



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

Minutes of The Board of Directors

held on Tuesday 28th March 2023 at 7.30pm in Norton Sub Hamdon Reading Room

Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

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.
Jennie Harris (JH)	NsH PC rep
Ian Murray (IM)	Secretary & Marketing

The meeting started with a powerpoint presentation by Bob Taylor demonstrating a current shop & post office financial model showing how the shop trades, as it is now & going forward covering the next couple of years. The idea being that trading can be examined on a monthly basis showing trends & not relying solely on the annual accounts, thus giving time for something to be done sooner should the need arise. The model would also show when a shortfall would occur & if action had been taken, e.g. new products, price changes. He also stated that it would be a useful tool for showing if further fund raising needed to be justified.

LH also supplied comment & shop manageress, Claire Luck was also present having been invited along.

On conclusion both Bob & LH were thanked & then in company with Claire, Bob left the meeting.

- 1. Apologies received:** Brian Wickens
- 2. New declarations of interest** - none.
- 3. Minutes of Board meeting (14th February)**

agreed with then signed by CM.

4. Agreement to Co-Opt John Forsyth

CM explained Larry Leventhal has now officially stood down from the board.

LH stated that she had received at least 5 responses in agreement for John Forsyth (JF) to join the board & thus proposed him which in turn was seconded by JN. There were no objections. As he was already present he took part immediately.

5. Finance Report

LH explained that there wasn't any new news on the trading figures as the costs are still higher than the growth which is down to gradual inflation on the cost base. LH also made the point that the new wage increase was due to take effect imminently. The board was reminded that there were 3 staff members on the national living wage & 2 at 12.4% higher, the latter referring to the shop & Post Office manageresses respectively.

CM pointed out that the national living wage was mandatory but that to increase the 2 higher wage earners was not. JN stated that it was in their contract of employment & NC commented that, many years ago, the Board agreed to having a differential between the staff & the 2 managers which has since followed on ever since. Affordability was touched on, albeit there were no objections. This also supported that they were doing a good job.

NC proposed the increase for the manageresses & it was seconded by JN. No board objections. This would take effect from the 26th (pay day) of this month which was proposed in favour of by JN & seconded by NC, again with no objections.

LH moved on to trends in the year to date highlighting both the gross & net profits. This showed a slight increase on the gross profit margin & was better than this time last year. However due to the increase in the overheads it was wiping out any advantage.

The bank balance is hovering around £43 - £44k & holding.

On the subject of the shop solar panels it was decided that the Financial Committee (FC) could not make a decision or recommend to go forward with them. However the FC was in favour of going ahead with the field solar array supported with an evaluation paper.

Enquiries with the energy supplier Octopus by JN showed that a saving of £150 pm was possible & was well worth doing. The FC recommend this change not only for a far more competitive price but also for Octopus's engagement with community solar projects. NC said that he would be happy to deal with the enquiry & this change was proposed by LH & seconded by NC with all in favour.

LH continued by highlighting the good work that Jonathan Naughton had done in & around the product trading data & it had drawn attention to one of the freezers which was shown to be running at a higher cost rate than others. It was then the intention that by next month's meeting a decision might have to be taken on the freezers. JN did say that an engineer was due to check the freezers within the next few days. It was agreed that the Shop Committee would make the decisions concerning the freezers keeping LH informed of any cost/s implications.

Post Office integration with the shop was going to be discussed with the post office manageress this coming Friday (31st) at the shop to discuss contact options.

CM mentioned the Community Ownership Fund which he said was worth looking into but was not in a position to report back as yet.

Terms of reference for the FC were now circulated & LH proposed that the board adopted them. Seconded by JN & no objections.

An AGM in October will suit the finalising of the year end accounts by Chalmers. The CLT Network membership is due & has risen from £300 to £350 py plus £200 for the Directors / Officers insurance & will be paid.

A letter of thanks to all those who pledged has been sent.

Bookkeeper assistance has been sought for a few hours at a cost of £40-60 plus vat for Sage.

FC minutes are available via LH.

6. Secretary / Action Log

Larry's actions are still in hand with him.

IM stated that he has sorted a website domain for the shop www.norton/clt.co.uk
Other links can be added & standard ones will be for the Chair, Secretary & Treasurer.

7. Shop & PO Committee

The last meeting's note was already circulated to the board.

JN said that the alcohol licence training was with Claire although she cannot find the time for the study for the licence exam (online). It was decided that a replacement should be sought & that person need not be a board member. CM did say that perhaps it should be a CLT member.

The data protection for the shop is covered by direct debit but it needed a name change for contact & a registered address. The shop address was not suitable for this. IM agreed that as Secretary he would be that contact.

JN together with SH agreed to take care of Facilities for the shop & post office e.g. required signage, key dates for PAT testing etc.

Appraisals are due in April for both shop & post office manageresses & will be done by JN.

Other areas of customer footfall were discussed with IM saying he'll look into it & Claire has already started looking at products which are not selling as well.

8. Solar

NC stated that regarding the shop panels, South Somerset Community Energy Society (SSCES) have found a structural engineer & are requesting a fee of £140 for an initial survey.

The 'do it ourselves' option is looking for a £3000p/yr reduction in overheads however, the saving from SSCES is significantly less than that & arguably going to create far more bother than it is worth. NC's advice is to decline that offer & so the 'do nothing' option is more likely as it would mean spending £10,000 to save £3000 per yr.

With the field array, SSCES are interested & they have been pointed in the direction of the agreed planning permission. A decision was needed as to what the CLT wanted from the arrangement - the land is already owned & has planning permission & so is a valuable asset.

NC suggested that the board goes with joint development, getting a return on the land for the benefit of the CLT & agree rental as a % income profit from the array & the supply of cheap energy for the shop. NC's desire would be to offer cheap energy to the community as a whole as well as to the shop. The benefit from the community aspect is that it actually increases the value of the power produced. The array could produce 88mw (mega watts) per yr & is of significant value & so it should seriously be considered as to where the boards stands in terms of partnering it, i.e - let someone else do it (making money out of us) & give us a tithe for rent or, we sell the land with the planning permission at a huge benefit possibly.

NC continued by explaining that if we were able to get cheaper electricity to the shop then batteries would be a good choice so that they could be charged by day & available for night time usage. That would be a cheaper option than having panels on the shop roof.

The board then discussed the options.

All were in favour of energy to be supplied to the community & favouring the field array. Further discussions would take place with the Solar committee (NC, CM & Bob Taylor) who'd then take their decisions/thoughts to the next FC meeting on the 19th April.

It was also agreed to pay for the initial survey fee (£140) for shop roof solar panels as it would provide a definite as to the state of the roof & its ability to support any panels. NC proposed & IM seconded. All in agreement.

9. Marketing

IM showed a recent free advertising video that he'd organised & that it would be shown on Instagram & Facebook. He said that it was to target & appeal to the younger shopper.

LH requested a thank you to JH for the success of the recent village hall jumble sale which raised £590 & she in turn thanked all the helpers.

10. CCTV

SH stated that a 2nd camera had recently failed but that both the PO & shop counters were covered. He then explained that circa £70 would be needed & with Board approval he would be happy to continue looking for replacements.

CM put forward that authority be given (agreed upon) & SH agreed to keep the Board informed by email.

11. A O urgent business

None

12. Board meeting dates

It was requested by LH that we revert back to monthly meetings & that was supported.

SH was given possibles for April, May & June & to arrange with the RR

Tuesday 18th July in the RR was confirmed.

Meeting concluded at 9.42pm