sort of facilities really that that that the community is looking for? It has so many variables that it can provide and as I said, on top of that, a very appealing outdoor space which, you know, people will be able to access when they come to the centre.

**00:11:32 Cllr Paul Dundas**

There's a lot of small businesses, a lot of self-employed people in Stanway. A lot of people working from home increasingly so I think post-Covid and certainly I know that the existing halls who also has a small conference facility. There is demand there for local businesses when they need to meet a client or they need to meet somebody or they need to to do something you know just to hire a room

for two or three hours, which is a nice room. Which they can have clients and suppliers visit or for meetings. So, I think they're expecting quite high demand for that.

**00:12:07 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

It sounds as though the outside the inside of the building is going to be as impressive as the outside of the building, by the sounds of it.

**00:12:15 Donna Tristram**

That's certainly the intention, it's... it's certainly a very nice space, with the with the lobby area and all of the glass looking out onto the Country Park. It's certainly going to have quite a 'wow factor', I agree with you. And as Paul said a number of of smaller rooms which could be booked for counselling sessions or anything like that,, quite small one to one sort of rooms that could be just booked on ad hoc basis or a more regular basis.

**00:12:47 Cllr Paul Dundas**

So moving on. How can people use and enjoy the centre? What can they expect to do and see?

**00:12:54 Donna Tristram**

That really depends a lot on the potential hires that want to come and use the facility to offer services to the community. The Parish council will also be looking to put on potentially more community events as well from there. So, we envisage it being a hub for, what happens in the community so obviously if hirers come, they want to have a Pilates session there every week or Tai Chi. If the community wants that, they'll support that, they'll come and use that and then that will become a regular... a regular item in the diary. So really it's going to evolve according to supply and demand.

**00:13:42 Cllr Paul Dundas**

I think the key point is it's designed to be multi-purpose. You know, it hasn't been designed with one particular hirer or one particular use in mind. The idea is, and it's very, very flexible, so you'll get quite a hopefully quite a wide variety of things going on there, and for what I understand, there's certainly been quite a lot of interest expressed in from various groups and using it already.

**00:14:05 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

A case of if you build it, they will come.

**00:14:09 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

How did you decide on the name of the centre?

**00:14:12 Donna Tristram**

The parish council contacted residents and asked for any ideas, so they were put into the hat. The parish council also had a clear vision that they wanted the centre to represent the whole of Stanway, hence the name Stanway in the title and the Lakelands that was settled on and came from obviously that particular area to identify and where the funding had come from and also, I feel it's it gives that feeling of again, the outside area, you know, it's enhancing the fact that this is bordering on the Country Park, so it just has a nice feel to it. Obviously that's that that's what was decided on. There was some talk about trying to include a reference to the Jubilee, but there were a number of similarly other named halls within the area, so when you're looking at a name, obviously it's.. it's a lot more difficult than you think actually, and it's always decided within a voting type basis. So obviously there was lots of opinions, lots of discussions, and I'm happy that we said... that the Parish Council and Colchester Borough Council settled on a really reflective name of, what this is for the community of Stanway.

**00:15:37 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Yeah, as Donna says, there was some quite long discussions over it. A lot of consultation. There were various names which came up. But I think it's actually really good. Good name because it takes the criteria we set ourselves. It's for everybody in Stanway, but it's important that we recognise and separate it, perhaps slightly out from the current Stanway Community centre on Villa road, so putting the geographical location in there we spoke about sort of Western Stanway community centre and various names like that, but it is right next door to Lakelands. It is paid for in part from developer money from Lakelands, so we thought it was really important that that was recognised in its title and I think it's... I think it works really well.

**00:16:30 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Can you tell us about the totem art project? What other projects are there surrounding the opening of the centre?

