



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 Tuesday 27th February 2024, 7.30pm in Norton Reading Room.

Attendees: Niall Clifford (NC)
Lindsay Higgins (LH)
Anne Fairweather (AF)
Simon Harris (SH)
Ian Murray (IM)
Rowena Asley (RA)
John Forsyth (JF)
Jennie Harris (JH)

1. Apologies

Brian Wickins (unwell)

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting (23rd January 2023)

Approved, signed & dated.

4. Property / Assets & Shop roof

NC was pleased to state that repairs had now commenced on the shop roof. This will now allow the possibility of other ideas for future improvements to be collated & presented for the Board to decide upon.

The field was visited on Monday 19th & it was noted that some fencing alongside the bridge, to enter the field, was in disrepair. This protects the walkway from the deep ditch. This can be sorted at a relatively small cost.

Still no progress on the covenants to date.

A thank you was made to Rowena for her involvement in speaking with Lynn Orchard (landlady) regarding the roof repairs as NC said he could not have done it on his own.

5. Finance

LH then discussed her previously circulated report to the board members.

Explaining her figures it was stated that unfortunately the gain made by the end of December had almost been lost. However JF did say that looking at February's figures, they were looking good. The ambition is to break even for the end of this financial year as a shop per se rather than relying on donations as well.

However. £1,325 came in from donations this month - gifted shares (£995), a one off donation of £100 & £230 from the counter collection box.

Wages are currently the biggest concern in that they are increasing again by 9.8% equating to £5,000 which will need to be found.

LH stated that the concentration should be on how much money we make on what we buy & sell as that still needs attention rather than, for example, reducing Thursday & Friday's opening hours.

JF commented that by reducing the shop trading by one hour on Thursday/Friday & Saturday, it would benefit in the region of between £3,000 - £5,000. That included the cost of sales. If available for the next meeting he said he would prepare some new figures for consideration.

Energy costs were still fairly flat which was good news & NC felt that there was still some saving to be made on consumption albeit minor.

At the end of January there was almost £16,400 from pledges. Since the last request 70% of pledgers have responded & in time an exact amount will be known & accountants advice will be needed as to how to show it on our accounts.

Margins are still the focus & the business plan is still a work in progress.

Nicola was approached about joining the Board but has declined. NC has agreed to volunteer as the Board member representative for the Post Office. The PO have suggested a refresh of the contact we have & AF agreed to speak with Liz Maunder for assistance with past PO involvement.

A new EPOS system is still a work in progress.

NC expressed thanks to LH for her continued efforts with the financial side.

JF gave information & comparisons between the current wholesaler supplier Youngs (Y) & a potential alternative, Bookers (B). The idea being, could the overall profitability be improved. Report provided.

Current spend with Y is £90,000 per annum, equating to 66 orders per yr with 50 of those over £1000. They deliver weekly.

Booker would require a minimum order spend of £1000 with a commitment to order £1000+ 6 out of every 8 weeks. This JF stated looked achievable. Their other requirements were the capability of large lorry (18T) being able to deliver & 2 payment bills within the month, which Y currently do. Delivery is weekly.

8 separate products were chosen randomly & all were cheaper to buy from B & had an improved margin for the shop.

The Board were appreciative of JF's work & a further meeting will now take place to discuss it further including checking that the range of products is available, involving Claire along with SH & JH.

6. Secretary & Action Log

The log was discussed & updated accordingly.

7. Shop & Post Office

JH asked if, alongside being the PC rep, would the Board consider her being co-opted onto the Board & then standing for election at the next AGM. Her reason was that she wanted to be more involved & felt restricted as only being at the meetings as a rep.

This was immediately proposed by NC & seconded by RA, the Board was unanimous. As a result JH will now assist with responsibility for the Shop & PO.

SH reported on the successful cover that was provided whilst Cheryl was on holiday, this coming from the volunteers who, where needed, doubled up, Rosemary Gray for opening up & Chris Westwood who carried out the daily orders. RA sent out a 'thank you' email.

The 'ordering' volunteers have now been asked to see either Claire or Cheryl for their training input & to run alongside that, SH & JH will also be available to open up should we not have the option of Rosemary's help.

Extra help was also going to be sought from volunteers who may be able to join the cashing up team. SH & RA to action.

IM was thanked for the work on putting the shop logo on the freezers, matching the fridges he had previously done.

The entrance mat has now been cleaned using the Vax cleaner that was donated & this can be done on a weekly basis if necessary & in situ.

The chest freezer that Tinkers Bubble asked if they could temporarily use at Christmas is still in use by them. LH suggested that perhaps we could sell it to them. SH to make further enquiries.

Peter Callaghan is still progressing with the veg display stand for the shop front & has removed the bench for renovation.

The Saturday PO closing time was discussed whereby it closes at midday but the staff member is paid until 1pm. This appears to be a historic decision & that no member of the PO staff had ever raised it or, more importantly, complained about the decision. SH genuinely felt that the reason for Sara asking to work on Saturdays was purely because her partner also worked that day & not on the basis of gaining an extra hours pay.

SH was happy to speak with Sara but requested some financial input to be able to present the Board's view, particularly in the wake of the staff wage increase that was due (25th March)

It was decided to raise this again at the next meeting under a specific agenda heading for discussion whether to extend the opening time or keep the status quo.

NC discussed the ongoing issue in negating having the shop keys on the premises overnight to comply with the insurance terms. Currently they are kept in a fixed key safe. A couple of ideas had been thought of but they potentially meant further keys being cut. AF agreed to re-check the insurance policy in a bid to determine what the requirement action / restriction might be.

8. Marketing

IM stated that the Local Produce campaign required some funding & this would include, advertising, banners, posters, labels etc amounting to £300.

This was agreed by the Board being proposed by NC & seconded by SH. He was thanked for his work so far.

IM was happy to manage to overall promotional time length of the campaign with most of the purchased stationary being reused.

BW to be asked to communicate the promotion to the Chiselborough residents.

9. Health & Safety

SH - Nothing specific to report.

JH asked if perhaps we should be having HSE training for the volunteers as a refresher etc. It was raised that a lot of training is held online. To be investigated further.

10. A O B

AF raised the cashing up issue that occurs when there's a discrepancy & asked for advice. LH was able to provide that but it was also decided that another email was circulated to the volunteers about ensuring that the card machine was presented to the customer before payment was taken. RA to action.

21.08 meeting finished

Next meeting date agreed - Monday 15th April