

Minutes of Uley Community Stores AGM

10.30 am Saturday 25th October 2025

Held in Uley Village Hall

Present (32):

Andy Davis, Mandy Bailey, Martin Bragg, Noel Briscoe, Diana Davies, Pami Davis, John Dauncey, Sue Durston, Erica Faucus Gibbs, Angela Haddrell, Steve Haddrell, Joan Heaney, Joanna Horden-Curzon, Tess Jackson, Richard Lewis, Dee Lewis Jones, Richard Littlehales, Ruth Littlehales, David Messenger, Malcolm McNulty, Jane Stevenson, Caroline Storvik, David Sykes, David Thomas, Maggie Turnbill, Amanda Voss, Julia Warthen, Simon Warthen, Cathy White, David Williams, Rita Williams, John Wood.

Apologies – Shareholders (13):

Debs Proposka-Cole, Fritz Curson, Janet Dacey, Paul Lawrence, Deborah Lawrence, Pam Parsons, Liz Purnell, Karen Randall, Peter Randall, Cat Sargent, Sally Thurlow, Ross Thurlow, Janet Wood.

Apologies – Non-Shareholders (5):

Juliette Brown, Ben Brown, Ian Proposka-Cole, Di Ford, Richard Ford.

Presentation of slides

In opening the meeting Richard L (Chair) introduced both himself and the agenda, and emphasized the current need to focus on the future for the shop. He also made particular mention of the vital contribution made by the volunteers and their achievement in keeping the shop open every day.

With reference to the future, the points made were that the shop lease will expire in November 2027, there is a need for a new EPOS till and a new Cloud based accounting system. The latter two will enable provision of better data to guide future operational decisions.

Mention was made that despite the road closures, turnover in September 25 was slightly up on the previous September. With reduced passing custom, there must have been an increase in sales from local customers which is an encouraging sign.

The income statement comparing 24/25 with 23/24 was reviewed, with specific mention being made of the following metrics:

- Gross profit margin down by 1.5% - implying that the sales prices haven't retained track of purchase prices – proposed as an area for further investigation.
- PO income increased by 10%.
- Increase in turnover since 2014 of £50k (absolute, not adjusted for inflation).
- Adjusted (for inflation) value of sales now slightly below that of 2014 (although unadjusted sales followed the same trend as unadjusted revenue).
- Sales - Commented that as shop is running so close to 'break even' a small reduction in a sales will have a significant impact, whilst conversely an increase would be hugely beneficial.

The Conclusions being that:

- the shop needs to increase its sales volumes, so Richard requested that the audience spend a little more in the shop and encourage others to use the shop or use it more.
- Analysis of products and product margins was required to see whether it might be possible to increase margins to create a greater surplus.

Buying Costs - Noted that buying costs also need some investigation as these haven't uniformly been passed onto the customer. However, it was recognized that the ability for the shop to do so is constrained by wholesalers setting the retail price for many goods.

Operating Costs – since 2014 these have increased 56%, but allowing for inflation this equates to 8.5% in real terms. It is difficult to envisage creating a reduction in these costs as they are largely fixed – rent, utilities and so forth.

One possible option to reduce operating costs would be to purchase the premises thereby removing the rental element.

Angela H – The Post Office

Angela advised that she would retire from the role of Postmistress in 2027 as she expects to be leaving the village and so wanted to take the opportunity presented by the AGM to make the village aware of this and to ask if anyone would be interested in taking on the role.

Angela provided an overview of how the role operated – in summary a license is granted to run the Post Office, the cost of the license equates to the income generated by the PO in the shop. In her role as postmistress, Angela has line management responsibility for the PO staff and is also responsible for ensuring all monies add up.

Confirmation has been secured to enable Angela's contract to be passed on. A monthly fixed payment of £1,300 is required. Every transaction made at the Post Office generates income...in most months amounts of between £600 & £800, increasing to about £2,000 at Christmas.

In taking on the role of Postmistress it was necessary for Angela to put up her house as security against any financial discrepancies. She advised that due to the rigorous processes in place for managing the monies, the risk of any discrepancy was minimal – in fact the figures have always been 'spot on'. RL also advised that further exploration would be made into this need for personal assets to be put up for security.

Anyone taking on the role would need to do so for around 10 years, be numerical, flexible and able to stand in for staff for holidays and periods of illness. Angela also stated that she'd never regretted taking on the role.

The request was made of the audience, that should they be interested in taking on the role of postmistress/master, they should to speak to Angela, and also that if anyone they know who might be interested they should reach out to Angela.

The question of whether the shop would be viable without the Post Office was raised.

Angela emphasized the integral role the PO ladies play in the day to day running of the shop, particularly with regard to stock ordering, order queries and ensuring consistency of operation between volunteers.

Angela also drew the audience's attention to the enhanced role the shop plays in the village, and that it is a recognized 'Community Asset'. In particular the value it has for the more vulnerable and elderly residents of the village.

Richard closed this item by expressing gratitude for the contribution that Angela has made in the role of Postmistress since Uley Community Stores commenced business.

