

BRIANTSPUDDLE POST OFFICE AND VILLAGE SHOP

REPORT TO PARISH MEETING 10.5.23

As always, we've seen volunteers step down and some new ones start. Our Chair, Ali Chorley, stood down at this year's AGM after 3 years in post and 4 on the committee, due to her work commitments. Towards the end of 2022, Stuart Chorley, who had been managing the shop on a day-to-day basis, stepped down from both the shop and Post Office. We recognise the contributions they have both made since 2020 in steering the shop during the difficult time of Covid. We were especially pleased to welcome Jo Neudegg on to the Committee as Treasurer this year.

There have been some changes in the shop. The counter screen has finally been removed. We have a new freezer; the old one was past its time and required defrosting weekly. The old fridge has needed repair but it is now back up and working. We have also purchased an additional fridge to keep the fresh fruit and veg in ensuring it stays fresh as long as possible particularly during the summer months when the shop gets very hot. This was funded by a grant we received from the Dorset Council during Covid.

We have recently had an electrical wiring test carried out; all is safe and in good condition and we are covered for the next 5 years. However, some recommended work will be carried out in due course.

The Village Hall and the Social Club are contributing to the cost of the wi-fi that we installed to enable the use of Square so wi-fi can be available to all users of the hall, club and shop.

Although shop sales have held up well, the shop made a trading loss of £875 in the year ending October 2022. This is for 2 main reasons. Firstly, we found that the newspaper vouchers were being discounted at Spar rather than being redeemed at face value. They give us a 10% discount on papers and the staff understood they needed to discount the vouchers as well. This error was not obvious until the year-end statement from Spar was reconciled. After some discussions, Spar are now redeeming the vouchers at full value and have made some contribution to historic transactions in the current year. Secondly, we have, unsurprisingly, seen an increase in our overheads, ie electricity, insurance, staff wages, card processing fees, pest control etc. In total our fixed running costs for the year were £6,632, an increase of £1,528. Electricity was a large part of this increasing to £1,338. Fortunately, grants received during Covid means that this loss can be absorbed but we hope to improve our trading position in 2022/23 without having to raise the mark-up we put on stock bought. The full accounts are available on the village website.

Despite all the problems within Royal Mail and the Post Office our PO continues to provide a good service to the village (and beyond). We are extremely lucky to still have a PO; very few communities of our size are so fortunate. Not only do we provide the usual postal services but also banking and bill-paying facilities, all provided through the goodwill of volunteers. Sometimes we are a bit slow because we might not be sure of the procedure but we always get there in the end; all we ask of the customer is a little patience occasionally!

The combination of the shop and the PO is mutually beneficial. It is unlikely that one would be viable without the other and the community's support, either through volunteering or as customers, is vital to both. The shop and Post Office continue to be supported by over 40 volunteers carrying out a variety of tasks, ie ordering and collecting stock, receiving and managing the weekly Sainsbury's order and there is the shop counter team and the Post Office team. In the background, members of the committee make sure we maintain the building and manage the facilities and administration. This is no mean feat in a small community such as ours. But, whilst the Post Office is fairly well-covered at present, in the shop we are becoming increasingly stretched and would ask members of the community to consider stepping up to help either by joining the committee or helping out with

practical work for the shop. It doesn't have to take up a great deal of time, we just need more safe pairs of hands to do some of the many tasks needed to keep the shop open and running smoothly. You may think you don't or won't need the shop now, but you might in the future, so please help keep it going.