



Minutes of Members Meeting

Held at the British School Room, Cliff Road
At 7.00pm on Monday 15th November 2021

In attendance and apologies

In attendance were Mike Johnson, chairman, Richard Hulme, Huw Bowles, Jonathan Gould, Geoff Martin and 15 members.

Apologies were received from Joy Smith, Pat Smith, Susan Hamer, Trevor and Lynn Broughton.

Also in attendance representing Mid Counties Co-op were Ryan Mumford, District Manager, and Aaron Haines, Sherston Branch Manager.

1. Minutes of the Members General Meeting held on 4th November 2019

These were taken as read and approved.

2. Review of the year

The chairman welcomed members and the representatives of the Co-op to this first meeting for two years, coinciding almost exactly with the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Post Office and Stores. He reflected on the journey from that time and the pleasure he has had in seeing the premises almost fully occupied in that period. He thanked the board for their good and voluntary stewardship. He was pleased to report that SOSIC had been in a position to help the customer-facing businesses, where appropriate, through the pandemic when they were prevented from trading normally.

He reminded members that SOSIC has paid 6 years of accelerated rent (£72,000), to provide security for any significant periods when some of the units might lie vacant and that the Board has begun to make funds available to the village for community purposes. He explained that the Parish Council has established a method for identifying worthy causes and that SOSIC will continue to put the Parish Council in funds, whenever possible, for this, while retaining a wish to guide them from time-to-time on the end use for which SOSIC would like the funds to be used.

He reminded members that SOSIC has a continuing responsibility to keep the premises in good repair and to retain sufficient funds for exceptional costs. Ten years ago an estimate of £25,000 was obtained for the roof above Shear Class should it be necessary to replace it. He anticipates that this sum will now be considerably larger and said that estimates are being obtained for this. In the meantime it is necessary to manage the funds prudently. Some re-painting has been carried out in the current year and, with the age of the building, he anticipated that increasing routine repair costs will be required.

The chairman particularly thanked those involved in maintaining the buildings, Nic Fisher as Caretaker and Jonathan Gould as Property Manager and again mentioned that they were providing their services entirely voluntarily.

3. Board membership and succession planning

The chairman explained that Huw Bowles, for personal reasons, wishes to resign from the board and as membership secretary at the end of the meeting and he thanked him for his service and contribution.

He hopes to be able to announce the appointment of a new membership secretary in the not too distant future.

However that brings to the fore the increasing need to have a succession plan and perhaps more diversity in the board. The chairman said that this is an increasing priority for SOSCIC. The chairman then invited each board member to introduce themselves to the meeting and to present on their own area of responsibility.

4. Directors' Reports

- Membership

Huw Bowles said that there were 266 members of SOSCIC at present, and little change in that number despite having encouraged new people to take part. In response to a question he explained that membership is on a one-vote-one-member basis and that members hold the ultimate power in their community company.

- Tenancy

Richard Hulme noted that a couple of the units would shortly become vacant or have leases that needed re-negotiation but that, at this time, he anticipated that full occupancy for the premises will be maintained. He also anticipated that the unit formerly occupied by Balcony House Cellars will be re-tenanted shortly.

The Co-op has a lease that runs until 2026 and he does not expect any discussion of this until much nearer the termination date.

- Property

Jonathan Gould was pleased to report that the external painting of the entire premises had been carried out to his satisfaction. He hoped that tenants and the village generally were happy with the manner in which the contractor had carried out their work.

He also reminded the meeting about the need for continuing routine maintenance. He was asked by a Member about the cleanliness of the gutters, about which he offered reassurance.

He confirmed that arrangements were being made for the entire roof structure to be examined professionally in the near future so as to establish whether any repairs might need to be carried out in the short/medium term and to obtain an updated estimate of the likely cost.

- Finance

Geoff Martin said that his key message for the last two years was one of resilience. He was pleased that his written report demonstrated the ability of SOSCIC to weather difficult times in addition to being able to be helpful to tenants.

5. John Knight

The chairman reported on the untimely passing earlier this year of John Knight. John had done so much in the managing the construction and refurbishment of the Old School. He identified suitable contractors and, once one was chosen, managed their works in an impeccable manner- ultimately resulting in the works being carried out on time and within budget.

He retained a careful eye on the premises until quite recently and was always conscious of the need to make sure that the regulations for the building were properly observed and that the premises were in good repair.

His contribution was invaluable and much appreciated by the Board. On his death the Old School bell was rung, for the first time since it's installation, in remembrance of him. A questioner suggested that some form of permanent commemoration might be appropriate and the chairman said he was happy to pursue this idea.

6. Tenth Year anniversary

The chairman was delighted to be noting the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Post Office and Store and to welcome Paul and Gail Mather who were our first occupiers. He reflected on the path from the idea of a community project to retain businesses and jobs in the village rather than allowing the old school premises to be yet another housing development. He is happy to see that the existence of the shop has been a lifeline for many during these recent pandemic times and that jobs and businesses have been retained. 'Where would we have been without them?', he said. A glass of wine is available for all attendees at the end of the meeting and a short toast will be given.

7. Questions

There were no further questions.

8. Chairman's closing remarks

Mike Johnson thanked all members for coming to the meeting and for their continuing encouragement and messages of support. He then closed the meeting.

Mike Johnson
Chairman