**Winford Community Shop**

**Annual Members Meeting 19.9.24**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Yvonne chapman, Philip Febrey, Hugh Gregor, Joe Herring, Phillipa Herring, Rosemary Holdman, Andy House, Carol House, Janet Longden, Celia Martin, Simon Martin, Rosemary Mawditt, Dave Pearce, Jean Pearce, David Spanner, Jane Spanner, Elaine Trotman, Mark Trotman, Maureen Voisey, Liz Weaver, Dick Whittington, Stuart Mackie, Elaine Gibbons, plus non-members Dawn Brabham, Ann Read, Andrew and Margaret Bolwell, Penny Bunker, Belinda Jones, Mary Douglas-Jones, Adam Snow, Mike Cole.

**Apologies:** Jane Thompson, Denise Poole, Hyacinthe Harford

**Dick Whittington (vice chair, in place of Chair Jane Thompson who was unable to be present) welcomed everybody to the meeting and read out the Agenda and Chairman’s report:**

* **Chairman’s Report**

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

*The priority agreed at last year’s meeting was to find a way to secure a future for the shop and Post Office.*

*Our initial plan was to apply to the Community Ownership Fund, ‘COF’ and raise money through a share offer to buy the freehold of the shop and adjoining cottage. We were unable to progress with the purchase of the whole of the premises due to the additional responsibilities of managing the repair, maintenance and letting of the cottage as well as differences in valuation between the Committee and the owner.*

*We were required to gather evidence to support the COF bid and carried out an extensive survey that received around 300 responses. As a result of the survey, a resident of Chew Valley came forward to offer support and expressed interest in buying the freehold of the shop and cottage and entering into a longterm lease agreement with us for the shop. Unfortunately, this did not go ahead due to a change in the potential purchaser’s circumstances.*

*The owner of the premises then assessed an option of separating the shop from the cottage and selling the shop to us. However, she was unable to make this work financially and was unable to proceed. We were planning to submit our ‘COF bid at that stage, but the funding programme was put off hold in the run up to the General Election and it is now unclear whether or when it might reopen.*

*The Parish Council applied to North Somerset Council to have the shop registered as a community asset. The application was approved but following an appeal by the owner was refused.*

*The term of our initial lease ended in May this year, which means that the landlord can at any time give us a 30 day notice period to vacate the premises. Her personal circumstances mean that she has to sell the premises and they are due to go to auction in October.*

*We have issued press releases and carried out a social media campaign to try and attract a new owner who either wants to continue to rent to us or who wishes to take over the business. Our hope is that such a person will come forward and that we will continue to have a shop and Post Office in the village. However, if a new owner wants vacant possession, we may be faced with closing the business with just 30 days notice and need to be prepared for this eventuality.*

*We have considered relocating to new premises but have been unable to find a suitable location. As a fall back in case the shop is forced to stop operating from the existing premises we need to work out if a reduced service and support for our customers can be offered from elsewhere and or alternative services provided to help people get to the shops.*

*We are now in a very difficult period of uncertainty in particular for our staff and for many of our customers who rely on the shop. Closure of the shop would also be a great loss for our volunteers and the village as a whole.*

*I would like to thank our staff for their continued hard work through this period of uncertainty, thank all our volunteers without whom the shop could not function and thank all of the Committee for their hard work this year in trying to find a solution for the future of the shop and for continuing to operate the shop and post office and thank all our volunteers without whom the shop could not function.*

Jane Thompson

Chair, Winford Community Shop

* **Treasurer’s Report**

*The financial statements for the year to 31 March 2024 have again been independently reviewed by our Accountants, Stanley Joseph. These are the accounts in the format which we are required to file with our regulator, the FCA.*

*The Shop Turnover the year was £214,489, a healthy 11.5% higher than the prior year, and with a retail margin similar to prior years, the profit contribution from the shop was up by just over £3,300 year on year at £47,541.*

*The Post Office contract income improved this year by about £1,600, but the net overhead costs of the shop were about £5,000 higher than the year before - almost wholly down to the cost-of-living increases in the wage rates paid to employed staff.*

*The reported profit for the year of £3,259 was therefore almost exactly the same as the previous year’s £3,233.*

*In this financial year there was no new capital expenditure, and so the company’s cash balances on 31 March 2024 were £48,062, which was £3,483 higher than the opening position.*

Stuart Mackie

Treasurer, Winford Community Shop

* **Vote to agree accounts:** proposed by Yvonne Chapman and seconded by Maureen Voisey PASSED
* **Vote to disapply audit:** proposed by Yvonne Chapman and seconded by Maureen Voisey PASSED
* **Election of Management Committee:** no new members, the committee all agreed to stay to see the transition period through**,** proposed by Yvonne Chapman and seconded by Maureen Voisey PASSED
* **Volunteers**

Pippa Herring thanked all the volunteers for their consistent hard work, without which the shop could not function. She described how new volunteers are always welcome and expressed the hope that we would get through the current period and start recruiting new volunteers afterwards.

* **End of lease**

Dave Pearce explained the four possible scenarios for the future of the shop, now that we have come to the end of our lease and the shop building will be up for auction on 17th October with Maggs and Allen and we do not know the guide price or reserve yet:

1. A buyer is found who wants the shop to continue, by running it themselves
2. A buyer is found who wants the shop to continue, by letting us continue to run it as a community shop
3. A buyer is found who wants to close the shop so they can convert the building to residential
4. A buyer is not found

* **Q and A**

Did the committee appeal the decision to disallow the registration of the shop as a community asset? *We were told by North somerset Council that there were no grounds for appeal. Registration would have given us 6 months extra time, no more.*

What was the amount the shop was prepared to offer the landlord to buy the whole premises, and how would you have raised this? *At the meeting Dave said his* *recollection was £425k but this was a while ago and after the meeting, on checking our correspondence, it was in fact £400k. This would have been raised by applying for a COF grant (for which the application was already written by the committee), another share issue and a commercial loan, and would have taken into account that we would not have the cost of paying rent anymore for the premises and would have rented out the adjoined cottage at the back of the shop building. Phil explained that our offer was declined, and to buy it at the auction we would need to have the cash in advance.*

Have you asked for the guide price yet*? No, but it will be on the website very soon, now that the September auction has taken place (tonight).*

Have you considered an alternative location, such as the buildings at the back of the pub? *Yes – but nothing has been suitable. The buildings at the back of the pub have been considered and looked at but require a lot of building work. Passing trade is an important part of the income of the shop, and many of the suggestions do not have the visibility and parking that we have now.*

Have you considered building a shop on a plot of land? *There have not been any suitable plots in the village.*

Discussion followed around potential investors who could be approached, eg the airport, Butcombe Brewery, King Charles III, the new cricket club using the site in Winford, and other potential ways of raising money. Phil confirmed that we had applied to the airport in the past and they have made donations toward the community shop. Adam Snow volunteered to approach the airport again and enquire about the possibility of investment from them in the current situation.

Phil commented that most of the current management committee have been involved in working to set up and then run the shop for nearly 6 years. Taking on a potential new project will in all likelihood require new faces joining the committee.

The meeting concluded with Dick thanking everyone for coming, and asking people to spread the word of the current situation. Andy House proposed a vote of thanks to the current committee for all their hard work.