

## **Brompton Regis Shop AMM - BR Village Hall - 15 May 2019 - 7.30pm**

The meeting started at 7.35pm

Those in attendance: Phil Barnard (Chair), Chris Pollard (Treasurer), Trish Kirkby (Shop Manager), Jenny Phillips (Committee), Janet Neves (Committee), Peter and Babs Page, Dr Wendy and Rev Paul Kingdom, Jane Collins, Mavis Nicholls, Wendy Brett, Sue Newton, Jackie Smith, Royce and Marion Lindsey-Noble and Su Elsdon (Committee/acting Sec).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Annual Members Meeting. All those attending were given copies of the Chairman's report and a financial report for the past year.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from: Jenny Pattenden, Claire Pounder, Kim and Huw Williams, Jenny Jakeman, Colin Berry, Donald Elliott, Eddie Neves, Kevin Laws, Jeannie Barnard, Sarah Merchant, Charlie Phillips, Bill and Jane Rees, Chris and Dale Cherry, Iain and Pauli Joyce, Jenny Stringer, Louise Knight, Keith and Molly Routledge.

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting.**

The minutes were approved. Proposed: Janet Neves. Seconded: Trish Kirkby

### **3. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman gave his report, firstly noting the importance of business being conducted within the rules of the Financial Conduct Authority. His full report is attached to these minutes.

Comments from the floor: Rev Paul Kingdom noted that, without intending a criticism, it may have been more politic to have advertised the post of Shop Manager to the community at large or, as a minimum, within the shop, in the event that there may have been another willing candidate to come forward. The Chairman responded that the committee fully appreciated the importance of publicising the post and indeed had press/magazine advertising and shop/village noticeboard posters in the pipeline. However, Alexx came forward with an impressive retail and small business track record. Given past experience with the difficulty of finding a suitable recruit (and the cost/time involved) together with Alexx's suitability for the post, the Chairman felt it was the right thing to seize the opportunity and then discuss it at this meeting. The Chairman's Report was then accepted. Proposed: Sue Newton. Seconded: Babs Page.

### **4. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer explained that the Detailed Income and Expense Account handed out, represented page 4 of the full accounts which were available to view at the end of the meeting.

Sales had continued to decline as noted in the Chairman's Report, however the 'Sales' figure appeared to tell a different story. This was due to newspaper vouchers now being accounted for as payments in with costs netted off. The effect was to add nearly £8,000 to sales and purchases. This change produced an apparent increase in sales, although in reality they were down by 2.7%, continuing a longer term trend, despite the best efforts of the shop team.

The gross surplus declined a little with the drop in sales, but the figures still held up well in comparison with other similar community enterprises. A gross margin of 24% was little different from last year's 24.5% - a good result.

The Treasurer then detailed specific items in the accounts:

*Other operating income* of £687 derived from the raffles (£263), similar to last year, and grants paid - from Brompton Regis Show and the Parish Council (£424).

Under Expenditure - *Carriage and Packaging* was attributed to the delivery charge paid to distribute the papers to some customers outside the village.

*Wages* - for the Shop Manager, a lower figure than last year due to volunteers mopping up some of the hours previously accounted for in the Shop Manager's costs.

*Rent* represented costs charged to the shop for the use of the Hall and Boundy Room for meetings.

*Light and Heat* were down a little from last year, possibly due to the mild winter.

*Telephone* equally showed a slightly lower figure.

*Repairs and Renewals* showed a greater saving from last year. No freezer or fridges needed repairing. The cost was mostly for rubbish collection and waste disposal, along with a few items bought - heater and floor mats.

*Sundry Expenses* largely covered the volunteers' supper (£522), considered a very necessary item (!) along with printer cartridges, a Christmas tree and a donation made to Jenny Stringer's farewell present.

*General Administration* was represented by an annual subscription to the Plunkett Foundation - an umbrella organisation offering support to similar enterprises - and an annual subscription to the Financial Conduct Authority.

Finance Costs - *Credit Card* costs were an unavoidable expense.

The net surplus of £1668.00 was a record and it is hoped that the current year will produce a third successive profit.

