

The Friends of Briantspuddle Post Office and Shop Association Ltd

Notes of Committee meeting held 16 November 2023 in the Jubilee Room

Present: Peter Head (Chair), Richard Killer, Peter Martin (Treasurer), Chris Miller, Jo Neudegg, Cindy Read and Lesley Wilcox (Secretary).

- 1. Apologies for absence:** none required.
- 2. Notes of last meeting on 14.9.23:** approved.
- 3. Treasurer's Report**

Peter M had produced the accounts for FY 22/23. Net profit of £637 in October but overall loss for the FY of £1,161 on a turnover of £68k with an operating cash flow of -£318. Cash resources at the start of the year were £20,472 and at the end £17,032 – the purchase of the fridge and freezer accounted for the difference so in day-to-day terms the shop had paid its way with an overall margin of 11.8%. However, overheads continue to increase (see item 6 in particular) which led to a discussion about how best to grow the shop's income. It had previously been agreed that we should aim to cover our day-to-day costs without breaking into reserves.

Peter H was concerned that goods are not being displayed to best advantage and will look at this. It was also agreed that we needed to be more aware of our best-selling lines (this data can be extracted from Square) and consider buying those from Bookers where possible.

It was also agreed to increase the mark-up from 12.5% to 15% where appropriate.

4. Volunteers and operations

The staffing situation had improved. Both the counter team and the Sainsbury's team were now well-staffed and Chris would probably be able to join the newspaper collection team once collections from Williams stopped (their shop was due to close at Christmas). Still need someone to help with the collections from Dorchester market. There had been far fewer problems with Square.

5. Future priorities

Various papers had been produced as a basis for discussion.

Extended opening hours – subject to volunteer resources being found, it was agreed to trial opening on Saturday afternoons from noon to 16.00 from 30.3.24 (Easter Saturday) to 25.5.24. Further opening will depend on the success of this. A threshold of takings of £200 for those 4 hours would be used to gauge the success, or otherwise, of this. The opening will need to be well-advertised in advance.

Delivery service – At present, if a customer is in need, there is generally some way to get goods to them. However, the administration needed for a formal delivery service to work efficiently would be time-consuming and significant with the real possibility that sales would just move from being shop-based to delivery-based. There was also concern that deliveries undertaken by volunteers could invalidate their car insurance as the journey would be deemed to be for business purposes. It was therefore decided not to pursue this idea.

Enabling self-service – this would enable customers who are not able to get to the shop during the current opening hours to access the shop themselves. There are a number of obstacles to this, eg Post Office security, setting-up costs (change of alarm, extra fobs, CCTV), potentially little extra income arising, training, possible abuse of the system. It was agreed to take this idea to the AGM for discussion. We could also have a list of key-holders willing to be contacted out-of-hours for anyone wanting anything from the shop.

Improved access – there are two main options, a ramp and a lifting platform. A ramp would take up a significant part of the grassed area so impinging on the social space and it is very doubtful that planning permission would ever be granted. A lifting platform is a more practical option but relatively costly. Peter H will look into the possibility of obtaining grants. As this would be a significant project, it was agreed to take this idea to the AGM for discussion.

6. Electricity contract

The current contract with Scottish Power was taken out during the period of a steep rise in prices and runs until the end of July 2024. The extra chiller had contributed greatly to the shop's energy consumption. The meter was read recently and, as a result, our monthly payments have increased from £209 to £289. This is a significant overhead to bear but we are locked into this arrangement for the next few months.

7. Christmas 2023

Orders can be taken for fruit & veg, meat, bread, dairy products, Christmas trees and hampers. Order forms are in the shop.

The shop will be shut on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Newspapers can be collected from the box outside the shop.

8. Responsibility for maintenance.

Richard advised that the lease was clear that the Parish Council was responsible for structural matters and the Shop & PO Committee for interior matters. However it was silent on the responsibility for exterior maintenance; he had discussed this with the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council without reaching an agreement. The meeting agreed to ask a local builder for a view on whether the window at the front of the shop could be repaired or whether it needed replacement, together with a cost estimate. Richard will then take this to the Parish Council.

The fridges and the freezer have been serviced. This will be arranged annually.

9. Camera in the shop

It had been suggested that a camera be installed in the shop to enable the adult supervisor to leave the shop for a short period. However, that would not satisfy our legal or insurance obligations. Alternative adult supervision would be found.

10. Any Other Business

The new bank account with Nat West had been opened. There are 6 signatories and 4 of these have bank cards. However, further actions needed to be taken to enable on-line banking to be set up.

- i. The Committee resolves that the bank account will require one signatory to initiate and execute transactions.
- ii. The Committee authorises the Chairman to approve the users of the account.
- iii. The mandate on the account has to be updated. The signing rules need to be applied (see item 10i) and the 6 signatories are each required to provide a digital signature (this has been done once already but Nat West have not uploaded the signatures onto their system).
- iv. The Committee agreed to Peter Martin and Jo Neudegg having independent access to online banking and that an application would be submitted when the mandate had been successfully updated.

11. Dates of next meetings in 2024

18.1.24, 14.3.24, 9.5.24, 11.7.24, 12.9.24, 14.11.24. The meetings will be held at Cruck Cottage.

AGM – 23.2.24 (subject to the availability of the hall). Date now 22.2.24.

Lesley Wilcox

Secretary