

Wilstone Community Shop Limited: Annual Members' Meeting 22nd January 2021

Chairman's Report

Well welcome everyone to this year's Annual Members' Meeting held on zoom, who would have thought we'd be doing this a year ago!

Welcome too to any non Shareholders present, its particularly great to have you with us as we move into the final phase of establish the shop's future but I'd like to remind you that you will not be able to vote on approving the accounts, but you may participate in the second vote on seeking support for the committee's approach. I'll remind you again on this before each vote.

There's a lot to get through tonight and we are using a medium many of us are now familiar with for family chats or work meetings but maybe not quite so used to it in this way so I have a few key messages to help us get the best out of the time we have.

Firstly, please ensure you are on mute unless you are asked to speak so as to ensure there are no unexpected distractions.

If you do have any questions or a particular point to make please either use the chat facility available at the top of your screen, or email Doug at dougchalm@gmail.com or text him on 07885962818 either with the question or asking him to phone you. You can do this at any time.

We will be holding two votes tonight one on approving the accounts and the second to support the committee to pursue the leasehold option. At the appropriate time the voting options will appear on your screen, you click yes or no and that's all that's needed. Simple!

A reminder of the meeting flow; I will start off with my report, Jonathan will then present his Treasurer's Report followed by any questions and we will then vote to approve the annual account for 2019/20. Tom Burrows will then briefly outline his plans for the shop and the adjoining premises and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions of him and Sophie. After that we will bring you up to date of the current situation with regard to the shop's future, again with the opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have

before we ask you to vote on supporting the Management Committee to pursue the leasehold option.

So without more ado I'll start by reviewing the past 12 months. Where do I start, well it's certainly been one heck of a 12 months!

Progress to Date

Looking back at what I said last year I'm intrigued to see that even on the 14th February there was still no mention of possible trouble to come and yet only a month later we were on the cusp of our first lockdown. It's been such a tough year for every single one of us, young and old and we are, thankfully, in an area which has been less affected than some. One thing the last 12 months has most definitely proved is just how vital our shop is to our community not just in supplying goods but in providing a centre for support and communication.

Speaking for my own experience I can only say that it's been a godsend for me, helping me to feel useful and providing a vital distraction from other worries and concerns.

I feel truly proud to have been part of a team which, under Ali's amazing guidance, has adapted to every twist and turn in the path often before being told to do so.

From a business point of view, although we moved to opening for just three hours every day, the initial lockdown saw a 50% increase in business as people felt safer coming to us rather than travelling to other shops. Despite this increase in business we managed to keep the shop stocked using any means at our disposal, made deliveries when required to anyone shielding and provided friendly support to all. It was most definitely challenging but also immensely rewarding. And, of course, we are once again back to 3 hours a day until the current restrictions begin to ease again.

So not over yet sadly but we will continue to adapt as required so we will be there for you all in the months to come.

As you can imagine with everything that is going on there are so many people to say a massive thank you to. First and foremost, to each and every one of our volunteers, they are always brilliant but the pandemic has seen them all

step up to the plate and help in whatever way they could. At the forefront has been Ali working long and hard to ensure we have the safest working environment that we can and tracking down products from whatever source she could locate. Our students have been amazing, serving in the shop, cleaning after hours and delivering newspapers. We had some who had left us to go to uni but then came back in to help when they had to return home. Other volunteers helped out in all sorts of ways to ensure we kept going throughout; in particular baking amazing cakes to meet the lockdown munchies that seemed to grab each and every one of us. Thank you each and every volunteer, it has been the greatest pleasure working alongside you.

Of course all the other essential jobs still carried on. Firstly thanks to Abby for keeping all our media presence up to date in order to our community informed of what we were doing. As you can imagine with all the twists and turns the year has presented doing that has been no mean feat. Then to Anna for all the hours she puts in to the bookkeeping and to Jonathan for managing our overall finances. Doug too has had a very busy year not only fulfilling his various duties as Secretary but in addition in playing a major role in focusing on the future of the shop. Indeed a big thank you to all my fellow Committee members who have been tireless in stepping up to the plate whenever required.