The report was put to the floor for comment:

Sue Newton queried the seemingly hefty telephone bill, but Trish noted that it included the cost of internet access.

Jackie Smith commended the team on its efficiency in finding a replacement for Trish. The Chair noted that the shop was hopeful little change would be expected with the new incumbent in terms of costs, with the advantage of Alexx living locally. Mileage would still need to be claimed but in reality the reduced hours Trish was able to put in due to living so near, along with her additional volunteering role, something Alexx is willing to undertake, represented a £5,000 annual reduction from when Steph was the Shop Manager.

Jackie queried the cost for newspaper deliveries - but it was noted that this was covered in the newspaper charges. The Treasurer confirmed that, in effect as part of sales, it goes into the till and is taken out for reimbursement at Christmas time.

Peter Page noted action points from last year still be to be addressed. Jenny Stringer had raised the issue of promoting the shop at Wimbleball Lake for holiday makers. Discussion followed about the difficulty encountered in siting a permanent poster there, but the Chairman noted this was one of the tasks raised at a recent Management Committee meeting and was on the agenda to tackle, accepting that we were already into the holiday season. In addition, Alexx has contacts at the lake and, along with her knowledge of social media, it is hoped extra promotions there will soon pay dividends.

Signage was discussed, a point raised at the last AMM, with Highways disallowing any brown signs in the

village to promote the shop, because it is sited within the village boundary. Peter Page noted that he would raise this issue in another forum.

It was also noted that whilst debit cards attract a fee this is at a lower rate than credit cards, and contactless payments in the shop are on the increase.

Jackie Smith noted that the recent flooring costing around £1500 did not show in the accounts. This work was done earlier *this* year, paid for by grants from both the BR Show and the Parish Council, and would show in the 2019 accounts.

There being no other queries, the Treasurer's Report was accepted. Proposed: Rev Paul Kingdom. Seconded: Jackie Smith.

## **5. Election of the Management Committee**

No approaches had been made prior to the meeting, so the Chairman opened to the floor for any prospective new members to come forward. Chris Cherry had become a recent volunteer and had earlier accepted an invitation to join the Management Committee. There being no offers to replace the current serving officers, they would stand again. The other members of the current Management Committee were also happy to stand again. The Chairman proposed an en-bloc re-election with the addition of Chris Cherry. Proposed: Rev Paul Kingdom. Seconded: Jenny Phillips.

## **6. Shop Manager's Report**

Whilst the present status was covered in the Chairman's Report, Trish presented a brief and final report as the outgoing, soon to be much missed, Shop Manager. She noted that the Shop, the village and all it represents is a 'great place to be'. The shop provides local knowledge and a place for people to keep in touch, particularly for the more elderly in the village. Everyone helps each other out, and she commended the shop team in carrying out their tasks so well. She congratulated everyone and specifically thanked the volunteers for doing an amazing job this year, many now able to carry out tasks without her intervention. She stressed the importance of the volunteers supporting the new Manager. She confirmed she will help and support her in showing her the ropes - but that we must all continue to be good friends to all. There was a lot of appreciative applause from the floor for all that Trish has done.

## **7. Call for Volunteers**

The Chairman noted that the new Shop Manager, Alexx, would also work as a volunteer in the next few months and hopefully would continue to do so.

No further applicants having come forward, the Chairman raised a point covered in the most recent Management Committee meeting, of job sharing, in the hope it may encourage more to come forward, offering greater flexibility and potentially making the task more feasible for new volunteers.

He noted the loss of two volunteers during the year, Molly Routledge and Kim Williams, being replaced by just one - Chris Cherry. As a result, Trish had spent more paid time to fill the gap. The possibility of closing the shop on Tuesdays had been discussed at the most recent Management Committee meeting (Tuesday being the quietest morning), a move that no-one wanted and with the risk of it sending the wrong signal. Hopefully, with Alexx joining initially as a volunteer, the problem had been resolved, albeit for the short term. The Chairman stressed the need to find more volunteers with the benefits of flexible working (e.g. 2-hour stints) and the opportunity to meet others in an informal setting.

Rev Paul Kingdom noted that new people were moving into the village and had expressed an interest in helping. The Chairman said the committee was already pursuing 'possibles'.

