

# **Wilstone Community Shop Limited: Annual Members' Meeting**

## **4<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

### **Chairman's Report**

Welcome everyone to this year's Annual Members' Meeting; it's wonderful to be back in the same room with you all this year, hopefully a sign of more positive times to come.

Welcome too to any non Shareholders present it's lovely to have you all here but I need to remind you that, as such, you will not be able to vote on approving the accounts. Other than that any other input you may have is warmly welcomed.

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 accounts for 2020/21.

We now need to election Management Committee members, both existing and new. Susan Brown and Doug Chalmers are up for re-election and Chris Owen, Kath Heslop and James Brown have put themselves forward for election. Our new rules allow for up to 12 committee members so, unless anyone would like to put themselves forward tonight we can ask the meeting to confirm all appointments. *Check approval is given by a show of hands.* Doug will then summarise the key points of our new lease and give you an update on the shop fit out and any outstanding issues that remain, and then look at maintenance issues both ongoing and reactive.

Finally there will be an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have.

So without more ado I'll start by reviewing the past 12 months.

### **Progress to Date**

Well 2021 certainly started off much as 2020 ended, in lockdown! The one bright light on the horizon was the rollout of the vaccination programme otherwise I'm sure things would have felt even more difficult.

Once again we were back in to opening for just 3 hours a day with a core group of volunteers. Our thanks to everyone who contributed over this time, having that solid support enabled us to keep open and continue to offer a vital service to our local community not just in goods but in social support at such a stressful time.

Ali has continued to do an amazing job in ensuring we met all the COVID guidance, adapting swiftly as changes occurred – and there certainly were many! – Whilst at the same time keeping the shop stocked when she couldn't tell from week to week what would be available.

Thankfully, as the year progressed life did become easier and we moved back to normal opening hours. Product availability remained unpredictable and currently we are also facing serious price increases, so shopping around for the best deals is even more important.

A big thank you as always to all of our volunteers, you have once again been amazing. Last year was a really big one for us, coping with the issues thrown up by the pandemic, fund raising for the shop redevelopment, and then the big one, the redevelopment itself, has involved a huge number of people in so many different ways. We are so, so proud of you all and what has been achieved.

Of course all the other essential jobs still had to carry on. Firstly thanks to Abby and Susan for keeping all our media presence up to date in order to keep our community informed of what was happening. A big thank you also to Cliff Brown for doing so much to improve our website. We are really beginning to appreciate the power of social media as a way of getting information out to our community as rapidly as possible. This really came home for us when we lost our internet for a time and had to rely completely on cash, something incredibly difficult in this day and age, but being able to use social media to let everyone know really helped.

Thanks also to Anna for all the hours she puts into managing the book keeping and to Jonathan for handling our overall finances. Doug also had a really challenging year with finalising the new shop lease and then project managing, within an inch of its life it has to be said, the shop redevelopment. Thanks too

to all the other Management Committee members who willingly took on key tasks, and there were many of them, as they appeared.

One difficult decision was to cease newspaper deliveries at the end of October. We had been faced with the need to recruit someone to this role 3 times in just over a year and the last time we were hopeful of making it more stable with setting it up as a job share, but whilst we had one person lined up we were unsuccessful in finding anyone else interested in it. The situation was becoming increasingly stressful and there was also a constant need to have people prepared to fill delivery gaps when they occurred so in the end ceasing deliveries became the sensible thing to.

But on a more positive note it has been lovely seeing so many of our newspaper customers on a more regular basis when they come in to pick up their papers. We are confident that, overall, taking this decision has proved to be a good one keeping us in contact with our customers and more aware of arising issues.

Keith Fox continues to do a great job processing newspapers on a weekly basis, thanks Keith its lovely to know that particular job is in such safe hands.

Thanks to Anne and Tara, and sometimes Callum or Harrison when they're home from uni, for all their cleaning work; ensuring the shop meets not just its legal requirements but also our high standards is such a vital activity.

We said goodbye to Jane Waterhouse during the year. Jane had been involved with the shop since we first heard we might lose it way back in 2008, so it was very sad to see her go but we wish her every happiness in her new life. We were also sad to say goodbye to Steve Backler, thanks Steve you're welcome back at any time if you get bored! On the plus side we were very pleased to welcome Janis, Linda and Caroline Smith-Wright to the team.

Being a volunteer is such a rewarding thing to do. I have found it particularly so in the last two years, as being busy and feeling of use has made a real difference. We are always delighted to welcome new volunteers; it doesn't always mean serving in the shop, working behind the scenes is just as vital.

