

## **PARISH MEETING 9.4.25**

### **VILLAGE SHOP AND POST OFFICE**

Firstly, the shop. Sales of £72k were up by just under £4,000, or 7% on the previous year and gross profit rose from 11.5% to 13.4%. The overall net result was some £1,400 better than the previous year giving a profit of £709; not a huge amount on sales of £72k but we met the aim to cover the Shop's costs and therefore to be a sustainable business. Overall, it has been a reassuring year with a return to profit following a loss in the previous year. The accounts are on the village website.

The position with volunteers had been quite stable with about 40 volunteers supporting the Shop and PO. However, there is always a job for someone to do so more volunteers would be most welcome.

We trialled opening the Shop on Saturday afternoons in the summer. However, it was difficult to find volunteers to man the shop for a couple of hours and so we concluded that, without extra help, we could not open regularly on Saturday afternoons. We did open all day for the Open Gardens event in June and that was worthwhile with lots of positive comments from visitors.

Our thanks go to the Parish Council for organising and funding the refurbishment of the shop window. We now have new maintenance agreement between the Shop and the Council (our landlord). This allows for the Shop to take responsibility for the maintenance work required within the building and the Council for the exterior of the building. A maintenance plan will be agreed with the Council every year.

Access into the shop will be improved by installing some grab rails and altering the height of the top step. This required Listed Building Consent from Dorset Council. Thanks go to Adrienne Ridler-Lee of The Heritage Consultancy who prepared the Heritage Statement free of charge. Also Dorset Council was very helpful in advising how to prepare the application. Approval has now been received. The grab rails have been installed and we are awaiting a date for the start of work to the top step.

We are participating in the Working Group set up by David Neudegg to explore ways that the various groups within the community might collaborate more.

The Committee thanks all those who submitted entries for this year's calendar which produced a profit of just over £300 for the Shop. Suggestions for themes for next year's Calendar are invited.

Turning to the Post Office. Our biggest challenge has been that our Postmistress, Eve ('Chips') Badcock, has decided to retire in September by which time she will have been in post for 24 years. Over that time she has kept the PO open for 5 days a week without fail - a significant achievement. We give a big 'thank you' to Eve for all her efforts over so many years. The PO needs to carry on but cannot do that without a formal postholder. Eve will also be giving up two days a week behind the counter so additional volunteers are needed.

The PO Area Manager confirmed that the PO would not help in finding a replacement so our PO could close with, possibly, only an Outreach service for a few hours maybe once or twice a week. We were obviously concerned that the focus on the Horizon IT Enquiry might be a disincentive to applicants for the post. Horizon is still in use but is now far more robust with no recent major problems and the PO's Helpdesk is extremely helpful. Also, given the small financial turnover that our PO has, the scope for problems is minimal as we only carry a relatively small amount of money.

We distributed a leaflet to each household explaining the current position and asking for a volunteer to become the next Postmaster. Encouragingly, one person has indicated an interest in taking on the post and we are following that up.

Our local postman, Steve Smith, is also retiring in May and we wish him well. He has served our community exceptionally well over the years and will be much missed; there is a collection in the Shop for a retirement gift for him and we are hoping to organise a small event and presentation for him in May.

Finally, we hope that the community will continue to support the shop and the Post Office, both as customers and as volunteers. We aim to provide a convenient way of buying day-to-day items but, just as importantly, the shop and PO provide a social hub which is valued, particularly by our more elderly residents. By using the shop now residents help to ensure that it remains open in the future.