We sadly said goodbye to Dave Henshaw, our newspaper 'boy' during the year. Dave had delivered our papers for around 10 year but he now felt the time had come to take a well earned rest. Thank you Dave you never let us down come rain come shine and you are missed. We were, however, very lucky to have Imogen take on the role, fitting it in around her university studies and she fitted in seamlessly. We also now have a great band of volunteers who help when Imogen is on leave, and their help on these occasions is really very much appreciated.

Still on the subject of newspapers Jon Driver and I had been coping with processing all the various vouchers we receive, many thanks Jon for taking that on, but as you can imagine we were both absolutely delighted when Keith Fox offered to take on the task. Many, many thanks Keith, it takes a while to get used to what is required but you have got to grips with it really quickly and it's been wonderful to know you are dealing with them.

Callum & Harrison did sterling service not only serving on Sundays but even more helpfully taking on doing a deep clean of the shop every week. In fact Callum is once again helping us in this way until such time as he can finally get back to Uni. Whilst we sadly said goodbye to Harrison and George, we were also extremely pleased to welcome Jenny, Gerry, Helen, Veronika, Tracey and Jim to our team. They joined us during a really challenging period but have fitted in perfectly.

Lastly, in the first lockdown we were delighted to receive offers of help, organised by Abby, from so many people in our community who were willing to come in to re-stock shelves or deliver any orders to shielding customers. Whilst we didn't need to take up all the offers just to know how willing our friends and neighbours are to help was heart warming indeed.

I truly believe that never has volunteering been so important, both to the community we are helping but also to us as volunteers. We hear so much about looking after our mental health in such difficult times and being involved in this way makes a very positive difference.

But even with the pandemic and all that that has thrown at us, the clock is still ticking towards the time when Michael Armson will relinquish the antique shop premises. Both the Shop Development Committee and the Shop Fundraising Committee have continued their sterling work and I'll leave it to Doug to update you on the current activities relating to the shop's future.

Fundraising however has continued apace. Whilst there were no opportunities for any of the planned village activities due to the pandemic, our Wilstone Woolies were still able produce some amazing products throughout the year, and in particular in the lead up to Christmas, which have continued to generate monies for our fighting fund. Our thanks to all of you involved with the Woolies, your creativity never fails to amaze and delight us.

To date we have £46,600 in our Save Wilstone Shop fund which some of which has been from some very generous individual donations including a £5,000 donation from Michael, so currently the total available to us is £51,600 a truly fantastic achievement in just over two years.

We also have the offer of a charitable grant of £50,000 which will leave us with needing to raise a final amount of around £15,000, which our Fundraising Committee will be looking at ideas to generate over the coming months.

Future Plans

Future plans will be covered by Doug's presentation but suffice to say it's going to be another year of significant challenges. The pandemic will continue to test us in all sorts of ways, although with the vaccination programme underway hopefully life will eventually become easier.

More challenging yet will be managing the changes required to secure the future of the shop, and all the building work required! We are very lucky that Doug has agreed to take on the project management for all of this. It does feel daunting but we'll take it one step at a time and with all of your support I hope that by this time next year everything will be on a much more stable footing and we will be moving on from there.

So that's it from me, are there any questions before I hand over to Jonathan for his report?

After Jonathan's piece ask for Shareholders to vote on approving the Annual Accounts for 2019/20, reminding them that if they approve them then under our rules we do not have to have them audited.

Introduce Tom and Sophie and invite Tom to give a brief outline on his plans for the shop and adjoining premises. At the end ask if there are any questions for Tom and Sophie

Hand over to Doug for an update on Current Committee activities relating to the Shop's future.

Any questions or observations?

Second vote of the evening in which everyone present can participate on asking for support for the Management Committee to pursue the leasehold option with relevant professional advice.

Close the meeting