But of course the main event for us last year was finally achieving our goal of securing the long term future of the shop. It's just over 3 years, December 2018 to be exact, since we shared with you the news that Mike Armson was looking to sell the antiques shop which meant the future of the shop was now in question. We were so lucky in that he gave us such a long notice period in which to prepare.

From the beginning we, the Management Committee, have been delighted by the response of our community to this challenge. From that first meeting we were able to form two new committees one to look at Development options and the other to begin fund raising activities. Both committees have done amazing work over the last 3 years. The Development Committee enabled us to identify what was the best option in terms of location which allowed us to then to focus on what needed to be done to achieve it. The Fund Raising committee worked tirelessly at looking at ways to engage with the community and begin to build the finances we would need for the future. Our thanks go to all the members of those two committees for everything they have helped us to achieve.

Having identified our path we faced a bit of a kink in it when Mike secured a buyer in October 2020 but once again we were very lucky that the buyers, Tom and Sophie, were fully supportive of retaining the shop for the village. We agreed the terms of a future lease with them early in 2021, Doug will take you through that shortly, and the agreed sale date was finally set for the end of June. We now had to draw up plans for the new shop layout, something from previous experience we knew would be very challenging, and then draw up a timetable for the redevelopment. With some excellent professional help, a lot of discussion and marking spaces out on the floor we finally agreed our layout. By then the supply of building materials was becoming something of a challenge, Doug did an amazing job with suppliers; getting some excellent deals for us, advance buying as much as we could and then either finding places to store it or persuading the suppliers to hold it for us.

We set about getting the utilities installed, a new electrical and water supply; two very critical pieces of work. Electrical thankfully went very much according to plan. The water as we all know nearly scuppered everything! Getting that resolved certainly proved the power of the voice of a community and thankfully it was finally connected up just in time. Thank you everyone who took up the cudgels on our behalf.

We also decided that to do the programme as smoothly as possible we would need to close for around two and a half weeks with the date set for the 10<sup>th</sup> July. Trust me, clearing everything out of a shop takes a lot longer than you would think! Once again a brilliant team of volunteers stepped forward to help pack everything up, moving the bulk it to the village hall for safe storage, the rest going people's houses, garages and anywhere else that made sense! We had been able to make a great head start out the back, again thanks to Tom and Sophie for their support with this, and then we started on the front once we were closed. Sean Hughes and Steve Iley, who did the building work, were amazing putting in long days and working through issues as they arose. Our thanks too to all the volunteers who came in to help whenever extra labour was needed; from unloading delivery trucks, to prepping walls and then painting them and putting up bits of kit. The tasks seemed endless but wherever we had a need someone came forward to help. We can truly say our new shop is a real community effort. Doug, thank you for project managing the redevelopment; it was definitely not a simple task and we couldn't afford to be closed a moment longer than necessary, but it all went like clockwork and we re-opened exactly when we said we would. Most definitely something we can all be very proud of. We now have a lovely new shop and security into the future, something definitely worth applauding. *Start clapping*

You'll hear more about the finances from Jonathan & Doug but in the end, thanks to some very generous grants from local benefactors and some amazing discounts from the suppliers we used, we were able to come in well under budget. This has left us with a fighting fund which will definitely aid us as we face the next challenging period with inflation and price increases certainly adding to our costs.

I said at our last meeting in January 2021 that the year ahead felt daunting but that I hoped that by this time in 2022 everything would be on a much more stable footing. Well it was daunting and a lot of hard work, but together we rose to the challenge and we should all be so very proud of what we have achieved.

We were able to finish the year on a very positive note by once again being able to host a Christmas Dinner for some of the more mature members of our community. A big thank you here to the amazing team who prepared and served the meal, to all those who entertained everyone so well and to everyone involved in cleaning and tidying up at the end. It was a really enjoyable event and we look forward to giving more back in this way to our community in 2022 and beyond.

### **Future Plans**

Looking to the future we are now turning our attention to the last piece of work to be done, tidying up and making the best use we can of our outside space. It's not big but we hope to make it as attractive and usable as we can.

We are also hoping to use the new space created in the shop to provide even more of a social hub for villagers as soon as the pandemic allows.

Other than that, for the time being, we are focused on dealing with all that the current economic climate and the, hopefully, tail end of the pandemic throws at us.

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

*Pause*

After Jonathan's piece ask for Shareholders only to vote on approving the Annual Accounts for 2020/21, reminding them that if they approve them then under our rules we do not have to have them audited.

*Vote*

Hand over to Doug for Management Committee re-elections & elections, a summary of our new lease and any outstanding issues on the shop refit plus ongoing maintenance.

Any questions or observations?

Close the meeting