



Minutes of Members Meeting

Held at the British School Room, Cliff Road
At 7.30pm on Monday 12th November 2018

In attendance and apologies

In attendance were Mike Johnson, chairman, John Knight, Richard Hulme, Huw Bowles, Jonathan Gould, Geoff Martin and 25 members.

Apologies were received from Martin & Jane Hatcher, John Harris, Ann Lyall, Keith Maslin, Beryl Clampton, Paul Mather, Peter Sidebottom.

1. Minutes of the Members General Meeting held on 13th November 2017

These were taken as read and approved.

2. Review of the year

The chairman reported a year of continuing progress but also of evolution, especially with the departure of Paul and Gail and the new occupancy of Mid Counties Co-op. He thanked Paul and Gail and welcomed Mid Counties Co-op as a company with proven track record, owned by its members and promising to support our local community.

He said that SOSCIC has now paid 5 ½ years of accelerated rent (some £66,000) and signalled a change of approach, the board having decided to donate £5,000 to the Parish Council to fund projects for the benefit of the village and with the condition that the Parish Council advise SOSCIC how the money has been used.

This prompted a lively discussion in which it was suggested that SOSCIC itself should be deciding how the money is distributed and that the members should have a say. The chairman countered that SOSCIC has no desire to be involved in deciding which causes are most worthy and that the Parish Council was already set up to make such decisions for the whole community. He nevertheless agreed to keep these views in mind for the future.

Changes in the board are also taking place, Peter Sidebottom having stood down a year ago, Jonathan Gould joining the board as a new director and John Knight wishing to stand down at the end of this meeting.

The chairman thanked John Knight for his significant part in the entire building renovation process from selection of contractor through project management of the works through to ongoing maintenance of the premises for the tenants. His will be a hard act to follow

Mike Johnson introduced Jonathan Gould to the meeting and, having talked about him, gave Jonathan the opportunity to explain a little about himself and his professional suitability for the property role. Jonathan explained that his business, GWorks, provides nationwide facilities, building and maintenance services to the corporate, residential; and commercial property industry.

The chairman then invited each board member to present on his own areas of responsibility.

Huw Bowles said that there were 267 members of SOSIC at present, and little change in that number despite his having put a description of the project in each of the last two Cliffhangers encouraging new people to take part. He will continue to encourage new members and suggested that those members present could do likewise.

Richard Hulme noted that Pulse Software had renewed their lease for a further term (which includes the sub-letting to Compass Graphics), that Shear Class are considering an extension to their lease if certain condensation issues are resolved and, of course, the change of tenant in the PO and Stores. He welcomed the Mid Counties Co-op as a tenant having good strength and record and expected that they would add much to the commercial covenant of the premises.

John Knight reported that the building was in generally very sound shape and that this had been confirmed by a local contractor very recently. The car parking area is performing satisfactorily but is showing signs of wear with the amount of traffic that this, former playground, is now having to support. There is a significant issue with condensation in the Shear Class unit and considerable research has been done about this and recommendations will follow shortly. There are other difficulties related to the age of the building and the original methods of construction but, overall, the internal state of the building remains good. John was pleased to be handing his responsibilities to Jonathan Gould and those of the caretaker to Nic Fisher.

Mike Johnson talked about planning matters and in particular about signage at the PO Stores. He noted that all un-approved signs had now been removed and that the Co-op were in the process of applying for planning permission for permanent signs.

Geoff Martin, in presenting the finance report, reminded the meeting about the objectives for the old school project when it was first set up. In particular he reminded the meeting that the village was prepared to back the project and the drawing down of a loan by the Parish Council of £250,000 provided that it did not impose any further financial burden on the 'ratepayers'. Accordingly it has been SOSIC's objective to put the Parish Council in as good a position as possible whilst retaining funds for itself to try to insure against large unexpected maintenance costs and tenant 'voids'. This the company has been able to achieve to date and the giving of a donation to the Parish Council does signify a change in direction that he would approach cautiously at this time.

3. Mid Counties Coop

The chairman was pleased to introduce Lee Stapleton to the meeting. He is responsible for the Co-op facility and was at the meeting to explain and re-assure the community.

Lee Stapleton explained that the hand-over period for the store of two days only had given significant logistical problems that they were only now beginning to overcome. He talked about the 70 plus local suppliers, many of whom they are happy to retain but some of whom do not meet the standards that the Coop expects and whose products cannot therefore continue to be stocked. He expects that the village will be consulted soon about which products they particularly would like to be stocked and he said that the Co-op will

listen to those requests and were keen to be a valuable part of the community. He also said that the Coop has a strict re-cycling policy and that 98% of packaging is currently re-cycled. They have plans to upgrade the store, particularly with improved refrigeration equipment, but this will mean a store closure of perhaps two weeks for the re-fitting to take place. A 'pop up' shop will be in place during that period but when asked about the Post Office he said that this presented more difficult problems, especially because of the need for strict and effective security. Urged by the meeting, he agreed to see if some PO facilities could be made available during the store closure period.

A questioner asked if the store was to be open until 10pm and he said that this would only be the case if the village wanted it. His objective at this time was for the store to be open from 7am to 8pm daily.

Another questioner asked if it was the case that the Coop would extend their premises to the back. He dismissed this and said that they would remain within the existing building but make as good use of the space as possible.

A further question was whether the large delivery lorries could use the Old School car park. He explained that they has been advised that this was not possible but that disruption on the High Street would be minimised wherever possible.

4. Questions

There were a number of people noting the increasing difficulties of parking in the High Street. It was pointed out that the very success of Sherston as a village and commercial centre as well as a centre for walkers following publication of the Sherston Walks book were all contributing to the increasing need for parking. The chairman of the Parish Council who was present said that they had considered many ideas to alleviate the problem and that should anyone be able to help it would be appreciated.

SOSCIC was asked if the car park at the rear could be used for general parking. It was explained that a section of that car park belongs to the Village Hall and the remainder is allocated to the tenants of the premises. That together with the very restricted access leaves little scope for use of the car park for more general parking.

One questioner noted the outward opening window at Compass Design and said it could pose a risk to passing people. This will be further considered.

It was noted that the Donors' Board in the entrance porch to the PO Stores is sometimes obscured by adverts and signs. Neil Perry offered to keep an eye on this and to keep the Board clear.

In answer to a further question, Lee Stapleton said that the Co-op are happy to administer the Notice Board in the entrance porch and will continue to donate to charity the advertisers' fees (currently 50p per week).

5. Chairman's closing remarks

Mike Johnson thanked all members for coming to the meeting and for their continuing encouragement and support. He particularly wanted to acknowledge the contribution of John Knight to the success of the old school project and presented him, on behalf of the members, with a voucher for afternoon tea at Whatley Manor.

The meeting was then closed.

Mike Johnson
Chairman