## **8. Any other business**

Wendy Kingdom commented on the need to raise the shop's profile, with its restriction in not appealing to those who go out to work. The Chairman noted that the new Manager had already been considering this and was very likely to help with Social Media. Rev Paul Kingdom then noted as a non-volunteer and non-committee member, his thanks to the users of the shop, the volunteers and committee, and the importance of it as a community base for exchanging information as well as the benefit of having a shop in the village. The floor applauded his comments.

## **9. Next Annual Members Meeting**

Potentially this will be held in mid May 2020 but it was agreed to fix a date in the new year. The Chairman noted that the Management Committee would decide on this and inform members.

He noted also that 135 people were recorded as Members of the Society and shareholders. Whilst some had moved away and some had passed on, only two people had asked to be reimbursed.

Jackie Smith asked if incomers to the village were encouraged to join and the Chairman confirmed that most were strongly encouraged to do so and that the shop 'Welcome Packs' also helped in this. The Chairman confirmed Babs Page's request that the calendars and cards would be continued.

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their support and for keeping the shop going.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm

Su Elsdon (Acting Secretary) 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019.

## **Chairman's Report 2018/19**

At the end of its first decade as a Community enterprise, your shop continues to run 'in the black', again achieving a positive result last year. This is despite sales, on a like for like basis, continuing their slow decline as the Treasurer will explain.

Our volunteers are key to this success and, sadly, we lost our most experienced one when Molly Routledge moved away from the village. She had also been a valued member of the Management Committee and provided special support for the Manager. Fortunately, Jan Neves, also a volunteer and Management Committee member, has stepped up to take on that role.

We were also sorry to lose Kim Williams as a volunteer and thank her for her valued contribution but were pleased to gain Chris Cherry. Nevertheless, more volunteers are still required.

The shop continued to source locally as much as possible. This now includes Youngs of Barnstaple who have replaced Bookers as our main wholesaler since the latter no longer supplies businesses as small as ours. Exmoor Kitchen frozen meals are also stocked now, and we will be providing a local ice cream range during the summer. Our Manager also astutely switched milk supplier last year to largely avoid the huge national price

increase.

The wider community benefits of the shop are ongoing: housing the food bank, distributing the Brendon Beacon, being a collection centre for prescriptions and focal point for BR Show materials as well as a meeting and gossip point! We were also pleased to participate in the Church's decorated Christmas tree display.

Although we cover our running costs, the shop still needs outside finance for capital expenditure. During the year we were grateful to receive grants from the Brompton Regis Show and the Parish Council that enabled us to replace the shop floor with a beautiful wood effect surface that is much more hygienic and easily maintained.

As noted in previous years, the wide variety of competition makes life difficult for a tiny community shop. Various initiatives have helped to raise our profile and increase sales e.g. provision of 'Welcome Packs' to new arrivals, donation of a grocery hamper to the BR Show and display in its Information Tent, launch of the BR Calendar, link to the village website, and new lines of merchandise.

We are now planning to redouble our efforts to attract Wimbleball Lake tourists and to use advertising postcards. We will also be seeking to enhance our online presence, in particular to encourage the pre-ordering of fruit & veg and bakery products as well as informing customers of special deals.

The most dramatic event of the past year has, however, happened in the last few days. Our Manager, Trish Kirkby, has announced that she will be moving to Scotland in September. Trish took over the shop 3 years ago at a difficult time, kept things going and has done a great job not only in maintaining the shop's viability but also in training up our wonderful cadre of volunteers. I know all Shop Society members will join me in thanking her and wishing her well in her new life.

Serendipity has once again enabled us to avoid a costly and time-consuming search for a replacement. A local resident, Alexx Lewin of 'The George', who has both retail experience and computer 'nous', expressed great interest in the job and, after a successful interview earlier today (!) has accepted the position. She will work alongside Trish as a volunteer 'learning the ropes' over the next few months.

Finally, I would like to thank our dedicated volunteers and my colleagues on the Management Committee for making it all happen. My thanks to you too as Shop Society members, shareholders and customers for supporting our unique little community enterprise.

Phil Barnard (Chairman)

15th May 2019