

Hughenden Valley Community Shop Ltd

Chairman's report for AGM

Friday 26th June 2009

Just over two years ago, at the first committee meeting, on 25th May 2007, I remember thinking that surely it cannot be difficult to source a shop location in the village that I have lived in for over twenty years, get the required and relevant planning permission, locate a building to use as the shop, recruit a manager and some volunteers and open up a shop. Just goes to show how naive I was in those days.

Having retired from industry where I was an MD of a large electronics company employing many thousands of staff, I thought that there will be no problems. Welcome to the 'real' world!

Like most projects it is vital that the team tasked with getting on with the job has all the right attributes and skills. We were very fortunate in that respect and the 8 team members have a wide ranging skill set as well as the ability to not only get on with each other but also to be able to turn their hands to carry out a wide ranging number of tasks.

We have all learnt a great deal in setting up this project.

The 'Trials & Tribulations' of getting Planning Permission, satisfying the County Highways Department, agreeing a lease on the Village Hall site, discussions with the few objectors to the scheme, raising the necessary funding and obtaining the required grants, all delayed the opening.

So here we are, two years on, and on the 16th of May we officially opened. I have to say that I consider it has been a success from the start. I am sure that our Treasurer, Peter Cannon, will give you further information on our success to date, in his Financial Report.

The concept of a community shop has been around for some time. There are over 180 shops around the countryside, as we speak.

Basically the shops are there to serve the local community in terms of stocking those items that we all seem to run out of at a most inopportune time, somewhere to walk to, for example to buy our daily paper, as well as reducing the village's 'Carbon Footprint', by reducing car use.

It is also important to remember that in some villages it is the only place where residents, especially the elderly or those who feel that they cannot get out as much as they used to, can go to meet friends and neighbours and have a chat over a cup of tea or coffee.

We are trying to re-introduce the old concept of a village community, hence the term community shop.

It is your shop. You are not only residents but much appreciated 'Share Holders'.

In addition to what I have said so far we are also intending, once all outstanding debts have been cleared each year, to offer to village groups a chance to apply for funding for small projects. We do not know yet what the funding will be but we are determined to support village activities as much as possible.

We have, I believe, achieved a lot over the past few months as it all came together but in reality it is only the start. Our 'Planning Permission' is only valid for two years, from last January as is our agreement with the Village Hall committee.

We are now faced with locating a permanent structure, as they have done at 'Hyde Heath' and at the 'Lee'.

This I suppose is where the real work comes in, as once again we look for the right premises, obtain Planning approval and seek out more funding. All in a days work!

We have some options for a more permanent location and we will be keeping everyone informed as to our progress.

It is, in our opinion, important that we endeavour to keep the spirit of the community alive as much as possible. Too many villages, as indeed ours has, have seen the demise of the 'village shop'.

Only this week the National Housing Federation and the Government have both announced figures that indicate that over the next 12 months over 650 village pubs and over 400 village shops will close. We must not let this happen in Hughenden Valley.

It is the committee's pledge that we will do everything in our power and capability to ensure that the spirit of the community is continued and that the community shop grows as we want it to.

We are not in competition with the 'Tesco's' or the 'Morrisons' of this world but rather we, with your continued support, will provide a community service to the residents of Hughenden Valley, which offers the best of produce at a competitive price.

I once again thank you for your support to date and I hope you continue to support us by using the shop.

Tony

A J Horton

Chairman, Hughenden Valley Village Shop Committee