The following items of Official Business were then conducted:

1. Richard L proposed that the 24/25 accounts should take advantage of the opportunity to be exempted from the requirement of a formal financial audit. A show of hands gave unanimous support for this proposal.
2. Re-election of Richard Littlehales as Chair, and of the other committee members standing for re-election was also supported by a unanimous show of hands.
3. Two new committee members were appointed:
 - a. Noel Brisscoe - Noel is also the current chair of the Village Hall Committee, has lived in the village since 1992 and has a science/technology background. Noel already makes a key contribution to the running of the shop in overseeing the EPOS system.
 - b. Martin Bragg - Martin has lived in the village for 3 years, but has a long association with the village through relatives and his children having attended Uley school. Having recently retired from his position as a Head teacher, he now has capacity to offer support to the shop.
4. Richard asked for support in finding a committee member with accounting experience. AH advised that she would also place a note to this effect in the shop window.
5. Grateful thanks were conveyed to Joanna Curzon Horden for her invaluable role as secretary, and in particular for the support she

provided to Richard when he first took on the role of Chair. Tess Jackson was formally appointed as the new secretary.

6. Richard also recognised the contribution made by the following people who have stepped down from the committee in the last year, Cat Sargent, Liz Purnell and Ross Thurlow.

THE FORMAL SECTION OF THE MEETING WAS THEN CLOSED.

Notes from the subsequent Open Forum on the potential to purchase the shop premises.

2027 is a critical year for the shop, as the current lease comes to an end and Angela Haddrell will be retiring as Postmistress.

Richard summarized the current situation regarding the property, and its recent market history. Given that previous 'consultations' had concluded the current location of the shop as being the best available in the village, then the option to purchase the shop premises is clearly of interest. Richard had held initial discussions with previous shop Chairs – Peter Randall and Paul Lawrence, both of whom were supportive of the opportunity being explored. The views were then sought of a further 10 families with existing/previous involvement in village activities. All 10 confirmed support for the opportunity being investigated further.

The current financial proposal was explained:

- Premises to be purchased outright for a sum of £135,000.
- A sum of £75,000 to be paid on completion.
- The balance of £60,000 to be paid in 5 years' time (which would be funded by the savings in rent).

The shop currently holds cash reserves of £144,000.

Below are some of the risks identified in relation to the current circumstances and this opportunity:

1. If the entire property (residential and shop as a single lot) was sold between now and 2027, there is no certainty that the new owner would renew the lease.

2. If we are unable to appoint a replacement postmistress/master would the shop still be viable on its own? It was noted that even without the Post Office the shop could enter into contracts to provide services such as accepting parcels, etc. However, Angela strongly advised that a 'manager' (part time) would need to be appointed to have effective oversight of shop management and administration, taking on those activities currently undertaken by the PO staff.
3. The risk to the current landowners in reducing the size of their property and the loss of rental income. (It was noted that as the shop premises are Grade II listed so it cannot be altered and that the Parish Council had registered the shop as an official 'Community Asset').

The following points were also noted:

1. Structural work will need to be undertaken to convert the shop into an independent property. It was estimated that the shop would need to be closed for two weeks to allow for this work to be completed.
2. Further investigation needs to be done into identifying the detail of the proposed form of contract, namely a flying freehold.
3. Need to confirm whether the current lease was 'contracted out' or 'contracted in' – i.e. whether a new landowner would be obliged to continue the lease. The current understanding is that the current lease will terminate in 2027.
4. Due to the time required to research the options it was not possible to delay in taking action.
5. Some significant structural improvements have been made to the property in recent years. If a future survey identified further structural work would be required the purchase price would be reassessed.
6. Provision would need to be made for ongoing maintenance.
7. If the proposal was implemented, then costs would be incurred in upfront legal costs, undertaking the structural modifications and in lost interest.
8. Even if the premises were purchased, and the decision was taken to close the shop after e.g. 5 years and the property was sold at a loss, the shop would most likely still be in a better financial position than if the current rental arrangement was continued.

It was felt that the key question behind the decision whether to investigate purchase of the shop premises was identified as whether it was felt the shop could trade for a further 10 years beyond 2027. If yes, then it was proposed that the right decision would be to purchase the property. If not, then the 'wrapping up' process would need to commence now.

Prompted by a member of the audience an informal show of hands was undertaken to gauge the level of support for the in-principle purchase of the shop premises, for which unanimous support was indicated.

Additional observations/concerns raised:

The difficulty in securing sufficient volunteers - concern being that many of the current volunteers are aging, and younger people often have too many existing commitments.

Whether the Post Office could be forced to close, irrespective of the feelings of the 'village'? Angela advised that it is the 'Crown Post Offices' that are being closed. As Uley is not a Crown Post Office, there is no current threat from PO headquarters.

The need to research how people's buying habits are changing and how/whether the shop can accommodate them.

If the premises were purchased, and the shop no longer proved viable, could the premises be used to provide a different service, e.g. coffee shop, craft shop, artist gallery, play group.

It was confirmed that the 'frontage' to the shop would be included as part of the purchase.

After these discussions RL then asked the meeting to approve the move to work up a formal proposal to buy the shop premises for the consideration of the members in the near future. This proposal was unanimously supported.

RL thanked all present for their contributions and the meeting was then closed.