



COMMUNITY SHOP & CAFE
Annual General Meeting 20th March 2022
Great Plumstead Village Hall

Present:

Management Committee

Andy Carty
Adrian Nagle
Debbie Tomkins
Kelly Hall
Louise Amond
Vic Tomkins
Vicki Malcolm

Committee Members

Claire Carroll
Linda Carty

1. AGM Business

This was our fourth AGM and attended by the Management Committee, Members and Volunteers. The meeting opened at 11 am.

Introduction and Apologies

Chair, Andy Carty, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, outlining the procedure that the AGM will follow and introduced all the committee members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Harry Marks and Sophie Harrison.

2. Chair's Report

A very warm welcome to our fourth AGM and annual report of the Society's activities.

It has been another exciting year seeing our shop, café and walled garden all thrive and despite difficult trading conditions managing to make a profit in our first full year of operation.

Firstly, I should thank all the people who have got us this far, the past and present members of the Management Committee (MC) and everyone who has helped over the years, you should all be proud of our achievements to date.

We have a shop and café that is managing to operate at a profit and a Walled Garden that is really starting to resemble its former Victorian glory. But as you all know, we are still at the early stages of our journey and it is only with the continued help and support from the Volunteers, Management Committee, Staff, customers, Parish Council and all our grant funders that we can maintain our position at the centre of our community.

Vic will go into more detail on our financial position later, but it is important to note that a significant reason for our level of profits was the amount of time and effort that was put in by the Management Committee and Volunteers. In many cases this level of unpaid input was not sustainable and we currently employ more than twice the level of staff than we did this time last year. We now provide 11 local people with paid employment, employing the equivalent of over 4 full time employees. However, our whole venture could not succeed without the significant number of volunteers who continue to freely give their time each week in the shop, café and garden. So a big thank you to all of them, a message to anyone out there thinking they may be able to lend a helping hand, please come forward and talk to anyone on the committee or at the shop - you will always get a warm welcome.

Another keenly supported service we have provided is work experience for a large number of local teenagers. This has sometimes been as part of their studies but we know that a significant number have been able to use the experience gained to progress to paid employment. Our Partnership with the Broadland Clinic also continues to allow them to provide supervised experience for some of their clients.

The major addition to our infrastructure since last year has been the external gazebos that have really improved our ability to provide services whatever the weather and made a significant difference during the times we were operating under Covid restrictions.

However well you think you might be doing, it is always important, and sometimes a bit scary, to ask your customers for their thoughts, so it was with some trepidation we launched our first customer survey this year where we encouraged our customers to provide feedback on how we are doing, where we can improve and what effect we have had on them and the community. Given the unprecedented times we find ourselves in, we thought it appropriate to include questions on topics such as social isolation, health, wellbeing and community cohesion. At the end of these Minutes is an excerpt from the summary of the almost 100 responses we received.

We were much heartened by the responses but know that we cannot rest on our laurels, such as they are, so we have a number of exciting projects planned for the coming year to enhance our ability to provide support and services to our local community. Louise will give you more details on our exciting plan to create a Victorian style Greenhouse that will not only be a stunning improvement to the infrastructure of the WG but will also provide many new opportunities.

Grant applications are likely to be a continuing area of support that we will need, to maintain and enhance the facilities we currently have. We are also hoping to redesign our outbuildings to allow us to provide a community room that can be accessed for events and good causes (for example, we already have a donor wishing to help us set up a dementia coffee morning once the facility is in place).

As a Management Team we really feel that the support and feedback we are getting from the community makes it worthwhile (not only from the formal feedback but from the comments we get on a daily basis and the requests we get to hold: birthday parties, christenings, Woolly Wednesdays, mum and baby groups, weddings...).

So to conclude, we have made a fantastic start and it is in all our hands now to continue to create a community asset that we can be proud of and I look forward to doing this with you.

Thank you
Andrew Carty
Chair
Plumstead Community Shop Ltd
20 March 2022

3. Accounts For The Year Ended 31 October 2021

All members had been given access to the formal accounts via a web link. Vic Tomkins gave a report.

Good morning and thanks to Andy for the overview. Between Debbie and myself, we have covered all things finance related over the past few years, plus involvement in other things.

This is our first physical AGM for two years, and since opening.

Two years ago when we last met, the site was still a muddy patch without a building, but at that time I think we managed to finally convince ourselves and yourselves that the project really was about to become reality.

Anyone visiting the site for the first time would find it very hard to believe that “nothing” existed 2 years ago. I am biased, but to me the transformation of that waste patch of land is truly astonishing. As noted by Andy, everyone here has had a part to play and everyone should feel very proud of their contribution in providing the fabulous facility that is now at the heart of the community.

