

REPORT TO AN EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ON THE 11TH OCTOBER 2021

OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE VILLAGE SHOP

1. Advice from the Kent Association of Local Council

Thanks. I am sorry to hear that. It happened here in Elham but sometimes it can just sort itself out if they are viable or you have a local player interested (as in Elham a chap who owned several local shops steamed in and its now much improved). Therefore, one key role for the PC is to keep the issue alive and generally speaking S111 powers 1972 LGA can be used here as “front of house” to highlight and offer good services.

In terms of grants: its difficult outside of the GPC (but with the usual criteria applied even then) whilst S137 which all LCs have has many cogs as you know and the main one is it cannot be used to befit individuals which knocks out commercial set ups also though it could be used to promote a community model. (attached).

The question here is even if you can offer a grant does it help because the issue is often sustainability?.... but if it is lawful there could be a role here for funding looking at viability or supporting a small aspect of the operation going forward (e.g. the provision of information). Some LCs have used their own buildings here i.e. cheap rentals or looked at community buildings in effect to offer a favourable rental. These will all vary with the set up/challenges.

My top tip I think is to have a work with *ACRK Rural Kent* if you are members (or not well worth joining) and see their website as they are the leaders here: Carl Adams carl.adams@ruralkent.org.uk

Carl can probably put you in touch with help/support and guidance. Carl will also have access to solid case studies.

The ACRK role will be to look at the issue/options and advise interested parties to obtain a better outcome.

2. Suggestions from Councillors

Cllr Eastwood – note from Cllr Eastwood attached

Cllr Kennaird - I have a suggestion for the PO, maybe this could be run out of the village hall on a part time basis. There is an example of this in Matfield where the facility is shared around a couple of villages. Matfield is open 3 mornings a week and I know that it then moves on to Horsmonden in the afternoons. Maybe this is something that could be shared with Egerton and Ulcombe?

3. Feedback from other Parish Councils –

Several other parish councils have been contacted where they have lost their village shop in the past. At the time of writing no responses have been received. Except a holding response from the Clerk in Egerton saying that a working group has been established and she has asked them to contact us directly with details.

If anything further is received before the meeting it will be circulated to councillors and placed on the website.

4. Findings from Cllr Galton VILLAGE SHOP INFORMATION, prepared on 2nd October 2021.

REPORT No 1 by Ron Galton

Contacts.

Peter Forknall Chairman of Parish Council 01622 843 126. 1st contact 30th September 2021.

Steve Waring. Parish Councillor and on the village shop committee 01622 843 112. 1st contact 1st October 2021. stevewaring@myfwi.co.uk

Val Underdown. Involved in shop operation 01622 843 232.

Plunkett Foundation for advice on setting up from scratch. 0845 557 469

Kent Rural Retailers, they work with Kent rural retailers to develop and sustain their retail operations. See below:

ARCK Action in the Rural Communities in Kent see below.:

Angela Milligan 01303 765 642. – angela.milligan@ruralkent.org.uk

Sharon Davies 07551 725 383 - info@kentruralretailers.co.uk

Carl Adams 07771 932605 - carl.adams@ruralkent.org.uk.

Carl is the Rural and Social Enterprise Officer.

Information obtained to date based on Chart Sutton village shop experience:

1) It is very difficult to find volunteers among only approx 800 residents (Boughton Malherbe is less at about 400.)

2) Planning permission is required and renewed every 3 years by MBC..

3) The shop was first set up about 10 years ago by forming a Community Shop Association and now has a turnover of about £90,000 annually.

4) The shop was temporarily set up in an old Portacabin and about 6 years ago it moved to a second hand converted 20' shipping container placed on the village green that is about the size of GG village green. It is unobtrusive being painted a dark green which blends in with the surroundings.

4) The shop incorporating a post office is very important, The one at Chart Sutton is run by one of the Headcorn PO staff and open only on Wednesdays 2.00 – 4.00pm and Fridays 10.00am - 1.00pm. These times are within normal shop hours.

5) Normal shop hours are Mon – Tues – Thurs, 7.00.am – 1.00pm

Wed - 7.00am – 4.00 pm

Fri – 7.00am – 1.00pm

Sat & Bank Holidays – 8.00am – 12.00 noon

Sun – 8.30 am – 12.00 noon.

6) The basic fitting out of the container includes the following basics:

Access pathway, entrance ramp, security shutters, external advertising board and waste bin, internal lining to walls and ceiling, floor covering, external steel flush cladding, small counter, till, 2 freezers, 2 chillers, a fixed electric heater, 2 extractor fans, fresh air inlet grilles, lighting, CCTV, Telephone and Broadband, Fire/panic alarm, fire extinguisher, shelving. RG has roughly estimated a cost of about £25,000 to set up a similar shop in Grafty Green. This would include a dedicated power supply.

7) Stock is purchased every week at wholesalers such as Bookers, preferably pre priced with retail prices (Pricemark system) where possible as a lot of time is otherwise spent pricing items.

8) Basic items stocked are tinned foods such as soups, peas, sweetcorn, yogourts, etc.

Milk, bread from Headcorn bakers,

ice cream, bottles/tins of soft drinks,

cheese, butter, bacon, basic fresh veg,

eggs, selection of frozen food inc,

Korkers sausages. Basics such as

caddy and bin liners.

9) The shop also does newspaper and magazines to order.

!0 Perishables have to be carefully purchased to avoid losses.

12) The shop is run entirely by volunteers using a rotor and there are six members on the management committee.

13) The Parish Council does not run the operation, that has to be community led.

However the Parish Council is represented on the committee by at least one member.

Other examples not yet visited or contacted

Smarden, Benenden, Detling, Barham. All of these are much larger communities than either Chart Sutton or Grafty Green. For this reason I have concentrated on Chart Sutton to date because it is the nearest in size to Grafty Green.

Funding for Chart Sutton

This came from:

Local organisations and resident donations given freely.

Parish Council grant,

Issue of shares in the venture, each shareholder has only one vote regardless of the number of shares purchased.

Applications for grants from Charities, MBC and KCC.

The next report will come after I have received more answers to questions I have asked of Chart Sutton.

Attachment – Good Councillor Community Business Guidance

Proposals by Cllr Eastwood