

Village Shop — first investors meeting held

The inaugural meeting of the shareholders of Barcombe Village Shop Limited took place in the Village Hall on the afternoon of Sunday, 23rd October. The Hall was almost full with upward of 100 investors attending.

Raphie Kaplinsky, who had been instrumental in bringing together the group of founders, spoke of his appreciation of the tremendous community response to the call to rescue the shop and Post Office, and applauded the democratic nature of its ownership structure. He also praised Rob and Clara Wallace for taking on the responsibility of running the shop and wished them all success.

Gordon Gurman thanked the village for the support it had provided over the past seventeen years, and expressed his thanks to Raphie, Alan Marler and others for enabling the shop to continue as a going concern.

Rob and Clara Wallace explained that they were speaking to retail space consultants about possible improvements to the shop layout, and that they intend to consult widely within the village over what changes the community might like to see. Rob also thanked Gordon for his continuing advice and support, both in the shop and in the Post Office.

The meeting was then opened to questions from investors. The following queries were raised:

- How many directors are required? There is no specific requirement, but the current number (six) gives a broad spread of expertise.
- Are Board members paid by the company? No. All directors provide their services voluntarily.
- Would Rob and Clara consider reinstating a local delivery service for newspapers and other products? Rob said he would like to see this, but a service depends on finding someone with transport.
- Given the space restrictions in the shop, would it be helpful for someone in the village to make storage space available? Rob agreed that it would.
- Might it be possible to acquire part of the car park from Lewes District Council for such extra space? This was considered unlikely.
- Other local shops seem to do good business with cyclists, including providing bicycle repair services. Rob confirmed that the Barcombe shop found cyclists to be good customers.
- Will Rob and Clara use social media to share information about the shop and to promote its services? They plan to do this.
- Did plans include installing a coffee machine? This was under consideration.
- Could space be found for community use, for example the exchange of books and DVDs? The idea would be included in consultations.
- Could a small area be set up in the shop for contributions to local food banks? This too would be considered.

The meeting then addressed the formal agenda item, the election of directors. Each of the existing directors — Chris Arbenz, Sheila Holden, Nick Lear, Nigel Saxby, Paddy Secretan and Amanda Williams-Thomas — gave a brief description of their background and experience, and each was warmly confirmed in office.

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As investors left the meeting they were able to collect their BVS share certificates and Loan Notes. The printing of these had been arranged by Andrew Pearce, who, with Alan Marler, had also provided great support in many ways to the founders and the board throughout the shop rescue process.

For those investors unable to come to the meeting, certificates have been delivered by hand or posted by Special Delivery.

Ends