Not a normal business. Most businesses measure success by financial results, our measure although perhaps more difficult to quantify are the social wellbeing and community centred aspects.

As a business we do need to have accounts and it's important for the MC to be kept aware of the ongoing financial position as we progress the project forward.

Shareholders have all received a copy of the account as we are required to provide, after this meeting the full accounts will be filed at the FCA and will be available in the public domain. Generally, only shareholders are invited to attend an AGM but we believe that all staff and volunteers are equal members and should have the opportunity to attend - although I do have to admit that there was a bit of a communication breakdown and I apologise for the late notice that staff and volunteers received of their invitation.

I will try to highlight the key financial aspects - and at the same time look out for glazed eyes as financial information at the best of times is a dry topic.

Profit & Loss - a financial summary of the 12 months 1st November - 31st October

- Sales turnover for the year was £243k, being shop £130k, café £108k and garden £5k. I should say that whilst the bulk of the shop products are procured from Nisa (Co-op), wherever possible we support local businesses by buying from local suppliers - including all café products.
- Gross profit - after taking off the purchase cost of goods sold we are left with £110k gross profit.
- From gross profit we deduct salary costs £53k (I'll come back to that), fixed asset depreciation £15k and other overhead costs of £32k.
- That leaves a pre tax operating profit for the year of £10k.
- Salary costs - there are some paid members of staff in the shop and café, all other staff, be they working in the garden, café, shop or on the committee, are 100% unpaid volunteers. We initially opened with 64 paid hours per week, as we moved through the year it became apparent that the café was unsustainably dependent upon MC members and an army of volunteers with several staff handovers each day, and some of whom were run ragged. The success of the café meant we needed to increase the level of paid work - or run the very real risk of the café failing. Today we have 150 paid hours per week and the salary cost in this current year will be almost double that of last year - and we remain dependent upon volunteers to supplement the paid staff to ensure the success of the café.

Returning to the P&L account - the grant money we received in order to provide the facility is released into the P&L account in increments in each year that broadly equal the amount of asset depreciation, so in this year £15k grant money was released making the profit from ongoing operations £25k.

We did spend a considerable amount of time trying to secure financial assistance from the National Lottery to support our salary costs. We were successful mid-way through the financial year - this support covers 50% of the cost of 3 part time staff and added £11k back to the profit. This support will be at the rate of £22k per year for a total of 3 years from last May.

Covid obviously severely impacted business across the UK and the Government put in place financial assistance schemes which were administered by local councils. We received income support via Broadland District Council of £11k (actually more, but not all of it in income support, which I'll come back to).

As a community business, we are the exact type of business that the Co-op support via their MADL scheme, and we were fortunate enough to receive £5k from them.

Finally, through fundraising and general donations, we received a further £3k.

Adding all of these grants into the P&L, we have a final reported surplus/profit of £55.7k. Summarising, we had an operating profit of £10k after "accounting" transaction that profit increased to £25k from ongoing operations and, adding all the grant support we received brings us to a reported surplus of £55k.

A normal business is allowed to distribute some of its profits to shareholders, as a Community Benefit Society all of our profits must be ultimately used to secure the society and for the benefit of the community and none are distributable to shareholders.

- Balance Sheet - a financial snapshot of the assets and liabilities of the society at 31st October 2021.
- Fixed Assets - building, leasehold improvements, fixtures and fittings £232k - all funded by a combination of grant money and shareholder share purchase - nothing has been funded by debt.
- Stocks - what we see on the shelves, in the storeroom and in the café £12k
- Cash - £124k I will come back to this as it does required explanation
- Debtors and Creditors (£284k) - at face value to have a net creditor balance of £284k means we "owe" somebody £284k, in our case this is not true. It is an accounting requirement that if grant funds are received to provide fixed assets, they be held in the balance sheet and released to the P&L account over the lifetime of the assets. They are not creditors in the true sense and this money is not required to be repaid.
- The sum of the above is £84k which represents the members funds - £26k share capital and £58k retained profits. As previously noted, not distributable.
- Cash explanation - within the cash we do have an interest-free loan which at the year end was £39k, this also forms part of the offsetting creditor balance. I mentioned earlier that we received government funding via Broadland District Council, in addition to the income support of £11k, we also received £15.5k as business restart and adaptation grants. The Co-op has also supported us with a £10k grant to assist in financial stability in the business restart. These 2 sums have been used to provide the gazebos, parasols and outdoor seating which enabled social distancing to be maintained under cover. Some of the funds have also been used this year towards the cost of strengthening the roof and covering with solar panels.
- There were also significant donations made towards the garden and greenhouse, made during the year from donors who have asked to remain anonymous.

I should explain how the committee views the cash position of £124k.