**00:16:30 Donna Tristram**

So, the totem Art project has been funded by Colchester Borough Council as a public art facility. It's going to act as signage at the at a focal point on the Western bypass and it will be a very attractive a piece of art which is, I think, up to... I think it's up to around 5 metres. It will be standing proud so it's going to represent the new centre. So, I'm very excited about the meetings that I've been having

with the Public Art Company who have won the contract to actually design that totem. They're part of their brief was that they consult the community, which they've been very active in getting in touch with all demographics of people throughout Stanway. They've actually set up free activity packs, which they've recently just released throughout the community throughout their social media routes and also through the schools and also they're setting up some trails, some walks around the facility and around the Country Park which are talking about the history of Stanway, so again, it's just looking at giving that sense of community and what happened in the past in Stanway, bringing that into the design.

So it's going to act as a really nice focal point I think, and it will be something that the the Community can appreciate in its own right, as as a public piece of art as well. With regards to when we're looking to open up, we've been given dates around late summer, so we will certainly be looking at an open event for the totem and then obviously open events for the actual inside of the centre as well. So it's... so look out for those dates 'cause they're going to be very exciting. I'm really looking forward to them.

**00:18:39 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Thanks Donna, yes now I'm sure when it comes to the opening we look to have some opening days 'cause I think one of the best ways of promoting the centre and getting hirers to commit to it will be for them to come along and see it 'cause it's going to be an impressive new building and I think once people really see it complete and come in and see what it offers. I think it'll probably sell itself to be honest with you.

**00:19:03 Donna Tristram**

Yes, I agree. we're looking at time frame, potentially opening officially, perhaps into September or the autumn. So, there will be some community engagement around about that time opening the centre and, you know, really excited.

**00:19:20 Cllr Paul Dundas**

What are the timelines for the development?

**00:19:22 Donna Tristram**

So, Hutton who are the contractors building the complex have done really well in staying on track and if you drive past you'll see there that they're up to the second level and the roof trusses are going in now. So you really do get a feel for the size and the kind of design of the building so it's worth going down and having a look if you haven't already done so.

The time frame we're looking at is late summer into autumn, perhaps for the official opening and you know, I think that will be a great time because a lot of hirers always follow a school calendar, so they're looking to book from September. You know they treat that as a term September to December. So, if we can try and marry up with that, that would be the best result really.

**00:20:21 Cllr Paul Dundas**

This site has been designed for community activity and engagement. What does community mean to you?

**00:20:27 Donna Tristram**

Already it's very established, Stanway. People identify as coming from Stanway, but I think with the new developments and there is room for people to form more of a cohesive community. So, the fact that we've got so many more people coming to the area, obviously we need more spaces to do that. You know, community is everybody and everyone.

**00:20:57 Cllr Paul Dundas**

I think you're right, but I think you make a very good point Donna that Stanway does have a very good community, but you also have a lot of people who have lived there for many many years whose children grew up there or they grew up there so they know people from school. But we also have thousands of people coming new into the community, so you have to make sure that they become part of the community and aren't disconnected from what exists.

**00:21:20 Donna Tristram**

Yes, and it's not so easy in a bigger place that borders an even bigger place. You can become a suburb of Colchester, so you could find all these new residents just end up migrating into Colchester where facilities are. So, it really is essential to give them something that they want to come to on their doorstep, and I certainly feel that the community centre and the Country Park, the wider facility there are actually going to provide them with something which will make them want to stay in Stanway.

**00:21:53 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

Because if you don't have these sorts of facilities, then places get fractionalized and one part of an estate doesn't like or doesn't want to know the other part of the estate, so you wouldn't get people coming together. And I think when people come together they share and they learn. Because nobody knows everything and nobody can do everything. So, if you have a focal place where someone can come along and ask the question, then that person they're asking may know the

question or they if they don't know the answers, they can find somebody that does. But if you don't have that focal point, the community doesn't have anywhere to go to, it doesn't know basically what it is. It doesn't know. Am I a community or do I just live in Stanway? Or do I just live anywhere because I don't have that place I know I can go to for whatever I may need, or I don't know I need it until I go there. I'll find out, "Oh I didn't know they did that, I'll join in with that" or "Oh, I think I might like to set something up to help other people." That's what a community is, it's the help and the advice and the care that one and one person will give to another person and that snowballs. So eventually everybody is coming together to help in the best way that they can.

