

Wigmore Village Shop Association Ltd

Wigmore Village Shop, Wigmore, Leominster HR6 9UJ

Registration No. 30400 R (Registered with the Financial Conduct Authority)
Registered in England and Wales.

Minutes of Annual Members' Meeting

held on Wednesday 7th May 2025 at 7.00pm

At Wigmore Village Community Centre, Wigmore, HR6 9UN

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Jano Rochefort, Alison Benwell, Joy Ardy, Lesley Pollaco, Stephen Lloyd, Ingrid Mason, Bryan Casbourne, Megan Ellis, Werner Ritter, Malcolm Rochefort, Selina Bailey, Yvonne Hill.

Apologies: Anita Smith, Stuart Abell, Gill and Vic Harnett,

2. Acceptance of minutes of the Annual Members' Meeting held on 8th May 2024

The minutes were read and accepted.

Proposed: Ingrid Mason

Seconded: Lesley Pollaco

3. Chairman's report

At last year's annual member's meeting I noted that the previous 12 months had been a bit of a roller coaster for our village shop what with a break-in in October 2023, a larger than expected electricity bill in January 2024 and the uncertainty of whether our main wholesaler Brookers would continue to fulfil our orders.

Now, at the risk of tempting the fates, I'm going to say that the last 12 months have been a reasonable period of calm after the storms of the previous 5 years. And as I've just mentioned 'storms' it seems a good time to mention a small number of hiccoughs that we've 'weathered' before turning to the highlights of the past trading year.

Storms – we've all had a few and one that happened in early December last year managed to rip off part of the lead flashing on the roof and deposit the metal on the pavement outside. Having dealt with that small emergency just before Christmas (Thanks to Steve Pollacco and Steve Mundy), we had a minor flood early in the New Year as a result of a heavy downpour that also flooded the roads to the extent that Alison our manager couldn't get in from Ludlow. The excess water was mopped up, minor leaks in the office dealt with and no damage to our produce. The leak identified and dealt with and no further incursions to date.

And while I'm on the subject of roads, we've had to cope with road closures for weeks on end which has made travelling to the shop a bit of a logistical headache for Alison and a several of our volunteers. And yet everyone has managed to get in for their shop rotas and the shop has seen increased sales of Food 2 Go items purchased by the various workmen passing by. It's an ill wind as the saying goes. And I really must stop these meteorological references.

So on to the positives. After the worry of the rather large electricity bill at the start of 2024, we reviewed our energy usage, made savings where possible and together with our landlord Steve Mundy who agreed a competitive fixed energy contract for us, we are now in a much more stable financial position vis a vis energy costs.

In 2023 we purchased a new and bigger self-service food chiller and a better coffee machine, and these two items have been very well received by customers. We've increased both the pasty and pie orders from Quarry Farm and the range of sandwiches, wraps and quiches without any noticeable problem with wastage and many customers say our coffee is the best around. Two capital expenses that have been of proven benefit to the business.

The shop's exterior has been smartened up. Last summer the outside was completely repainted, and this spring we put out a new notice board for the pavement and recently the awnings over the door and windows were renewed. All of which has been commented on with approval by neighbours and customers alike.

Last year we moved with the digital times and launched our own website and set up Facebook and Instagram pages which one of our volunteers updates regularly so that visitors can learn when new items or seasonal produce are on the shelves. Again, this is receiving positive feedback from the community.

And as a village shop we do our bit to support our community in other ways. We provide work experience for students, donate prizes for village events, take in parcels for residents and our notice boards are full of local goings-on.

Suppliers come and suppliers go. Suppliers increase their minimum orders and change their delivery days. All of these happenings we've encountered and adapted to. Bookers remain our main wholesale supplier and though the initial problem with deliveries from Wolverhampton have settled down we still have issues with some weekly items ordered but not being supplied. We frequently check out alternative wholesalers, but they are either too expensive, have too high a minimum order or are reluctant to deliver to a small rural shop.

Moving on to the management committee, our treasurer Lesley Pollacco has been in post for just over a year now and had a bit of a baptism of fire at the start of her tenure, having to address the large electricity bill which she has done with admirable efficiency and for which I give grateful thanks. Our eye-catching website was set up last year by Debs Green. Debs has now stepped down from the committee as she has moved abroad with her family so there is a vacancy on the committee. Anita Smith has taken charge of the website as well as looking after our social media presence which she does with great style and an eye to publicity.

