

## BLEDINGTON COMMUNITY SHOP LTD

### Minutes of Fourth Annual General Meeting held on 28 November 2015 in the Village Hall

**Committee Members Present:** Michael and Robin McCulloch (Acting Co-Chairs), Michael Lear, Ben Ball, Ben Woodward, Ali Mackesy, Penelope Leather, Heather Pearson, Rebecca Allen, Paul Dickson, Sigi Lang **In attendance:** Mike Logue (Project Manager)

**Apologies:** Peter Davis, Paul Richardson, Andrew Packe

**BCSL Members and Visitors:** about 50 attended.

#### 1. Welcome and vote of thanks

Michael McCulloch welcomed the visitors and thanked them for coming to the meeting. The pop-up shop set up in the hall should give everybody a flavour of things to come. MM explained that he and Robin were at the moment acting as joint chairmen. He suggested that any visitors who were not yet members may wish to sign up. He also requested that e-mail addresses are given or updated, so members can be kept informed.

Ben Ball also thanked the visitors for coming and for supporting the shop. He gave thanks to Michael Lear for heading the shop project for 10 years. Under his guidance, we set up the Bledington Community Shop Ltd.(BCSL) and Bledington and Foscot Community Association Limited (BAFCA); we raised over £100,000 and bought the land; we secured planning permission and we designed the beautiful building. A vote of thanks was given to Michael Lear and we are all looking forward to celebrating the opening of the shop with him.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes of 2014 AGM

Copies of the AGM minutes were distributed and approval was proposed by Penelope Leather and seconded by Angela Lear. The minutes were approved on a show of hands.

#### 3. Chairman's Report

Ben Ball presented the Chairman's Report. This time last year BCSL had 200 members and we now have nearly 260 members. This means there is now a clear majority of adults in the village who are shop members. Three areas were highlighted – fundraising, preparation for construction and business planning.

**Fundraising:** The Chastleton Tea Ladies serve teas 2 – 3 times a week during the summer to National Trust visitors coming to Chastleton House. In 2013, £3,000 was raised, this increased to £8,000 in 2014, and this year to £12,000, bringing the total to £25,000 over 3 years. The teas are so popular that a lunch for 50 has already been pre-booked for next year. Ben Ball asked for a round of applause for the 25 ladies who have worked so hard to run these teas. In addition, many smaller events, parties, dinners and lunches were organised. A major summer fundraising campaign had been planned but was scaled back at the last minute due to the unexpected funding crisis with the village hall roof.

Ali Mackesy reported on the external fundraising. There are 6 potential primary funders, all of which have a Cotswold focus. Applications range between £20,000 and 60,000, bringing the total to £150,000. We have also applied to "Power to Change" as our lead funder. The application for £200,000 was submitted in October and we should hear any day now whether we have been approved to go forward to the second round. This is a frustrating and painful process at this stage, as we are unlikely to see any clear progress until we have the primary funder in place and the primary funder won't commit until they feel confident that we have everything in place to complete the build. We are also in discussion with other local trusts as possible major funders, as well as some smaller trusts where the potential total could be in the region of £52,000.

**Preparation for construction:** The Building Sub-Group has been dealing with the planners who have asked for more details about landscaping, surface finish of the wood used for the building and drainage. Responding is nearly completed, so initial construction work could start in the next few weeks.

**Business planning:** Other community shops have been doing very well, with profits going up. They are the hub of their communities. We are in regular contact with our mentor stores and learning from them.

The shop building is pre-fabricated, so once we have the money there should be a short lead time between ordering the building and opening for business. Ben Ball paid tribute to the hard work of many volunteers, commenting that is in fact what a community shop is all about.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

Ben Woodward reported on the present financial position. Total cash (BAFCA and BCSL) in the bank at the moment is £52,500. This will enable us to start initial building works. The total raised from April 2015 to today is £27,000, made up of Chastleton teas and fundraising. Submitted gift aid claims brought another £5,000. From April 2014 to April 2015, £36,000 was raised by holding a charity auction and from Chastleton teas.

Costs incurred were £26,000 for the land we bought and £4,000 for building design works etc.

Ben Woodward explained the difference between BCSL (shop) and BAFCA (charity). BAFCA was set up for receiving donations and for recovering gift aid. Any shop surplus can be gifted to BAFCA and the money can then be used for projects in the village.

#### **5. Adoption of Accounts to year-end 31 March 2015**

Adoption of accounts was proposed from the floor and seconded by Paul Dickson. The accounts were approved by a show of hands.

