



**Fourth Annual Members' Meeting of Crowle  
Community Shop Ltd**

**Sunday 30 January 2022 at Crowle Parish Hall**

**Annual Report to Members 2020/21**

# **Crowle Community Shop Limited**

**(Trading as The Shop at Crowle)**

## **Agenda for fourth Annual Members' Meeting of Crowle Community Shop Limited**

**Sunday 30 January 2022 at 11am at Crowle Parish Hall**

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Chairman's Report to Members
3. Financial Report for year ending 31 March 2021
  - Presentation of annual accounts
  - Financial performance and trading outlook
  - Resolution not to appoint an auditor vote
  - Independent accountant's report
4. Operational reviews:
  - Customers and products
  - Risk management
  - Volunteer recruitment
  - Premises
5. Management Committee
6. Any other business

## **Chairman's Report to Members**

In today's meeting we are, strictly, reviewing the year commencing on 1 April 2020, and this was of course completely dominated by COVID. We're a little late with the annual meeting this time, due to a combination of lockdowns and other ill-health at our end.

Our aim throughout the pandemic was quite simple: to stay open and offer a valued service that was as 'COVID-safe' as possible – both for customers and for all those working at The Shop. We are all familiar now with concepts that two years ago would have been quite alien to us all – face coverings, protective screens, increased sanitisation measures, limits on numbers of people in The Shop, closure of the Cafe and so on. Trish will elaborate on this in her Risk Management report, after we've heard from Howard, our Treasurer, on how we fared financially during the 'first COVID year'.

In the meantime, let me thank Carolyn and all our volunteers (front and back of house) who have kept the Shop going throughout these challenging times. We have been asked 'when will you be able to return to the previous opening hours?', and Trish will comment further in her report on Volunteers.

### **Our Local Focus**

When we set up The Shop you told us that you wanted us to have a strong emphasis on local products. We're therefore delighted that about 65% of our product spend goes to producers within the county or a little beyond.

I won't steal Carolyn's thunder by going into product detail, but we regularly review new local producer and product options, and this includes keeping a close eye on local winners in the annual Great Taste Awards to size up their suitability. We especially welcomed the 'Make it Worcestershire' campaign, co-sponsored by Richard Soper, one of our shareholders and regular customers. This campaign showcases the best of what the county has to offer, and later this year we hope to be able to help by hosting a promotional event at The Shop.

Our local focus is a central part of our wider marketing activities, energetically spearheaded by our Vice-Chairman Nick Brett, using both traditional channels such as the Cryer alongside social media. Nick is especially busy at Christmas, showcasing our many festive products, but also at other calendar events and whenever we have new product news.

### **Countryside Alliance 'Rural Oscar' Awards**

During the year we made a submission for the Countryside Alliance's 'Rural Oscars' Award. These awards celebrate stand-out rural businesses that 'go the extra mile' in contributing to their local community. We were one of only four Village Shops in the Midlands shortlisted for the final. The judging panel was really impressed to see more than 80 supporting submissions from shareholder members, customers, volunteers and grant funders! I'd like to read just one of the comments we received, this from Robert Harkins on behalf of himself and Joan, because this encapsulates so much of what The Shop stands for:

*The products and produce are well chosen and of good quality and negate the necessity to travel into town. The volunteers are welcoming, efficient and on the ball, listening to any suggestions that are made by customers. We have met so many more people from the village since the shop opened and having coffee and cake there is a delight.*

In the event, we were awarded 'Highly Commended', the worthy winner being Yarpole Community Shop and Post Office (which is located in a church!) near Leominster.

After the Award we were proud to receive a congratulatory letter from Nigel Huddleston MP who said: *'Being a regular visitor myself, I am only too aware of the facilities you provide to local people and it always a great pleasure to call in. Could you kindly extend my thanks and appreciation to your wonderful team of staff and volunteers, who I know all work together to make the Shop and Café the great success that it is'.*

### **Repaying the community**

As a community venture, it's no surprise that we set out to have a strong community focus. When we set up The Shop almost all the local community groups supported the venture in one way or another. Now, with the success that you've all helped us to achieve, we're in a position to put something back.

Crowle Searchers Football Club was a generous supporter from 'day one', so we were delighted to have the opportunity last year to sponsor their Under-11s kit. We hope that this is just the beginning of our 'community support and recognition programme', which we're planning to develop more formally during the coming year.