At this point I have to speak of the shock and sadness we all felt at the sudden and totally unexpected death of Janet Gaunt in January. Janet was one of our longest serving volunteers and committee members. Many of you will remember her as the face behind the counter on Saturday mornings. Janet's Saturday shift of 4 plus hours was the longest shift of any of us volunteers and yet there was Janet every weekend and she would also fill in any gaps in the week's rota. I'll leave it there as Alison is going to say more about working with Janet.

Once again, I say that without our volunteers there would be no village shop. I'm not sure if we're unique as a community shop but I note that we have 4 couples who volunteer to serve in the shop – 3 sets of married couples and one mother and son. I have just mentioned the Saturday 4-hour shift and it is with much thanks (and relief) that Yvonne and Steve have taken over that session. There have been many complements from customers on their teamwork. We have a full complement of people to fill the rota so that the shop can open seven days a week. Some volunteers do regular weekly shifts whilst others are on our 'Can you help us out' list that Alison sends out every Friday and we haven't yet had to close the shop for lack of staff.

As a small token of appreciation we held a Volunteers' Lunch at The Castle Inn last July. It was a super 'Do' and really appreciated by all. A big thanks to Kelly and her team for putting on lovely spread for us. We have another Volunteers Lunch planned for July this year too.

Volunteers are absolutely vital to the successful running of the shop but so is our manager, Alison. Her business acumen is first class. Alison combines a very good feeling for what sells, what's new and interesting, what our customers want and more importantly what they will buy at the price we sell it for. The result is that our merchandise continues to attract customers and we get many compliments on the variety of items we sell.

A word of thanks to our very understanding landlord Steve Mundy. He really is the best landlord that a shop could ask for. Also, thanks to our accountants Lisa Southwell and Andrew Grey who manage our financial matters.

Finally, despite the challenges that running a business in the ongoing economic climate presents, your local village shop remains open, welcoming, full of interesting stock, competitively priced and more pleasant than driving to a supermarket.

4. Shop Manager's report

Earlier this year I passed my tenth year at the shop as the manager so this is the eleventh time standing up here today. In fact, the shop opened in May 2008 so it's been going for 17 years now. The shop continues to thrive and keep us all busy. We have seen some shocking price rises in the last 12 months, chocolate being a prime example, however we seem to be doing ok. Footfall is up slightly, or really, I should say transaction count is up because that is our only way of tracking footfall. We hit a high of 187 transactions the other day., we usually hover around the 135 mark.

We continue to get a lot of lovely comments from customers. “Ooo this is a nice shop”, “Wow what a lot of variety” are 2 common ones. The other day someone commented that the she had been in when the shop was full of school children and she said “The volunteer was so nice and friendly and chatty to them all. You don’t always see that in shops”.

Thank you to the volunteers and the customers. Without them there is no shop. We have gained 2 new volunteers in the last year, 1 has left, 1 started and left and of course I couldn’t not mention Janet who very sadly left for good in January. We have also had 1 D of E young person volunteering and 1 Spanish volunteer who learnt lots of choice phrases you don’t pick up in the classroom. Back in July we had a lovely buffet lunch together at the Castle pub here in the village.

Last year we had the shop front repainted. The busy road puts up a lot of dust and dirt so earlier this year we had the awnings replaced, too. There are also new sandwich boards outside with designs that tie in with our website. Thank you to Anita for keeping that up to date and for all the posts she puts on our Facebook page.

Earlier this year the weather got to us again. One corner of the shop and the office got flooded when a storm blew half the roof off the shop. Thankfully there wasn’t too much stock damaged and the computer and office equipment survived.

Our big category sellers continue to be pies, soft drinks and confectionery, real convenience store products. We have a new local cake maker alongside our cakes from Leominster. Those sort of products on the counter sell well. Who doesn’t love a piece of cake after a Quarry farm sausage roll.

So let’s hope we have another good year and that the shop continues to serve the good folk of Wigmore and those passing through.

5. Treasurer’s report for the year 1st January to 31st December 2024

a. Treasurer’s report for the year 1st January to 31st December 2024

Trading in 2024 was good and above expectations. We achieved a turnover slightly higher than expectations and 7.6% above the 2023 figure. We achieved a gross margin of 40% against a target of 34%. Administrative expenses were higher than 2023 but considerably lower than target and this was due to the electricity charges reducing around July; we are currently up to date with our fuel charges and these are monitored every three months to ensure we do not end up in the same situation as last year. As a result, our net profit was £7644 which is a 35% increase on last year and above expectations.

