

Open Letter to Uley Shop Members and Uley Village Residents concerning the future of the Uley Shop

Dear Members and Residents of Uley,

The Village Shop and Post office is an established feature of Uley Village life and in our ninth year of operation as a community venture it remains an unqualified success. This is in large part due to the unwavering commitment of our staff and volunteers, our customers and our suppliers who have all made the shop both a trading success and a community hub.

The shop has been of particular relevance in the current Covid-19 crisis and has adapted well to difficult circumstances.

However, the lease on the shop premises is due to expire in July 2022 and as things stand it is unclear as to how, and indeed whether, the shop will continue to trade beyond this date.

It seems that popular desire is for the shop to continue in its current format with volunteer staffing and in its current location. It is very unlikely the shop could survive commercially should we have to pay shop staff salaries or not be in partnership with the Post Office. Operating from different and probably less convenient premises could also affect viability.

Our landlords have been and continue to be very supportive throughout our tenancy but have indicated their intention to sell the premises at some point and are not planning to extend the lease. They have however given us an informal first right of refusal to purchase the premises, all other commercial terms being equal.

So, we need to consider over the next twelve months or so what feasible options we have for the future.

It is most likely the premises would need to be purchased as a whole unit and would therefore require a very significant fund raise which would need to cover not only the actual purchase but also working funds for all the liabilities and responsibilities that go with property ownership. As a minimum it is estimated that we would need to raise over £500,000. In the event the property was purchased by a third party we would have to engage in a separate negotiation should they be prepared to continue to lease the ground floor to us.

The current crisis has made it all but impossible to communicate and engage the Members and Village Residents on this issue on a collective basis. So, the intent of this letter is to inform our various stakeholders at this time that we have a material tenancy problem in 2022 to address and to set out the issue in its simplest form. We do have a secure tenancy until June 2022.

The Committee undertakes to communicate regularly during the coming months , both to keep everyone informed of developments and initiatives to address our future beyond that date and to seek opinion and input as appropriate. A 'Suggestion Box' will shortly be established in the shop as one way of enabling comments and suggestions to be made.

We look forward to your commitment and enagement in resolving the future of the shop

Uley Shop Committee