### **Goodbyes**

It's sad that, as time goes by, we lose some of the people we've known who have made a difference, and The Shop's shareholder roster is not immune to this.

- I mentioned Robert Harkins earlier, in the context of his thoughtful and positive support for our 'Rural Oscars' bid. I should also add that his generosity extended to regular support for our Food Box scheme.
- Graham Rhodes was perhaps best known in the village for his role as Treasurer of the Parish Hall Trust, our landlord, and in this capacity gave valuable guidance to our first Treasurer John Hood and me when we were setting up.
- David Speirs was a generous benefactor to The Shop, and we benefited from his creative talent by displaying and selling his wood carvings (which he donated to The Shop). We're pleased to have been able to welcome Sheila back to our volunteer team.
- Marie Eastwood was a determined advocate for The Shop project from the start. The backing of the Parish Council was critical and, as Chair, Marie provided unstinting support for the project as it progressed; at a personal level, her first question when I popped round to give her a briefing during The Shop's development phase was always 'when can I let you have my cheque?'. After we opened she became a committed patron – both as a customer and through her frequent and generous contributions towards our Food Box scheme.

### **Shop extension**

Before I hand over to Howard for the financial review, let me add that I haven't forgotten the Shop extension – I'll be saying a few words about this later in the Premises Report.

**Stephen Denne, Chairman**

## ***Financial Report for 2020/21***

This report is on the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021 but I will also very briefly touch on the period to date.

Firstly apologies for the delay in producing these, amongst other things I had two, non covid, bouts of illness.

After 2020's development and growth we were faced at the very end of the 2020 year with complete lockdown on 23 March. As we started 2021 we had no real idea how things would develop.

We have circulated some pages from the full accounts but should anyone want a full set please let me know.

The accounts are not audited but they are independently examined. An audit is significantly more expensive and the directors (the management committee) decided at the outset that independent examination was sufficient.

The accountants nevertheless review our records and then compare that review with the statutory accounts and they have confirmed in their report on page 2 that all would appear to be in order and compliant with legislation.

Turning now to page 3 which is effectively a summary of the profit and loss account for the year.

Despite all the issues with the plague, Covid, our turnover, sales, increased by 23.6%. I believe that although movement and meetings were severely restricted and we had no café, the increase is due to individuals shopping in what they believed to be a safer environment than other places where there were more people.

The management committee constantly reviewed the policy of how many should be in the shop at any one time and also instigated a one ways system, plastic screens and so on, not only to keep shoppers safe but also to make them feel safe.

Our gross profit is 28.3% compared with 32.5%. I'm not overly concerned about that variation because the stock figure at 31 March 2020 was a guestimate due to Covid, however we did a full physical check at 31 March 2021. Also, during 2021 we did not have many café days and sales in the café generates a higher profit.

You will note that there is no tax charge and that is because we are again applying the "Peterhead Principle" whereby a notional charge for volunteer wages has been applied thus reducing the taxable profit to nil. This principle has been accepted by HMRC and that principal has been applied again on exactly the same basis as previous years and thus no tax charge arises. We will continue applying this until we are advised otherwise.

Volunteer hours in the year amounted to 4,698 hours and when the national minimum wage is applied to that results in a notional potential wage of £41,861.. more than enough!

Staying with Profits and losses. A very healthy profit of £31,511.

On the face of it, it seems the shop is doing incredibly well, and it is BUT

When the shop began, and subsequently, it received various grants, some were capital and some revenue. Accounting policies now require these grants to be released systematically over periods of time.

For example capital grants received at the beginning in respect of the build and development of the shop are released to the profit and loss account over the same period that the building (for example) is being depreciated (effectively 10 years).

The £31,511 includes a release of £20,498 of grants. This is included in "Other operating income" as a deduction from admin expenses.

Thus the operating profit is £11,013 which is still a healthy position and if donations and other similar small items are removed as well the trading profit and loss is £9,528 – 5% on sales. For a community shop this is a good performance, there has to be a balance between ensuring there is profit and serving the community and I believe we have that balance about right.

Page 4 is the balance sheet and sets out our assets and liabilities. There is not a lot to comment on here. Assets are written off in equal amounts annually with the building being over a total of 10 years.