#### **6. Inspection of Accounts**

At present we are not required to have a professional audit, though we had planned to do so at last year's AGM. We do expect to proceed with an audit next year and we are looking for a suitable auditor.

However, as a precaution, the Committee tabled a resolution providing that the Society may dispense with any requirement to undertake a full professional audit for the accounting year 2015/2016. The resolution was proposed by Audrey Scavuzzo and seconded by Louise Angus. It was approved by a show of hands.

#### **7. Election of Management Committee**

All existing members agreed to stand again. Michael and Robin McCulloch have been acting co-chairs and were standing for election to the management committee as joint chairs. The election was proposed by Jennifer Steel and seconded by Louise Angus. The vote was carried by a show of hands. Michael McCulloch thanked the members for electing Robin and himself to the committee.

#### **8. Chairman's Address**

Michael McCulloch expressed his thanks to Michael Lear for having the vision to launch the project for a new shop, after the old one closed. A lot of effort went into it and without him we would not be where we are now. When Michael and Robin first came to the village 11 years ago they were pleased to see a shop and used it frequently. They were shocked to find the shop closed in 2006 and noted that the village had become quieter. They have been active supporters from the beginning and were impressed by the level of interest and fundraising achievements in the village. The village has an outstanding school, a busy pub, a newly renovated village hall, and a lovely church. Add a flourishing community shop and the village has all amenities to make it an attractive place to live.

In answer to a question from the floor, MM explained that it would be nice to open in September 2016 when people return from holidays, school starts and we can anticipate the Christmas season. However, this is dependent on receiving funds from grant-giving organisations and no definite date can be offered until funds have been secured.

He suggested that there are six elements to consider when starting a community shop: building, retail offer, trained staff, systems and procedures, finance and enthusiastic customers. Although the current focus is on fundraising and the building, other important preparations such as deciding what to sell, or attracting and training volunteers, reminds us the community shop is not just a physical structure. As we turn our attention to these other areas, the Committee will need to attract new members with relevant additional expertise.

Robin McCulloch reported on her recent visit with Ali Mackesy to the Hampstead Norreys Community Shop. This shop is of similar size to the one we are planning. Robin was impressed by the warmth and friendliness with which they were greeted and the welcoming atmosphere present in the shop. They met with the manager and one of the volunteers. The shop is a worthwhile addition to the village, with volunteers and young people involved. They have a vibrant noticeboard. As an example of how the shop supports the community, RM explained that teenagers who volunteer in the shop can win points for their Duke of Edinburgh Award. There is a job list to help them learn what needs to be done in the shop. The shop even organized a pizza evening for the teenagers to identify what more could be done for them.

## **9. AOB / Questions and Suggestions**

In reply to questions from members, Ali Mackesy advised that the building sub-committee has a very detailed breakdown of costs which is required when we apply for funds. The basic cost stands at £300,000. This is the total cost, without the land, but includes working capital. Ali also mentioned that because of our OX postcode, we are unable to apply for lottery funding. For this reason, we have approached “Power to Change” which is a separate charity supported by lottery funding. We have 9 mentor community shops – they tell us what works and what does not. Volunteers usually come from the villages but managers may come from outside.

Michael McCulloch explained that we would have a paid manager– either as a job share or a single person. It is crucial to find the right person(s), and the Committee will consider carefully when to appoint them so they can be involved in the setting up of the shop. Michael also mentioned that the Prince’s Countryside Trust has offered to underwrite the first year of the manager’s appointment.

A resident from Hazel Grove expressed concern about the impact of building works and asked who to contact if there are any problems. Michael McCulloch advised that Mike Logue, our Project Manager, should be the first point of contact when we get to the building phase. If necessary, villagers can also talk to the committee. There was a suggestion that the noticeboard could be used for updating on the works planned, with a specific timetable and Mike Logue agreed this could be done, particularly with regard to specific periods of work which might be disruptive.

The possibility of a lay-by on the main road was suggested by one of the members, with a walk-through to the shop. This had been considered but would require additional cost , so may be re-considered at a later stage.

Ali Mackesy suggested she would be happy to organise for members to visit one of our mentor community shops to gain an insight and will put details on the website. She also talked about the turnover community shops can expect to achieve, the basic projection of revenue is about £2,000/week, the highest projection is £6,000/week where a café is included.

Michael McCulloch closed the meeting and thanked everybody for coming. He also pointed visitors to our pop-up shop where Bledington Shop chutneys, cookery books and Christmas cards were on offer, plus Bledington Shop aprons and bags.