

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

## **10<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

### **Chairman's Report**

Once again, I extend a very warm welcome to this year's Annual Members' Meeting. As always, we have both shareholders and non-shareholders present so just a quick reminder that when we come to vote on the accounts it's only the shareholders who can vote.

#### **Progress to Date**

Starting, as always, with progress over the last 12 months. As you know the previous year saw us register our first loss since becoming a community shop, so we were facing a lot of challenges in a very difficult business environment, particularly for small independent businesses like ourselves.

Ali has worked very hard looking to around to buy products to meet our customers' needs at the best possible price. We continue with our aim to make a margin sufficient enough to meet our needs and provide a small contingency for future requirements. So, product sourcing is a hugely important part of the process.

Other Committee members have worked hard on ensuring we are achieving the best deals we can on electricity and broadband both of which, as you can imagine, place a heavy strain on our outgoings. We have managed to achieve a lot of success in both areas.

All of this means that, as you will have seen from the financial reports sent out with the meeting invitation, 2023/24 has seen us back in profit once again. Jonathan will take us through the detail after my report but it is a really big thank you to everyone who works, volunteers or contributes to the running of the shop in any way for this great result in such difficult times. The future remains challenging but be assured we will continue to tackle it in order to ensure we are here to provide you all in the years to come.

We are delighted that we have an increasing number of cyclists and walkers who are choosing to use us for their breaks. The feedback we get from them is always so positive and the fun atmosphere they add to the shop is lovely.

We also continue to have regular visits from any workmen in the area, it can make it quite hectic at times but it's a very good area of business for us whilst still offering them a great deal.

We said a sad farewell to Sophie, Will and Tanya but wish them all the very best in their future studies. On the plus side we have been delighted to have several new volunteers, so a very warm welcome to Blake, Clare, Chrissie, Denise, Julia, Saskia, Josh, Alistair, Peter & Liz.

As always, our profound thanks go to our amazing band of volunteers who give our community so much. There is nothing nicer than being in the shop when its buzzing with chat and laughter, it is such a lovely feeling.

Once again, our thanks to all those who help ensure the efficient running of the shop in particular to all the members of the Management Committee, their work goes on largely unseen but is absolutely essential to our existence.

A special mention to Anna who has maintained our invoicing brilliantly for so many years but has now handed over the reins on this to Doug. A big thank you too to Doug for taking on this fundamental part of our business as well as continuing with all the work needed to ensure we meet legal compliance and follow all the protocols required of us in his role as Secretary. Thanks as always to Jonathan for his excellent handling of all the other financial requirements of the shop; to Chris, Susan and Abby for their hard work on ensuring the wider public know what we can offer via the newsletter, Facebook, Instagram and our website. Also to Cliff Brown for ensuring our website is kept up to date and relevant. To Keith for managing all the work required to process newspaper vouchers and to Tara, Anne and Callum for deep cleaning the shop during the week.

Our appreciation also to all our customers, we do what we do for them and it truly is a rewarding feeling when the shop comes to life with chatter and laughter or when we are able to help with someone comes in with a query or problem to solve.

Last but by no means least, thank you so much to Ali for providing the leadership and friendship required to ensure we have such a lovely shop offering products to meet such a variety of needs, as well as giving all of us a

great place to be. Last November saw Ali celebrate 10 years in her role, we are so very lucky to have her and truly value the energy and enthusiasm that she brings.

We hosted the annual Christmas lunch in December for the more mature members of our community, once again very ably co-ordinated by Gail Short with backup from a magnificent band of helpers. All the food was donated by local business and volunteers, with entertainment in the form of a quiz, singing from Anna Swannell's choir and lively music provided by Ian Mackay & friends. This is always a lovely event to be part of and is very much enjoyed by everyone present. Our thanks as always to everyone who contributed the delicious food and to the team of volunteers, who set the hall up, cooked & served and then cleaned up afterwards.

We held a raffle at the lunch with the money going to St Francis Hospice, as well as a Christmas raffle in the shop which raised a total of over £121 which has gone to Cure Parkinsons. We are also awaiting feedback on our last Poppy Appeal collection. A particular source of pride is the generosity of our customers in donating to the Aylesbury Foodbank collection. We estimate last year we sent them around 500kg of food and other items. Our collector tells us we are one of their favourite donation points!

So, what for the future? Sales are continuing to grow with an increased average spend, although some of this is down to the constant price increases that seem a permanent feature of life today. The challenge of increasing footfall remains key though as that will ensure even more stability in the years ahead. But the main point is that the last financial year has seen us back into profit once more which is excellent news and a reward for all the hard work.

There are, as always, a few maintenance jobs to do both inside and outside the shop to keep things fresh and welcoming. But a major project for this year will be to upgrade our EPOS, that's electronic point of sale system to the uninitiated. We have had ours now for 11 years so the time has come and it will require a big effort to ensure the new system best meets our needs whilst not being too daunting a change for all the users.

We also have plans to hold a few social events this year as it's been a while since we have been able to do this. They enable us to build even more community spirit as well as being a lot of fun. So, lots to look forward to.