A brief mention of the year to date.

Construction of the extension began and is now nearing completion and so far, pending checking that no costs have been analysed incorrectly it has cost some £26,000.

This will provide much needed storage, more selling area and a bigger office for our manager.

Sales amount to some £133,550 which compares to £153,398 for the same period last year. This decrease is undoubtedly due to the relaxation of the Covid rules in our current period.

However, it is still a very healthy turnover and is above the pre covid trading in 2020 which had a turnover of £118,795 (period 1/4/19 to 29/1/20).

I believe the performance of the shop demonstrates that it has provided a valuable service to the village and surrounding area and a huge vote of thanks has to be given to all the volunteers and Carolyn our shop manager for keeping the shop operational through very difficult times.

Finally a thank you to everyone involved in the shop's operation and I'm not going to try and mention everyone because I may miss someone but you know who you are.. thank you one and all.

**Howard Painter, Treasurer**

## ***Customers and products***

To be added

## ***Risk Management***

- I think you'll all agree it's been yet another 'interesting' year.
- Incredibly proud of the fact we have continued to keep the Shop open and only having to close on the odd occasion due to volunteer shortages
- Talking of which our volunteers have been brilliant throughout and are incredibly supportive of the Shop, Carolyn (our Manager) and the Management Committee
- Many customers comment on how amazing they have been and continue to be during these challenging times
- We continue to receive comments about how safe customers feel when visiting the Shop.
- There are the occasional negative comments about not letting more people in at a time but that has been part of our COVID strategy all along. Each time government guidelines change so does our Risk Assessment (more on this later) but our priority is to ensure the safety of everyone – customers, our manager, volunteers, suppliers and visitors.
- I think people have become used to waiting outside until given the ok to enter the shop with only the weather giving rise to the odd moan. Generally, people entering the Shop have been very mindful of the rules and regulations and been appreciative of volunteers ensuring they stick to them during their 'shop'. Forgetting to wear a face mask/numbers inside being the main reasons for stopping customers from entering until they comply.
- Throughout COVID we've had a team of volunteers behind the scenes monitoring Government guidelines and translating these into the Shops Risk Assessment whenever changes occur
- Last year I mentioned that this has been in place since opening but over the last year it has never been a more pertinent document to possess in our tool kit.
- We are incredibly fortunate to have an Infection Control specialist on our Team of Volunteers in the form of Eileen Roberts who continues to keep us all on our toes and up to date with safety issues.
- The COVID Risk Assessment is available for all our volunteers whether shop fronting or behind the scenes to view at any time via our online rota and data storage system – 3Rings – so no one is kept in the dark! There is also a copy kept in the Shop for them to refer if needed to when on duty. The general Shop Risk Assessment is also available via these means and this is currently undergoing an update
- Any immediate changes that need to be actioned are communicated to us via our daily communications book and periodic newsletters from Carolyn
- The first version of the Covid specific risk assessment was compiled in June 2020 and has been updated either on a monthly basis or whenever government guidance changes. Our latest update was this week in line with the recent changes made.
- Throughout volunteers have continued to sanitise all surfaces touched by customers, door/fridge/window handles, the sanitiser unit outside etc; sanitising all areas touched by volunteers, till screen, card machine, telephone, scales, taps, coffee machine, kettle etc; maintaining a constant flow of air throughout the Shop – even in the cold weather!

- The need for hand washing is still an important practice with volunteers frequently doing so during a session and always washing or sanitizing their hands after taking a cash transaction. If a customer inputs their pin number rather than use contactless then the card machine receives an additional clean.
- To the best of our knowledge we don't think that over the last 12 months anyone (customer or volunteer) has contracted COVID from the Shop which corroborates that maintaining safe practices through our regularly updated Risk Assessment has been effective.
- Changes made to the Risk Assessment this week include:
  - The change of numbers allowed in the Shop at any one time increasing to 10 from 1<sup>st</sup> February. This includes all volunteers on duty, Carolyn, any café customers, suppliers and shoppers.
  - The wearing of masks is no longer obligatory however, we would encourage people to continue wearing them where possible including all those working in the shop. Masks will continue to be freely available for anyone who requires one. Posters encouraging their use are displayed throughout the Shop
  - From 1<sup>st</sup> February we will reopen the inside café but this will remain limited to two tables of two positioned under the windows which will be kept open.
  - The customer toilet will also be reopened but this is for café customers use only and will be cleaned and sanitised on a regular basis.
  - The toilet is not in available for general use.
- Tables both inside and out will continue to be sanitised after each customer either with 5 minute contact sanitiser spray or if busy with sanitising wipes.
- Those who do not want to or are unable to personally enter the shop will be served from the window albeit there may be a slight delay in service
- As always our request is for people to be patient with our volunteers if they are busy or dealing with other customers. They are the lifeblood of our Shop and are passionately committed to the ensuring the Shop is kept open following all government guidelines. Without these wonderful people (whatever they do for the Shop) we would not have been able to maintain this incredibly safe and valuable village facility