	£k
Working capital creditors (Employees/PAYE/VAT/trade)	5
Outstanding loan	39
Cash reserve (4 months disaster fund)	30
Specific garden and greenhouse donations and funds	15
Roof repair/strengthening/panels	22
Balance for discretionary expenditure/ongoing business	13

All in all a very healthy financial position for the community business to be in after just 13 months of being open, providing a fantastic debt-free facility which has been very well received and sufficient financial stability from which to move forward.

A very strong position but knowing how the cash balance is allocated ensures the MC is aware of the need to remain cautious with expenditure.

The Management Committee confirm they are satisfied the accounts represent a true and fair view of the financial affairs of the society and are happy to recommend that members adopt the accounts.

There were no questions from members regarding the accounts.

4. To Disapply Section 83 (Duty to Appoint Auditors) of the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (the Act)

Provided that the society turnover does not exceed £5,600,000 in the prior financial year and that the value of assets does not exceed £2,800,000 it is not necessary to appoint auditors, provided that a resolution to this effect is passed at a general meeting. The Management Committee have engaged Lovewell Blake to undertake the preparation of an unaudited independent accountant's report and retain Lovewell Blake for the current financial year in order that they may continue to undertake this role. The Management Committee confirm that the financial criteria for the excise of the power conferred by Section 84 of the Act will be met and are of the opinion that it is unnecessary to incur the expense to undertake a full audit. The Management Committee are confident that full and proper accounts are maintained and that engaging Lovewell Blake to undertake an independent accounts report is wholly appropriate for the society.

5. Resignations of Elected Members and Nominations for New Members of the Management Committee

The Management Committee members are required to step down by rotation and seek re-election, should they desire, every 3 years. Also, any members co-opted onto the Management Committee during the year are required to seek election by the members at the first AGM following their joining the Management Committee, and any members seeking election to the Management Committee are required to do so at the AGM. This year, we have 2 members stepping down: Kelly Hall and Adrian Nagle who are both seeking re-election.

Harry Marks was co-opted onto the Management Committee in February 2022 and has taken on the role of Treasurer and seeks election to the Management Committee at this AGM.

6. Resolutions

a. Adoption of the Accounts for the Year Ended 31st October 2021

The resolution was voted on by a show of hands. There were no votes against and no abstentions. The resolution was unanimously passed by the members. 1 vote was received by proxy in favour.

b. To Disapply Section 83 (duty to appoint auditors) of the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 (the Act)

The resolution was voted on by a show of hands. There were no votes against and no abstentions. The resolution was unanimously passed by the members. 1 vote was received by proxy in favour.

c. Re-election/Election of the Management Committee Members

The members were asked to vote in turn for each nominee. Each member was unanimously elected with no votes against and no abstentions. 1 vote was received by proxy in favour of all nominees to be elected.

Each of the following were hereby re-elected/elected to the Management Committee:

Kelly Hall
Adrian Nagle
Harry Marks

7. Garden Update

Louise Amond gave an update on the garden progress, the text of her message is below.

Over the past year, the garden renovation has continued with our dedicated team of around 20 volunteers who on Wednesdays and Saturdays work hard to develop and maintain the garden. As we move into our second year, the main garden will again be full of colour and interest, and now the east garden, behind the shop, is starting to take shape, being developed as a wildflower and wildlife area.

Our volunteers not only created the garden for us to all enjoy, but I also wanted to mention that they spend many hours in their own gardens and greenhouses sowing seeds, potting on and developing plants. Growing some of these plants to sell enables us to purchase the equipment and resources we need to maintain the garden. This has been a huge success since we started our plant sales, so we wanted to say thank you for supporting us this way. The volunteers are also fully involved in our event days, especially our two plant sale days which we want to establish in the gardening calendar.

We have also continued to accept tree and shrub donations, with around 65 fruit trees in our orchard, so again thank you.

Due to a generous donation from a local couple, we have begun to introduce a sensory garden which will be further developed in the coming months.

And, have been honoured to receive a special snowdrop and alpine collection from a local gardener who recently passed away. Thanks to her and her family, this special collection is now in our garden for everyone to enjoy.

Looking ahead, we still have many plans. We would love the wildlife area to encourage our younger visitors to enjoy and learn about nature. We want to continue to supply plants for your own gardens, and we are introducing more plant labelling. We also now have our newly launched garden newsletter.

This brings me on to our biggest ambition... having a Victorian greenhouse. With thanks to local charitable trusts and businesses, private donations, as well as all the hard work of the whole team running events over the past year, we have raised a significant amount but there is still the opportunity for you to be involved by donating to our 'pane of glass' initiative which is running until 31st March. You can donate via our crowdfunding page, within the shop/café or here today (the details are in the leaflets).

