

## **Abbotts Ann Village Shop Association**

### **AGM Report 2024**

Good evening and welcome to the AGM of our village shop association.

Thank you for your support in coming here and of course your support for the shop throughout the year.

I hope you have sight of the agenda.

Our first item is:-

#### **1. Approval of the minutes of last year's AGM.**

I trust that you have been able to see these if you wish to read them through.

There has been a copy available in the Shop, and on our website, and some are available here.

Could I have a Proposer; Secunder. Those in favour, any against; any abstentions?

#### **2. Chair's Report**

Intro

We are lucky to live in a beautiful part of the Test Valley and an exceptional community, but how do we judge how good a community is?

Some years ago I was strolling through a village in the centre of Devon when an elderly gentleman came out of his house and said "Welcome to Broadwoodwidge the village of the dead. Nothing happens here and we like it that way." Hopefully not a description any of us would offer to a visitor in AA!

Like it or not many people will judge our village by the institutions here, the church, the village hall, the sports club, and of course the shop.

Well, what do people see when they pass down the street or even drop in to the shop?

Clear signing and a very smart new awning!

Perhaps a place to park.

A very pleasant ambience outside (and indeed inside).

Some welcoming staff and a good selection of things to buy.

A substantial and comprehensive Post Office.

Coming to the shop gives people a very good chance of meeting others, good friends and new contacts.

We are, and very definitely should be in my opinion, a pillar of a great community.

So how have we been doing over the last year?

Financially the Association has, once again made a modest profit, a significant increase on the figure we made last year. As in previous years this has relied heavily on the contribution of rent from the flat above.

Our turnover has also significantly increased.

Our bank balance is very healthy.

The treasurer will elucidate in his report shortly.

A summary of our finances is available here tonight for those who want to examine the figures more closely.

As usual our accounts presented here tonight are for the financial year ending last December.

Challenges and change

We knew at our last AGM that our much admired manager Julia was about to retire. So we had to think of how to get a replacement! Do we advertise as widely as is necessary, or promote from within? I am happy to say we did both!

It was no secret that that powerhouse of commitment to village, shop, and Post Office life, yes none other than Judeth Dashwood declared her hand!

Did she have retail experience? ...definitely.

Did she know the minutiae of how the shop works? ....well if she did not then no one else would!

Has she got enthusiasm, drive, creativity and vision? ....yes by the bucket load! Well done Judeth!

So the transition period began and here we are with our new management team.

Of course I must mention Bev our new Deputy Manager.

Well who would travel a few miles over the hill to a strange community (and I use those words advisedly) to take a key role with people she had never met before?

Bev has been warmly embraced by the staff and volunteers in the shop and has shown her adaptability to take on everything shop, including pursuing the purchase of a new awning. More of this later!

So we have a new management team, respected and supported throughout the transition period on a daily basis by the volunteer managers and all our great volunteers.

The structure and equipment

I hope you have not failed to notice the amazing new awning....a dynamic and striking piece of equipment! High tech, self-retracting when the wind gets strong and remote controlled. Our name so clearly visible along the front... a huge improvement on what we had before.

Many thanks to Bev for researching potential suppliers, and thanks also go to the Fete Committee who contributed £1150 and Test Valley for providing us with £1000 as a grant.

Generally, our buildings are in good shape, the once broken tiles on the roof have now been replaced.

Tim Tayler has kindly provided more chairs so that when needed for the Men's Group which meets regularly in the shop, there are enough to go round.

Steve Randall, an expert on sonar and submarines, has proved just the person with the right skills to (dare I say) immerse himself in repairs and improvements to both the shop and the flat above.

He has attended to the steady demands of for example, the shed structure needing renovation, or a new box outside the back door for the papers to be dropped off in the morning. Many thanks Steve.

Moreover, on the subject of the Flat, we still have a reserve set aside for a kitchen revamp when there is a change of tenant. As far as I am aware it is generally in good shape and enjoyed by Richard our tenant.

Sadly a few weeks ago, as I guess you all know, a car ran out of control down Monxton hill and smashed through our fencing on both sides of the shop. It then impacted the wall on Jill and Tim Tayler's cottage.

Repairs to the fence have now been completed after agreement from the driver's insurers.

Mercifully no one was hurt in the shop forecourt in what we trust was an exceptionally rare event.

Moving on...

