



NORTON SUB HAMDON COMMUNITY LAND TRUST LTD.
A Community Benefit Society
FCA Registration No. 31698R

Minutes of The Board of Directors

held on Tuesday 25th April 2023 at 7.45pm in Norton Sub Hamdon Reading Room

Meeting commenced at 7.39pm

Attendees: -

Colin McDonald (CM)	Chair
Jane Naughton (JN)	Chair. Shop Committee
Lindsay Higgins (LH)	A/Treasurer
Niall Clifford (NC)	Solar/Energy
Simon Harris (SH)	Minutes Sec.
Ian Murray (IM)	Secretary & Marketing
Brian Wickins (BW)	Chis. PC rep
John Forsyth (JF)	

1. **Apologies received:** Jennie Harris

2. **New declarations of interest** - none.

3. **Minutes of Board meeting (28th March)**

agreed with then signed by CM.

4. **Secretary / Action Log**

IM went through the current log checking for updates from Board members & amending accordingly.

5. **Shop & Post Office**

JN confirmed she had circulated her monthly update to the Board & that the staff appraisals had been done.

Cheryl has confirmed that she would like to take on the role of being the Designated Premises Supervisor for the sale of alcohol & that she would be aiming to complete the online exam after Claire has been on holiday. The cost for the exam is £125 with Licensing Solutions.

All were in favour.

JN felt that the Shop/PO committee wasn't working in the way it is at the moment in that she felt it was too big & that the committee cannot discuss anything about the staff as some of the staff are on it. Ideas were coming in & people were going off doing different things but she didn't always hear back plus also it wasn't appropriate to discuss certain items in front of staff.

JN continued by suggesting that just 2 or 3 people were involved with the staff, keeping that separate from the Shop/PO committee, thereby having an Operations group (Shop & PO) & a HR (being separate) purely for the staff. Both JF & SH volunteered, there were no objections.

The Shop committee worked on & looked at all the ideas that were suggested but to actually focus on the decisions made for why a particular range of product is introduced for example, this wasn't discussed in any depth. CM suggested that perhaps a new committee would need setting up & that the Board discusses the idea of who is on what committee at the next meeting.

On the subject of a new energy supplier JN explained that she had spoken with Octopus but they insist on 50% pre-payment, which is their policy, this being 50% of the annual cost plus paying the monthly bill. Then at the end of the contract it might be refunded. NC said he had emailed them to question the fact that the CLT has been paying all its bills on time for the past 8yrs & why should it now be restricted. To date he'd not received a reply however it did look as if the answer would be no. LH suggested speaking with the local councillor Mike Hewitson & NC agreed to do this.

It was explained that the Post Office rep had visited & had made various suggestions for potential improvement for sales. Some of these were already being done. Re-decorating was asked for by Nicky otherwise as they know a lot of their customers, products were suggested accordingly.

6. Finance

LH stated that she had spent a lot of time adjusting the information with Sage to eliminate some of the issues, e.g. where some things had been incorrectly entered which in some places pre dated the recent board changes. However the figures still needed to be scrutinised by Chalmers.

Referring to her previously circulated report, she explained that £2000 had been donated plus the stock holding had gone up by 12% from the beginning to the end of the year. As a result this showed a net loss of £3,319.

Year to date, with removal of the donations plus the opening & closing of stock, there was a net loss of £10,053 compared with £7,075 previously. Only £961 of pledge money was used to support the energy bills. By adding in the donations & stock, the figure went back to £3,319 shown on the report.

LH stated that she had charted both the gross profit, which is made on the actual product sold & the nett profit after overheads had been taken out. JF had crunched some figures & this showed an improvement on transactions in Jan & Feb compared with the same time last year. Significantly so in volume, quantity, value overall & value per transaction.

If that trend can be continued it would be very healthy, supported with promotions & the right product lines. However the overheads are what erode any profit made.

Two new deals had been arranged with the card transactions & waste removal, Initial. The card transactions have been in place for a few months & the latter should be soon. The cleaning contract with Initial will be stopped as there was now a Vax carpet cleaner donated for cleaning the mats. JN said that Initial hadn't replied about the option of buying the mats back from them as yet.

The 'mark up' is going in the right direction but the overall profit isn't as the overheads keep creeping up.

Over £13,000 in pledges have been received with only using £961 so far as the energy bill had only been exceeded three times. Some of the monthly pledges had stopped possibly on the basis that they would only be for 6mths. LH put forward the idea of removing the message of Helping with the Energy & just say Generally Support the Shop. This could start with changing the label on the shop counter donation box. BW asked whether there was a need to send another request out. LH did say that perhaps now there should be a plan in place to support asking for more money.

It now appears that the energy costs were no longer the big risk to insolvency as they were this time last October. The government relief cap was in place until March 24 & the prices had dropped.

