

Wilstone Community Shop Limited: Annual Members' Meeting

6th February 2026

Chairman's Report

Another year come and gone, so welcome once again to our 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.

After my update we will then present the Treasurer's Report and answer any questions you may have before we ask you for your vote to approve the annual accounts for 2024/25.

This year there are no Management Committee members up for re-election, but we can accept one more member to reach our full quota of 12. We really appreciate having new people join the Committee as they bring with them fresh energy and ideas. So, the question to you all now is, would you like to join our management team? We will come back to this towards the end of the meeting so please have a good think about it.

Very sadly, Jonathan Tymms will be stepping down from his role as Treasurer later this year. We have been so lucky to have had him undertake this role for many years dealing with all the financial aspects of running the shop and giving us a lot of advice and guidance. He and Deborah made a long planned for move to the Cotswolds last year and he has kindly been keeping everything going remotely since then. However, we now need to let him enjoy his new life without this commitment. Jonathan, thank you so much for all that you have done for us over the years, both as Treasurer and serving in the shop. We will really miss you but wish you and Deborah a very happy life in your new home.

We are however really pleased to be able to announce tonight that Melanie Williams, who has been volunteering with us for a number of years, has now stepped forward to take up the role. Due to personal commitments this will not be until September, so Jonathan had very kindly said he is happy to continue handling everything remotely until then. We are truly grateful to them both as having a steady pair of hands in this key role is vital.

Progress to Date

Let's now look at our progress over the last 12 months. The retail market for small businesses continues to be very challenging, and Ali has worked tirelessly to continue to source products to meet our customers' needs at the best possible price. Our aim from our inception has been to make a margin sufficient to meet our needs plus provide a small contingency for future requirements. That means getting the right products at the best possible prices is crucial, and we are so lucky to have Ali working hard on our behalf to achieve this.

Having the right systems is also a key part of the business and, as we told you last year, we had reached the stage of requiring a new Electronic Point of Sale system, usually shortened to EPOS, to replace the one installed back in 2014. In the end this proved to be a challenging undertaking lasting around six months.

We started off by setting up a small project team comprising Doug, Ali, Susan and myself. We undertook a couple of training courses run by Plunkett, the organisation set up to support community run businesses which really helped us to focus. Who knew that knowing all about card suppliers and costings plus what sort of EPOS system would work best for us could prove so valuable.

The next stage was to talk in detail to various card companies and EPOS providers, which led us to eventually settle on who we wanted to proceed with.

Then it was down to very detailed discussions with our chosen providers to clarify what we required and then getting everything set up and ready to go, hopefully ensuring minimum disruption to the business.

The great change took place last August, and I am delighted to say that everything went as smoothly as we could have hoped for. As you can imagine there have been a few further tweaks to be made plus a whole lot of learning for all of us to adjust to the new system, but we are now seeing some real benefits to the business. We have seen a marked reduction in card costs, plus a much better information flow from the new EPOS itself.

There were significant costs involved in making this change but despite this 2024/25 has, as you will have seen from the financial reports sent out with the meeting invitation, seen us make a small profit once again. A big thank you to the project team for making this happen, and to our volunteers and customers for quickly adjusting to the new requirements.

We continue to be a destination of choice for many cyclists and walkers; their feedback is always so good to receive as they frequently tell us how much they enjoy the friendly atmosphere we create and the value that they get from us. They in turn add a positive and fun atmosphere to the shop.

Over the year we said a sad farewell to Anna, Luca, Josh and Saskia but wish them all the very best for the future. On the plus side we have been delighted to have several new volunteers, so a very warm welcome to Peter, Jess, Tom, Reece, Caroline, Brian, Mark and Nicky.

Our volunteer family is the beating heart of our shop so, as always, our profound thanks to each and every one of them for all that they contribute, and for the friendship and support that they give.

Our thanks to all those who help ensure the efficient running of the shop, particularly to all the members of the Management Committee and others whose work goes on largely unseen but is essential to our existence.

Specifically, to Doug who not only as Secretary ensures that we are legally compliant in all aspects of the business but also for handling the processing of all our invoices. To Jonathan for his excellent work as Treasurer. To Chris, Susan and Abby for ensuring the wider public know what we can offer via the village newsletter, Facebook, Instagram and our website; plus, Cliff Brown for ensuring our website is kept up to date and relevant and for helping us with IT issues. To Keith for managing all the work required to process newspaper vouchers and to Tara and Anne 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 can help someone with a query or problem to solve. It's been lovely to see many new faces over the course of the year and to help them to settle into their new community.

As always too, an enormous thank you to Ali who gives us both leadership and friendship. We are so proud of what the shop has become over the last 14 years and so much of that is down to her.

In terms of activities throughout the year, the annual Christmas lunch took place last December, once again very ably co-ordinated by Gail Short with backup from her magnificent band of helpers. All the food was donated by local businesses and our volunteers, with entertainment in the form of a quiz, singing from Anna Swannell's choir and lively music provided by Ian Mackay & friends. The feedback showed how much it is valued and enjoyed by everyone. 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.

Money was raised at the lunch raffle and that, together with money from the Christmas Hamper raffle in the shop, enabled us to donate £500 to St Francis Hospice who gave such great care and support to Sarah Dunthorne and her family last year.

Our collection for the Aylesbury Foodbank has also continued to do exceptionally well, with once again several hundred kilos of products donated. We are also awaiting feedback on our last Poppy Appeal collection.

Last November we also, for the first time in many years, held a pre-Christmas afternoon in the shop showcasing our selection of festive goods and offering customers a glass of mulled wine and mince pies. This proved very successful and was enjoyed by everyone who came along. We hope to continue to build on its success in the future.

So, what for the future? More of the same in terms of sourcing the right products at the right prices and minimising waste. Thankfully we now have our new systems in place which will significantly aid us in analysis and planning.

As always, there are maintenance jobs to do both inside and outside the shop some of which have just been done or are in hand. No doubt more will come along as the year progresses.

We also hope to add more social events to the year to continue to strengthen community spirit, as well as being a lot of fun. More on those throughout the year.