

## **A heart-warming Christmas celebration for the local community -**

A Christmas feast for 180 was served at Thetford's Charles Burrell Centre – with a little help from Stalham Farmers' Club.

Volunteers and the centre's café manager prepared and cooked a full, traditional Christmas dinner, said Nik Chapman, chief executive.

We were determined to celebrate Christmas in style after the 2021 dinner's cancellation, said Mr Chapman, who wrote to thank William Sands, club's chairman for the donation.

"Your grant went towards making that happen. It was a wonderful occasion. We had a bumper number of guests," he added.

The centre's main hall was decorated and included hand-harvested vegetation for the tables plus dried fruits (and copious quantities of glitter) all made by volunteers.

"Our café manager and band of volunteers used the training kitchen to produce a full traditional Christmas dinner for 180: an amazing feat. For dessert there was a trio of mince pie, chocolate swirl and a slice of cheesecake. Nobody was hungry." Mr Chapman peeled all the sprouts!

"When our guests left we gave them all a mini-hamper of Christmas treats. Our volunteers excelled themselves."

The Centre has been running a free weekly community dinner since the autumn, which regularly attracts more than 80 people of all ages. The café is also the home of the warm project, said Mr Chapman, who briefed club members at Stalham's March meeting about the Centre's help for the local community.

He said that more than 600 families were now registered users of the Burrell Shop and membership had "ballooned." Through generous gifts we were able to offer some Christmas treats, free vegetables and fruit as well as discounting basic staples.

The Centre's reverse Advent calendar project was able to give 150 hampers for families in need of support – including a last-minute addition of fresh chickens, thanks to Banham Poultry.

"Thank you for supporting Christmas at the Charles Burrell Centre. We were delighted that £500 was donated on behalf of Stalham Farmers' Club," he wrote.

"With your generosity and the support of others we were able to deliver this event and provide a great deal of support in the lead up to Christmas.

"Although the same challenges will face people as we move into 2023 there was a moment when these problems were suspended and people were able to come together and break bread with friends, family and strangers in the spirit of Christmas.

"Thank you so much from all of us at the Charles Burrell Centre."