#### Duke of Edinburgh Volunteers:

- We continue to have enquiries about DofE candidates returning (or starting) to gain experience in the Shop.
- Sadly, due to COVID restrictions and our opening hours the decision was made to temporarily cease supporting the DofE scheme.
- Recently however we reviewed this and decided that the best times to accommodate them would be on a Saturday morning before opening (8.00 – 9.30) or during school holidays. This would be dependent on availability and the volunteers on duty being comfortable with an additional person in the Shop
- They will be more than welcome and we look forward to their return.



Finally....

- My thanks go to the Risk Assessment Team – primarily Eileen but also Sandra, Lisa and Carolyn for ensuring we adhere to all Government Guidelines and maintain a safe Shop for everyone.

**Trish Hartley, Secretary**

### ***Volunteers***

To be added

### ***Premises***

As you'll have seen, the Shop extension is now a reality, and is nearly ready to be put into service as a new office and storage area, along with a relocated staff toilet. This has involved a great deal of work from our DIY team, spearheaded by Ivan Treloar and John Brookes, ably assisted by Fred Carruthers together with Paul Bussey and Steve Bott along with our professional contractors. The next step will be to fit out the new office, the working area in which will be generously sourced by Jean Morris (of Mark Ellis Interiors). All this work, however, has only been possible after diligent upfront planning work by Richard Temple Cox.

The current office and staff loo will be 'released' to become retail space, and we are looking forward to completing all the associated works. Never one to be inactive, Ivan has used his Christmas break to build some new floor displays which are waiting impatiently in his garage.

Our financial success has enabled us to upgrade quite a few of our appliances in the Shop, such as storage fridges and freezers but also the purchase of commercial-grade microwave and toaster which have resulted in a quicker service for Café customers (and less stress for those serving). This will also extend to a new printer for the office, although I'm sorry to tell Carolyn that the hot-tub and hammock may take rather longer.

First impressions are very important and we are, therefore, very grateful to Helen Dowson and Frances Hood who have continued with their work on the garden, which adds a welcome splash of colour for our patio area. Customers often comment on how lovely it is to sit in our garden area enjoying a cup of tea or coffee and one of Lisa's delicious cakes.

And finally whilst we are outside, let me add that we are eagerly awaiting the opening of the new Community Wellbeing space just next door, which as well as enhancing our local facilities should be positive for footfall for the Shop.

**Nick Brett, Premises**

## **Management Committee for 2021/22**

The Society's Rules require the Management Committee to be composed of not less than 3 and not more than 12 persons, at least three-quarters of whom shall be elected by and from the Members. The Management Committee elect from amongst themselves a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary.

The members of the Management Committee who served during the year are as named below. Odette Green stood down from the Committee during the year.

Stephen Denne, Howard Painter, Trish Hartley and Nick Brett have indicated their willingness to remain on the Committee; they do not require re-election this year.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Office 2020/21</b>	<b>First appointed</b>
Stephen Denne	Chairman	22 March 2017
Nick Brett	Vice-Chairman	29 September 2019
Howard Painter	Treasurer	20 February 2020
Trish Hartley	Secretary	29 September 2019
Jean Morris	Committee	11 April 2021
Odette Green	Committee	11 April 2021

John Brookes stood for election to the Committee as new member at this Meeting and was duly elected.

*Crowle Community Shop Limited (trading as The Shop at Crowle)*

*Registered office:*

*Blenheim*

*Netherwood Lane*

*Crowle*

*Worcester WR7 4AB*

**January 2022**