## Security

As you may know from the local press, a number of small retail outlets have been the target of organised thieves, usually breaking into the premises at night, causing devastation in the process.

Not surprisingly they go for cash and high value products like cigarettes or alcohol.

This was highlighted in a meeting organised locally by Test Valley Counsellors when the police shared their experience and advice with other local shop leaders and ourselves.

We followed this up, inviting the police to visit our premises and advise on what we can do to reduce the chances of criminals stealing goods.

The committee have also reviewed what security is in place, what can be done to increase

security and what is available to install. This process is ongoing. Our emphasis has been to use deterrence as much as possible. In other words a good alarm system, which thanks to the Post

Office we have; a motion sensitive light outside at night; good locks on our external doors etc.

We are looking into replacing our front door with a tougher more resilient version; window alarms; and the possible installation of CCTV internally.

At the heart of this is to ensure all staff and customers are kept safe, and should there be a break in, the damage to property would be as minimal as we can make it.

No one wants to feel that visiting the shop one gets the experience of entering a Fort Knox.

### **Activities**

The fete was held in the village street last year, and much to our benefit. Being centrally placed we had a great number of people calling in, giving us new customers and great publicity.

I would like to record my thanks to the generosity of the Fete Committee over the years, which has made such a difference to what we can afford to do in the shop.

Jackie Jackson is currently our representative on the fête committee. Thank you Jackie.

### **Volunteers**

Mentioning our committee, besides Jackie we have Paula Grant our diligent secretary, Mike Bird our steadfast and patient treasurer, Steve Randall DIY enthusiast, David Hobbs the ever supportive volunteer and the much enduring and devoted volunteer Elizabeth Howard. Vivienne Asbee left the village and Dee Howarth and Margaret Veale stood down this year. Many thanks to them. Elizabeth our deputy Chair is also now standing down after many years service. We gave her a bouquet of flowers last year after 20 years as a volunteer and committee member, so what can I say ... the village is truly indebted to you! Thank you for all you have done.

We have an additional little gift for you Elizabeth. (Token).

Claire Almond has agreed to put her name forward to be elected onto the committee.

I should pay tribute to Pam Lytle who sadly died a few weeks ago. She was a hard working and consistent volunteer, serving as secretary on the committee, raising money through selling raffle tickets for the magnum of champagne each year, returning newspapers at the end of the day and much else. Another devoted volunteer to whom we are indebted.

I think we have around forty volunteers working in different ways. We always need a steady trickle of new ones signing up. We are at a critical stage with our bakers who are frequently being seriously overstretched, please encourage anyone to sign up. I cannot emphasize this enough.

We have two events for volunteers this year- drinks at Christmas when everyone receives a box of M&S biscuits and drinks in the summer - due at the end of July.

We still have a need for someone to take on the role of keeping our presence on Facebook and Instagram up to date.

Thanks also to Martin Startup who gives much of his time checking through our accounts at the end of the year and to Keith Saunders who is always available to give us the best possible advice on IT, WiFi broadband etc.

### **The Post Office**

Maureen will report on shortly, but suffice it to say we could not do without it. I would like to thank Maureen, Judeth and John Moon who go above and beyond in keeping the service going.

Maureen continues to be supportive in every way possible as a local counsellor. Very many thanks.

### **Membership**

Currently we have 244 members of the Shop Association who are shareholders. If you are a shareholder, you can vote at this meeting. If you are not a shareholder then do please consider signing up Application forms are here tonight and also available in the shop.

You can also become a 'friend of the shop' by pledging to give a fixed amount annually to the Association. Again, application forms are available here and in the shop. Currently we have 31 friends signed up. This is a very useful way in which we can build a regular income. So I do hope you will consider this if you are not already a member.

Following comments made at last year's AGM we have put a photo of the original committee on the wall behind the counter.

We have included a voucher and information sheet in the village welcome pack and we have information revolving on our TV screen and in print giving an outline of the creation of the shop and Post Office.

### **In summary**

If you go to many of our surrounding villages such as Monxton, Amport, Upper Clatford, Longstock or Wherwell there is no village shop. All of these communities once had one and of course wish they still had.

Not only do we have a shop and significant Post Office but we have a community shop. We are indeed lucky and since the early days 22 years ago we have seen the shop grow in strength and viability. This is solely due to the hard work, vision and dedication of so many here in building this great village institution.

I trust you will join me in giving your valued support in enabling our community shop to thrive.

Chris Davis

Chair