Acceptance of report:

Proposed: Megan Ellis;

Seconded: Malcolm Rochefort

b. To receive the accounts of the Society for the year ending 31st December 2024

To agree that the 2024 accounts may be prepared without an audit and presented with an accountant's report.

Southwell Associates Ltd produces our report of accounts free of charge and does other work for us on a similar basis. It was proposed that they are appointed again this year.

Proposed: Selena Bailey

Seconded: Bryan Casbourne

c. To reappoint Southwell Associates as the Society's Independent Reviewer/Auditor

Proposed: Selina Bailey

Seconded: Bryan Casbourne

d. To agree that the 2025 accounts may be prepared without an audit and presented with an accountant's report.

Proposed: Selena Bailey

Seconded: Bryan Casbourne

e. Budget for 2025

Currently we are trading at a 5% increase in turnover compared to last year which is on target. Based on the last 2 years trading we have increased our predicted gross margin to 37% giving us an expected gross profit of £62,000. The committee agreed to a proposed budget where we predict our administrative expenses will be slightly less than last year, this is mainly due to our now cheaper electricity tariff which has been locked in for 2 years starting from last autumn. Depreciation may increase if we purchase new chilling equipment. We predict a net profit of just over £10,000.

There followed a few questions about the electricity supply: Steve Mundy has negotiated a reasonable rate with a new supplier. There are two separate meters, one of which shows the shop usage.

About the cut to advertising: Advertising has been cut since the new shop website has been up and running

About the cost of card machine purchases: Global Payments is slightly more expensive, but is more reliable

6. Report on the state of the membership and the membership strategy

Status

Membership opened to the community in February 2008. Membership fee was and remains £20 per person for one share. One share entitles members to one vote at members' meetings. A person ceases to be a Member of the Society in the following circumstances:

they resign in writing to the Secretary;

being an individual, they die;

As of today the status of the membership is as follows:

Total number of shareholder members = 101(100%)

Number of current members (i.e. no change in address) = 69 (69%)

Number of members known to have moved away with no forwarding address = 32 (31%)

Former members (deceased) = 22

Membership Strategy

The vast number of members joined in the first year of business, actually in the first three months of 2008. This enabled the Association to show to grant-giving bodies that there was local support for setting up a community shop.

Since then, so far as the records show, there has not been a dedicated effort to recruit more shareholding members.

According to the rules, both the former and current rules, it is only members who can vote at members' meetings and only members who can serve on the management committee. It is the management committee that manages the affairs of the Society e.g. employment of staff, ensuring the shop complies with relevant legislation, is responsible for the financial health of the business.

But the number of members is gradually going down and so the pool of people able to serve on the management committee is getting smaller. This situation has been going on for some time. Hence the need to encourage people to become members.

There are people in the community who like the fact that there is a shop in the village, especially as it is a community shop. In estate agent jargon it is an amenity that is a selling-point for potential buyers. Many residents show their support of the shop by being customers and volunteering. But not everyone has the time or inclination to commit to being a volunteer and this is where becoming a shareholding member might suit potential supporters. Many newer residents are not even aware that this is a community shop largely staffed by volunteers.

Since 2022 nine new people have become shareholders/members but they are largely drawn from volunteers who have been 'persuaded' to join the management committee. Most of these members are newer residents to the village who have found that volunteering in the shop is an excellent way to become involved in the community and they have brought with them valuable skills and talents that are benefitting the shop. Nevertheless, we would like to encourage more new members from the community to help keep the shop a vibrant and successful enterprise.

There was a suggestion from the floor that we carry out a leaflet drop explaining share membership of the shop

7. Election of Management Committee Members (to serve for three years)

The three-year term was up for two members of the committee and it was proposed that Jano Rochefort and Joy Ardy should be re-elected:

Jano Rochefort: Proposed: Stephen Lloyd; Seconded: Lesley Pollacco

Joy Ardy: Proposed: Megan Ellis; Seconded: Malcolm Rochefort

There is a vacancy for one new committee member: Yvonne Hill was proposed by Joy Ardy and seconded by Ingrid Mason. Yvonne was duly elected.

8. Any Other Business

Megan Ellis wished to state that the shop is a Godsend

Meeting closed 7.40pm.

(Previous AMM minutes and accounts can be found at www.wigmorevillageshop.co.uk/management)