With regard to the financial modelling, Bob Taylor had shown that if nothing was done & changed at the shop & nothing changed generally, we have enough finances to trade until the end of March 25. This included inflation & wage increase predictions.

With regards to the future of the shop & post office, LH suggested that the board have an 'away' day to chat about what we wanted from the shop & how to go forward. This would then help set budgets, look at what would be achievable & enable a business plan to be put together. This was agreed & would be arranged.

The Abri lease is due for review in September so potentially there could be an increase in income if the idea works in our favour.

The Plunkett membership is also due. IM made the point that we had previously agreed to renew it, deciding that if we wanted it we could always start it again. LH said that Jonathan Naughton had offered to have a look at the benefits of it & whether it was worth doing again.

7. Solar & Shop roof

NC said that the survey of the shop roof had been completed & in its current state it cannot support solar panels. The main issue was water leaking through & he continued to explain that the surveyor's report stated that the roof needed to be stripped, rotten wood replaced & a waterproof lining placed.

NC said he'd spoken to the landlord providing her with the report. Although 'spot' repairs were her choice it was pointed out that it was beyond that. One solution was that a rent holiday was considered & that the CLT helped contribute towards the cost although a costing would be needed in advance. JF asked if it was in a dangerous condition & NC stated no, but it's not waterproof & ideally the work would need to be done before next winter. JN also pointed out that there was at least 3 water drips & on the backdoor side of the building the fascia was broken, birds were nesting & damp had now got through as it was such a big gap. IM commented that a waterproof membrane would in fact improve the insulation.

NC said that he had looked in the roof space & daylight can be seen. He reiterated the need to keep the conversation running with her albeit with sensitivity. It was confirmed that the shop could remain open whilst the work was carried out & that John Bailey has agreed to allow scaffolding to be attached to his roof for access.

SSCES have been met with & are in agreement with a partnership with the CLT, with our Board's agreement, to progress the development of the solar array on the land in Minchingtons Close. The agreed proportion of fund raising by us would be 50.5% to the project cost, less any share of any grant aid raised. The likely cost would be circa £75,000 to raise & obviously require a considerable amount of effort on the Board's part.

The result would be a share of the income from an average of 80,000 KWh per yr which would range between 5 & 15p per unit for at least 20yrs. The additional benefit would be the option of supplying around 30,000 KWh to the shop at a reduced rate as part of the energy club option which may also exist as the whole aim of the project.

Shareholders & the public need to be brought on board because of the need to raise the funds as it will be of a benefit to the community as a whole.

SSCES did agree to all the negotiating points which had been previously raised in advance & that SH would also join NC & Bob Taylor, if the Board agreed, so that 2 members could always attend any future meetings.

A daily work time request of the energy consumption from the shop has been requested as if we get a cheap rate it will assist with the future opportunity of spending a bit more & install a battery for night use.

LH raised the question as to whether the Board would need to take this to either a SGM or the AGM for members to vote on & CM stated that the rules for raising community shares would have to be looked at. NC did suggest perhaps an Open meeting may be a good opportunity so that questions can be answered & collectively bring everyone up to speed as to what the CLT are doing.

IM raised the need for a prospectus which NC agreed would be needed for raising funds through shares although the need initially, was to enthuse the community by talking to them in general as to what has been done already including our successes as well as raising the issue of new funds.

There was then a general discussion about potential grant sources, planning objections & starting any work needed & about the larger community who could benefit from the 'club' reduced energy.

NC then proposed the decision to partner with SSCES in principle & to start thinking about how we raise £75k. It was seconded by SH with no objections.

8. Marketing

IM said that Louise Matraves had now joined the Shop committee & is assisting greatly with promotion ideas.

Following conversations he'd had with other marketers recently the preferred method for marketing to attract new customers was by email. Email lists were purchased, the option to opt out is provided & then the local population can be targeted. The aim being to reach those who don't come to the shop & who are not on social media.

There would be a cost as there would be a need to join a platform that takes care of the GDPR rules & its security on our behalf. The cheapest found would be for 500 emails £9 or 2000 for £17 per mth.

JN raised the question as to whether we'd need to check with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as we are registered with them to only hold certain information & is marketing is covered within that.

IM said he would do some more research.

9. A O B

BW mentioned about the circulated email via Chiselborough PC requesting a presentation & offering a £100 donation. LH said a full pitch wasn't necessary but giving information about our future plans & the fund raising needed was more relevant & getting that message across. NC said it was a good hearts & minds opportunity & that he would volunteer to go to their meeting when requested.

The presentation would be done after the Board's 'away' day & BW said he'd put a small report together in addition.

10. Board meeting dates

SH confirmed - Tuesdays, RR @ 7.30pm

May 23rd

June 27th (apologies from JF, JN & LH)

July 18th (apologies from JN)

Meeting concluded at 9.31pm