



A Community Benefit Society  
The Shop & Post Office Great Street Norton Sub Hamdon Somerset TA14 6SG

## **Minutes of The Board of Directors of Norton sub Hamdon Community Land Trust Ltd**

**Held on Monday 15th April 2024, 7.30pm in the Reading Room.**

Attendees: Niall Clifford (NC)  
Lindsay Higgins (LH)  
Simon Harris (SH)  
Ian Murray (IM)  
Rowena Asley (RA)  
Jennie Harris (JH)

### **1. Apologies**

Brian Wickins & Anne Fairweather (AF). John Forsyth has now left.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None.

### **3. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting (19th March)**

Approved, signed & dated.

#### **Matters Arising -**

Shop keys  
P.O. extra hour (Saturday)  
Shop opening hours

### **4. Property / Assets & Shop lease**

Field - NC visited today. The fencing repair is ongoing.

Lease - LH informed the board that at the recent Finance Committee meeting, Jonathan Naughton, was positive that the CLT should not accept an increase in the rent as the feeling was we were currently paying above the rent value as it stands anyway. The rent could only now be increased at the end of the term & the CLT has the right to renew it then.

The lease terms prevent the rent from going down. Comparing previous years, 2014 £5k p.a. & 2024 £5.800., the latter potentially without a market review.

The rent is market led & not index linked despite there being a clause about index linking in the lease although further on in the text it states that this clause does not apply.

The advice now is that the CLT should prepare for eventualities, for example, looking at new locations, coping with a rent increase, how long could we secure a lease for. Also that the CLT should commission its own commercial valuation for rent & sale purposes. This would be at a cost in the region of £2k.

NC stated that we needed the information & it may be a valid use of some of the reserve, if we have to pay for it, as we need some certainty of the direction we are heading in.

IM agreed to make an initial enquiry.

NC said that his impression when talking to Lynn Orchard (landlord) was that the thoughts of selling had disappeared but that it was now a rent increase she was seeking. However his feeling was that she didn't seem to know what she really wanted. Care & thought was needed towards her as it is a sensitive issue.

RA agreed to make enquiries with local solicitor firms who may provide a free 30 minute consultation & pass them onto Lynn allowing her to have advice as to where she stands with the lease etc.

NC thanked LH & RA for dealing so far with Lynn & RA agreed to continue being the point of contact for Lynn & should a meeting be required, another Board member would accompany her.

## 5. Finance

LH's pre circulated report was discussed. Mar-24 was a loss-making month, both overall (-£304) and on 'shop & PO only' trading (-£784) but not enough to put us into the red overall at year end, showing a profit of £89.

|                         |        |
|-------------------------|--------|
| The CLT overall profit  | £2,142 |
| The P.O <u>loss</u> was | £6,150 |
| Donations were          | £6,390 |
| The Shop                | £6,238 |

In comparison to last year -

Grants & donations had increased from £2,070 - £6,390

Minchington Close rent up by 37% - £883

The P.O remuneration was up by £1871 a 9.7% increase (almost matching the recent wage increase)

Shop sales were up by 21.8% from £239k - £292k

Direct expenses (costs for goods) up from £187k to £213k – 23.6%, by % increase outstripping sales income AND inflation.

Overheads up on £1.2k on the year (from £79,606 to £80,795), contained despite 9.3% increases in wages.

'Savings' are primarily attributable to:

- Reduced card m/c charges negotiated (£766)
- Reduced consumption of electricity and cheaper contract secured (£1,232)
- Office costs reduced (£876)
- Waste collection contract renegotiated (£700)
- Plus spend on repairs/renewals is down (£922)

At the end of the last month the bank account was at £68,078

However Chalmers still need to prepare & present the accounts.

NC commented that we should still embrace & continue to benefit from fund raising done by 3rd parties on our behalf.

The energy consumption saving has improved greatly from what it was last August & is still a fixed term for another year.

Youngs to be approached regarding a better deal - Claire & LH

Annual stock take (April) - showed a decrease of £1,747 & Claire was thanked for her hard & continuing work in reducing the overall stock with the aim of being able to just cover the ordering lead times. The stock total was £20,273.

NC is still in ongoing contact with the P.O. regarding CLT representation.

Business Plan - John Bailey has provided feed back & still in draft form.

A Community invited event was discussed whereby, once complete, the Business Plan along with a progress report could be shared, perhaps running alongside the coffee morning that JH organised last year, which was a great success. IM said he would give it some further thought as to how it could be organised & presented.

LH was thanked for her hard work.

## **6. Secretary & Action Log**

Action Log discussed & updated.

Safe keys were discussed & enquiries to be made for cutting.

LH to chase up the scaffolding company with the need to take it down.

A consensus for the time being that the shop opening hours (Thurs-Fri) remain the same.

The P.O Saturday hour needs further data - ongoing.

The accounts will have to be posted to the FCA as for some reason they will not upload onto the Public domain however they are on their website.

## **7. Shop & Post Office**

SH gave thanks to Peter Callaghan & Steve Collier for completing the work on the vegetable racking & shop outside bench. Their expenses have been paid. IM had thanked them in the newsletter also.

Francesca Chignell joined SH for a cashing-up session & she agreed to join Claire on a Tuesday as well for learning. Fran, Sophie & RA to be added to the WhatsApp Cashing Up gap. LH suggested a cashing-up refresher for those currently involved & to include the new members.

The 'ordering' volunteers have been trained.

New lock for the cigarette cabinet now fitted.

RA brought up whether newspapers were worth considering as she has had several enquiries, mainly from visitors.

## **8. Marketing**

IM asked what should the Board promote as to how the shop is performing. He asked as he is representing the CLT at the village Fiesta in the church & that there will be a Q&A session via the vicar.

Generally it was thought that the 'break even' story is good plus promoting what the shop/ PO offers. IM said he would circulate some questions beforehand.

IM doing a feasibility study with regards to T shirts that Rachael, Prue Biddle's daughter, has suggested selling in the shop.

## **9. Health & Safety**

SH - Nothing specific to report.

## **10. A O B**

PAT testing. SH & JH to look into purchasing a tester with the advice of Mike Dryhurst & potentially sharing the cost with the village hall.

21.13 meeting finished

Next meeting dates - Monday 20th May both in the Reading Room, 7.30pm.  
Proposed - Monday 17th June 7.30pm hall Meeting Rm.