It is because of this generosity that we have been able to start the process with the foundations and brickwork, which are now well underway. A thank you to Adrian for project managing this, and to the whole management team for fully supporting the greenhouse proposal.

A greenhouse brings the opportunity to grow plants on site, sell plants to fund more events and community projects, we can attract more visitors and it will also provide an all-weather space for course and events.

The reason our garden is a success is down to our wonderful and dedicated garden volunteers, but also to yourselves for supporting the garden in your generosity. This garden is to wander through, this garden is to celebrate special events in, and this garden is to remember loved ones in. This garden is for all of us to enjoy.

8. Any Other Business / Q&A

8.1 The floor was opened for questions.

Question was asked on Reviews.

A: We have had a really good response to the shop and café on all media platforms.

Question was asked on the possibility of installing patio heaters.

A: We do a lot to help the environment and it was felt that patio heaters would not fit in with our environmental policies.

Question was asked on the plans for this year and if an extension to the kitchen was planned.

A: This year, the Management Committee has firm plans to create the community room and at the same time create direct access to toilets. A second project is planned to move the garden tools into the new shed, thereby creating more room for stock and to take the events equipment and books to another storage area. Providing more room in the kitchen for preparation is on our list, but for this year we shall be concentrating on those two projects.

Question was asked on channels of communicating with volunteers.

A: The Management Committee believes it is important that our volunteers are listened to and that there is a method of capturing their ideas. Louise Hall-Hart held a meeting with volunteers recently and there are plans to hold those regularly. Louise has attended some Management Committee meetings and receives a copy of the Minutes to pass onto staff and volunteers. There will be a Volunteers' Party twice a year; at Mid-Summer and Michaelmas where the Management Committee can feed back plans and have informal chats to receive comments and suggestions.

Question was asked on what things have had to change because they didn't work out.

A: There have been some things that had to be tweaked. For example, the bicycle racks were out at the front gates but nobody wanted to leave their expensive bikes out of their sight so the racks were moved.

We took Paninis off the menu as they take a long time to make and take up space, causing longer queues to form. In hindsight we could have had a bigger café but it is not possible to change that now due to the dividing wall between shop and café which houses all the electrical cabling and due to health & safety reasons, it being a food preparation area.

8.2 Impact of The Walled Garden Community Shop & Café Questionnaire

We invited our customers to take part in our first questionnaire to find out how we are doing and the impact that the shop, café and garden has had, especially during these unprecedented times. We were overwhelmed with the responses and below is an excerpt from the summary of the almost 100 responses that we received.

To what extent do you agree/disagree that TWG has:

- a. Reduced social isolation - 78% strongly agree or agree
- b. Improved health & wellbeing - 75% strongly agree or agree
- c. Improved access to basic services - 82% strongly agree or agree
- d. Enhanced community pride & empowerment - 92% strongly agree or agree (no-one disagreed)
- e. Improved the local environment - 96% strongly agree or agree (no-one disagreed)
- f. Increased community cohesion - 84% strongly agree or agree (no-one disagreed)
- g. Provided volunteering/work ex opportunities - 93% strongly agree or agree

Any other comments about the impact?

- a. It's one of the few places where everyone you see are happy
- b. It is a great local facility and community project
- c. From a ruin to a Community used garden - fabulous
- d. It saves us using our car to get forgotten items from our weekly shop
- e. An amazing enterprise with good regular events - keep up the good work
- f. I love being able to sit somewhere beautiful with friends
- g. It's been so good to have it here
- h. It's great that it's brought the historic walled garden back into a use for the community, rather than getting more derelict and overgrown
- i. More events in the summer months
- j. Mum, a lady in her mid 70s is considering moving to Little Plumstead as she loves the atmosphere at your garden and cafe and thought it would be a nice community to join
- k. It's an amazing asset for the community. Whenever I've taken our friends to it they think it's amazing. The children love exploring the beautiful garden too
- l. I love coming there everyone is so friendly
- m. It's been great and really great events, such as the Halloween party
- n. It has become THE place to visit. Lovely to see the different colours on show in different seasons. Would like to see the plants labelled so that visitors know what to buy if they like a particular plant
- o. Great community within the new estate with plenty of planned functions (again too far from old Little Plumstead)
- p. My mother lives nearby and is new to the area, it's been a wonderful way for her to meet new people
- q. Keep going!
- r. What a brilliant community asset!!
- s. As we don't live in the area, it's difficult to answer. We think it's a huge improvement to the community and I really hope they appreciate all your hard work and dedication

There being no further business, all attendees were thanked for giving up their Sunday morning to attend the AGM and the meeting closed at 12 pm.