**Winford Community Shop**

**Annual Members Meeting 7.11.23**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Jan Longden, Pete Longden, Maureen Mullett, Joe Herring, Keith Milsom, Hugh Gregor, Alan Sage, Liz Weaver, Ken Jones, Mary Douglas-Jones, Rosemary Mawditt, Maureen Voisey, Andy House, Yvonne Chapman, Jane Spanner, David Spanner, Marcia Pearce, Jean Pearce, Committee members: Philippa Herring, Elaine Gibbins, Stuart Mackie (Treasurer), Carol House (Secretary), Jane Thompson (Chair), Dave Pearce, Dick Whittington, Simon Martin

**Apologies:** Derek Galloway, Glenis Shiner, Bridget Smith

* **Chairman’s Report – Jane Thompson, Chair**

Jane Thompson welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Dick Whittington who has helped her with the role over the year and would read out the Chairman’s report:

*Welcome to the fifth annual members meeting of Winford Community Shop Ltd.*

*It is now 4 and a half years since the community took over the management and running of the village shop and post office. During this time many of our residents have come to depend on the shop not only for their daily and weekly shopping but also as a place to chat and socialise and be part of the village and shop community*

*We have a strong team of staff with Dawn Full time and Nicky and Elaine both part time. When Dawn had a period of illness Nick and Elaine put themselves out, along with Phil to keep the shop and post office running. Our Saturday boys provide a friendly service at the weekends and reduce the pressure on the need for volunteers.*

*Our team of regular volunteers continue to work hard and we always welcome new volunteers to the team. Our volunteers thank you evening was well attended and included a fun local knowledge quiz about Winford.*

*Average turnover has increased slightly this year mainly due to rising costs but we are still managing to break even or make a short surplus each month after all the wages, bills and rent have been paid.*

*Last year Phil Febrey decided to step down as Chair but has continued to provide operational management and support for the day to day running of the shop for which we are very grateful. A challenge is for us to make sure we have a continuity plan if Phil is no longer around and we are aiming over time for responsibilities to be passed on to staff, volunteers and other Committee Members. We also lost Liz Weaver but are grateful to her for continuing her role as bookkeeper.*

*We have been fortunate that four new members joined the Committee bringing a wide range of skills and experience including finance, accounting, business and project management, community, and retail. Together with the existing Committee members this puts us in a strong position to address the challenges we are facing.*

*You will have already heard the shop Lease is due to expire in May 2024 and the owner does not wish to renew the lease. Priority for the Committee is to find a way to secure a future for the shop and Post Office. Dave Pearce is leading this work and will brief us later on the issues and the funding challenge that lies ahead.*

*The shop could not operate without the staff, the volunteers, the Committee, the shareholders and the customers and I would like to thank everyone for their continued support.*

* **Treasurer’s Report – Stuart Mackie, Treasurer**

*I hope you will have had the opportunity to look at the financial statements for the year to 31 March 2023, which are independently reviewed by our Accountants, Stanley Joseph. These are the accounts which we are required to file with our regulator, the FCA.*

*The Shop Turnover the year was £192,281, 9% higher than the prior year, and with retail margins similar to prior years, the profit contribution from the shop was up by just over £2,000 year on year at £44,172.*

*The Post Office contract income fell by about £500, and the overhead costs of the shop were about £2,000 higher than the year before - principally driven by the cost-of-living increases in the wage rates paid to employed staff.*

*The net profit for the year of £3,233 was therefore slightly lower than the previous year’s £3,871.*

*In this financial year the only capital expenditure was again on new fridges costing £800. The closing cash balances on 31 March 2023 were £44,579, up £1,800 on the opening posi-tion. This results from the profit of £3,233 less (1) the capital expenditure and (2) an increase in working capital (primarily stock) of about £800.*

* **Vote to agree accounts**: proposed by Andy House, seconded by Joe Herring PASSED
* **Vote to disapply audit for 2024:** proposed by Joe Herring, seconded by Marcia Pearce PASSED
* **Election of Management Committee**: no new members, the committee all agreed to stay, Joe Herring proposed this be agreed and Yvonne Chapman seconded this PASSED
* **Volunteers**

Pippa Herring has taken on managing the volunteers this year and reported what a valuable asset they are to the shop and how it could not function without them. She thanked them for all their hard work.

* **End of lease**

Dave Pearce then explained how the shop’s original 5 year lease will end in May 2024 and that the committee had begun negotiations with the landlord, who has indicated that she does not intend to renew the lease. She is willing to sell the freehold of the shop and residential property to us at market value. If we are unable to agree on a market value the landlord has indicated that she will consider her options including whether to market the property. Our priority is to retain a viable shop and Post Office in the village and the options we have considered to achieve this are:

1. The potential new owner takes over the running of the shop and Post Office as a family business.

2. Extend our shop lease and continue to rent from either the existing or new owner.

3. Find alternative premises for the shop and Post Office.

4. Purchase the freehold of the shop and adjoining residential property.

Options 1 and 2 depend on the outcome of the property being marketed and we have considered whether the shop and Post Office could move to alternative premises, but we are not aware of anywhere appropriate in the village. While we will continue to monitor these three options our only most likely option is to seek to acquire the freehold of the shop and Post Office and the residential property.

Acquiring the freehold is made possible because of the potential to apply for around 50% of our required funding from the Community Ownership Fund. Our priority is therefore to secure shareholder and community support for us to take forward our funding application to the Community Ownership Fund. We are also working on additional funding sources to, in effect, match funds from a successful Community Ownership Fund application. This could include another shareholder issue, using funds in bank account already, approaching the Parish Council for a loan (Public Works Loan perhaps?, ) and looking at a commercial loan.

* **Q and A from the members**

1. How will the landlady market the shop? As a shop or as residential property? *Maybe she would want to convert it but this would depend on planning permission. (Discussion followed around how long the shop has been a shop in the village)*
2. What is the valuation of the shop and what does the landlord want? *The committee declined to give figures owing to the sensitivity of current negotiations. If the shop were able to buy the building then they would need to do some renovations to enable the residential part to be let on the residential market and provide an income to offset any potential commercial loan interest payments.*
3. Has the shop been registered as a community asset yet? *This has been discussed but is a matter for the Parish Council to action.*

Further information discussed:

The landlord has indicated that if the shop is making concrete progress towards getting the funding in place for buying the shop the she would be willing to extend the lease to allow this to happen.

Dick explained how the Community Ownership Fund is aimed at enhancing village assets, eg shops, halls, pubs. Applying for this funding wil require a considerable effort from the committee as it will involve providing evidence for community support for the shop. The committee will have to approach – for example -members, local councillors, local MP, and customers. The committee will also need to show how they can enhance that shop -f or example – by providing café space, receiving prescription delivery etc. The social side of the shop is very important, not just the retail side. Suggestions from the community will also be important to help strengthen the shop’s value to the community. Jane told those present that the committee would be looking for quotes from the community to show the importance of the shop.

Hugh Gregor suggested approaching the King Charles III charity and Simon Martin explained how crowd funding could also be used to raise money.

Simon then asked the members present to indicate their desire for the committee to go ahead with seeking funding for this to keep the community shop open and 100% of those present raised their hands. The committee thanked them for their support.

Jane Thompson then ended the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and saying ‘we look forward to the challenge ahead’.