

Report from Community Shop

at Westbury sub Mendip Parish Council meeting, 19 April 2023

1. Our Mission: The Shop is run by the village and for the village. It therefore aims to meet the community's needs, by supplying everyday provisions and services, including post office and banking services, at flexible hours. It will seek to support the vulnerable and those with access challenges, to supply local, healthy and sustainable goods, and to be a rewarding employer, providing job opportunities for local people.
2. Financial position: Despite an increase in turnover, the Shop made a small loss in 2022, as in the previous year. The main reasons are the growing wage bill which is required to run the Post Office, increases in other overheads, and the rising cost of wholesale groceries and newspapers, which has squeezed profit margins. Action has been taken to address this situation. The Post Office now closes at lunchtime on Wednesdays: we regret the inconvenience this causes to a minority of customers, but it is helping us to keep staffing costs down and balance the books. Savings have also been achieved on utility costs through renegotiation. And most importantly, a Customer Survey has been carried out, and a Business Plan prepared. Action plans focus on restoring our sales margins to levels achieved pre-recession; controlling costs; maintaining sales growth; and exploring opportunities for additional Post Office income.
3. Staffing: The past year has seen significant changes in staff. Liza Lovell and Kate Camp took over from our longstanding Shop Manager Penny Colwill in August 2022. They have been sharing the job as Postmistress/ Shop Operations Manager and Shop Administration Manager respectively. Penny continues to work a weekly shift as Post Office Counter Assistant, alongside Mel Godfrey, with Sue Dennett opening the Shop on Sunday mornings.
4. Management Committee: The Committee met five times during the year. Paul Wiseman was elected at the AGM last June for the usual three-year term, and subsequently appointed Deputy Chair. Our Treasurer, Mark Fraser left Westbury last autumn, and Richard Stone, who was co-opted onto the Committee in September, has taken over as Treasurer. We are fortunate to be able to draw on his expertise as a chartered accountant. We also co-opted Joyce Henderson. Joyce is responsible for Communications and has played a leading role in developing the Shop garden.
5. Volunteers: The Shop's roughly 30 regular volunteers are its life blood. Alison Cole has continued as Payroll Officer and Sylvia Healey as Bookkeeper. Angus Henderson has been very active as Maintenance Manager, assisted by Paul Hamilton. We have a loyal group of half a dozen drivers who collect groceries from wholesalers, and between fifteen and twenty volunteers who work regular weekly shifts behind the Shop counter. We have gained a couple of new volunteers during the year but are always on the lookout for more!
6. New developments during the year: Our new Shop Managers are constantly reviewing stock and experimenting with new products. Bulk dry goods are selling well, and the more recently introduced zero waste liquids. Our self-serve hot drinks machine is in daily use. The Shop has become an Amazon parcel hub. We received grants from the Somerset Community Fund

and the Westbury Friendly Society to improve use of the garden as a community space and are using this money to make it a convenient, safe and attractive place for people to meet.

7. Opportunities: We are conscious that the potential housing development south of Roughmoor Lane may generate opportunities to develop the shop or even re-locate the premises. Given the current uncertainty in terms of scale and the timing of this development, we are not yet considering these opportunities in any detail, but the Committee would value being consulted as and when appropriate.