

**Woodgreen Community Shop Association**  
**Chairman's Report for the 17th AGM 28<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the 17<sup>th</sup> AGM of Woodgreen Community Shop.

Operating our precious village shop continues to provide challenges to the team so when we look at our 'numbers' each month we sometimes breathe a sigh of relief or we puzzle over why the numbers fluctuate so much. This year has been no different however the good news is that we are still here and ready to serve our community with a smile.

## **Shop Operations**

Gary will talk about the finances in detail but it is important to note that the ever increasing cost of wages has led us to examine our processes internally to try to be more efficient. As we no longer bake in the early morning we have changed our early morning staff tasks to start later and combine with our 'day' team; this has saved us a few working hours each week and been positive in improving team-working.

Bookers continue to be our main supplier but their deliveries can be unreliable and, following their takeover by Tesco some years ago their pricing often fails to benefit smaller retailers like ourselves. So Katy has been busy looking for alternative suppliers to reduce our reliance on Bookers and to introduce new products this is not an easy ask so its pleasing to see some successes.

Another area we investigated is the milk supply, following some supply and pricing difficulties with our current supplier. We looked at alternatives – including fresh local milk e.g. from the dairy in Nunton but this proved to be an expensive option. We have re-negotiated with our supplier and we were able to reduce prices a little last summer.

We remain very aware of the need to price fairly but sometimes our wholesale cost can often be greater than major supermarket retail prices.

Our café options of hot drinks and cake continues to flourish and provides a really important steady income stream for us as well as providing a social space for the community and visitors to the area.

Although it was technically in the current financial year I think it is worth mentioning the very successful charity coffee morning for Dementia UK which the shop team organised. It was a lovely social event and raised money for a worthy charity. I think we all agree that we should look to hold this type of event again.

## **Post Office**

Our Post Office income continues at similar levels as it has over the past few years; even though there have been some small increases in remuneration from the Post Office the cost of running the service continues to outweigh the income received. You may recall that we issued a simple information sheet a few months ago in order to try to increase the number of transactions and to explain to customers just how much we receive. By opening every day with no lunchtime closure we have tried to ensure we are there for customers at all times – again to maximise business opportunity.

We are trying to negotiate more courier arrangements with the Post Office ( e.g EVRI) so our customers can drop their parcels off for collection by the courier companies but this is a slow process and very much 'work in progress'.

The operation of the National Lottery by Camelot through the Post Office changed this year and our contract is now with the new company Alwyn which side-steps the involvement of the Post Office. Our income level has increased by 1% however we now carry the risk of losing money on unsold scratch cards; this is a new challenge for us to monitor and we hope to continue with this service but only if we can make it work financially.

Just an additional reminder that we do sell gift cards at the PO – for Amazon, M & S and One4All ( covers 130 high street shops) – and we earn money on our sales.

Our lovely team of Post Office ladies continue to do a great job for us and we thank them for their patience with the ever changing Post Office rules, systems and processes. As I am sure you are all aware it's a challenge to meet all the requirements of their system and not make any errors!

As part of the Community aspect of the business we continue to support running a Post Office here in Woodgreen and we know it does bring other business to our shop.

## **Projects**

This year saw the culmination of a tremendous effort from Steve Morris and Bill Shepley to re-design our shop website. They worked tirelessly on it to get it all together and I am sure it felt like the proverbial 'herding cats' trying to get the shop committee and team to provide all the information and support the photo shoots. A great effort by Bill and considering his health issues over recent times and we are very grateful to him for undertaking this project.

We are of course a high user of energy and spiralling costs have had a serious affect on our profits this year. Currently we are investigating the potential to add more solar panels on the south facing roof of the car park. We have a couple of quotations and it is technically possible with reasonable pay back times, however it would take a considerable amount of our cash reserves to finance such a project. To counter this we are applying for some grants and the outcome of this will underpin our decision on whether to proceed.

Moving forward into the current financial year; we have had a few difficult months with falling turnover and losses each month. We have recently been in contact with the Plunkett Foundation ( who support and advise community enterprises) to seek some advice on stemming the losses. They have offered us free consultancy service to look objectively at all aspects of our shop and finances and we are taking up this offer. We have already supplied them with background detail and our financial position and will be meeting with them early in the Autumn to progress this. We are very excited about this and hope we can gain some new ideas and guidance.

## **The Team**

The most important aspect of the shop (as well as you, the customers!).

We are immensely fortunate to have such a loyal and hard working team to keep the shop ticking along so smoothly and always looking so welcoming too. This year we said our farewells to Pam Morris who stepped back from her role after many years behind the counter. We have also had some changes in our 'youngsters' as they grow up and move out of the village new members join us. We are very proud to be able to offer the opportunity to the young people in the village to have their first paid job.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who helps us, especially the band of trusty volunteers – some of whom do 'behind the scenes work' we appreciate you all and hope you can continue to be part of our shop 'community'. Special mention to Helen for her patience in being our minutes secretary.

Finally thank you to my fellow committee members – your time, patience, advice and support is gratefully accepted and we are most definitely a team. And whilst on the subject – we do have a couple of spaces on the Committee if anyone is interested in joining us – especially someone with marketing expertise! It is a rewarding experience to be part of a community organisation working with a happy and talented team.