**00:23:23 Donna Tristram**

Yes, it's a sense of identity and inclusion, and that's why the parish council are so supportive of the venture because we want to be able to be an integral part of that, as you say, providing services to the community being as involved as we as we possibly can be. We're there to serve the community of Stanway.

**00:23:49 Cllr Paul Dundas**

How would you like to see the centre being used in the future?

**00:23:52 Donna Tristram**

I would personally like to see what we've been speaking about, the community endorsing the centre by using it, and just staying and as I said, using the outdoor space as much as the indoor space when they're there. There's other ventures in Stanway you know, we know that Stanway has got some future retail developments that are going to take place. So, it's just nice to have something which isn't necessarily about spending a lot of money. So there will be groups that can operate from there that hopefully we'd be able to provide facilities for... for people that don't have perhaps, you know, great resources of money to spend at retail places. There's also an organisation called StanWell, which has been set up to... as a community group to help people that perhaps they're isolated within Stanway. They're hoping to support the community, and you know, they may well want to invest in in that city in the facility that that we've got there as well. So I just really hope that it will become a centre for the whole of Stanway that is packed out all the time with great facilities and an array of facilities, not just you know for the elderly or for the young, just a real cross section. We've even got a pétanque court, if that's how you say it, and that we hope to be able to give so again, it's just about providing facilities that might not be a lot of money and that people can come down and use.

**00:25:49 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Yeah, I agree I think well firstly I'd like to see it fully booked like to see it full, and I'd like to see a good variety of uses I wouldn't want it to become known for just one thing that it's that it's, dominated by one organisation. I'd like to see it used, perhaps to promote some of the small businesses which are springing up in Stanway. We've there's been very early talk about maybe a, you know a Saturday morning, sort of, little indoor market or something. We put all these sort of often home based businesses making things, making cakes or whatever in... in Stanway. So it'd be a great place for them to sell, sell their wares, and promote themselves and again, hopefully wide variety of ages it needs to be for everyone.

**00:26:28 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

I think by the... by involving the Community right at the beginning, then you've already got your start point that you can actually build on. You're not playing catch up, and I think with places like this it enables the residents to actually sing the praises of where they live and like where they live, because there is something for them to do to see to make friends. Where some estates that we have that sort of thing wasn't actually thought of, it was just well, build a house and put somebody in it, but I think Stanway has had a golden opportunity and I do believe the residents will come to that golden opportunity and use it to the best of their ability. Because they have the involvement right from the very beginning. I'd like to see it thrive and thrive and prosper, which I think it definitely will.

**00:27:22 Cllr Paul Dundas**

And I think the last two years have demonstrated more than we could ever have possibly imagined actually, how much human beings actually need one another and don't really like being alone.

**00:27:34 Cllr Paul Dundas**

So, can I just say a huge thank you to Bev and Donna for your contributions today.

**00:27:41 Cllr Beverly Oxford**

I'd like to say thank you for inviting me. I'm very pleased to have found out a lot more about the community centre that I didn't know. I am extremely excited with the hedgehog house and the kestrel house. I still think that's absolutely amazing, and I think it's going to be an amazing facility for residents of Stanway. Thank you.

**00:28:03 Donna Tristram**

I'd like to say thank you, Paul for hosting, and I'm really looking forward to what the summer and going into the autumn holds. I think it's a very exciting time for Stanway with the new facility

opening, so I look forward to being able to meet more of the community as well. Operating from the actual offices there. So thank you again, Paul and Beverly.

**00:28:30 Cllr Paul Dundas**

Thanks for listening to this episode of updating Colchester about Stanway Lakelands Centre. If you'd like to know more about the wide range of projects going on around Colchester to improve our borough, head over to our web page, which is [www.colchester.gov.uk/updating-colchester](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/updating-colchester).

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