

**Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of Barnwell Parish Council held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2018 at 7.30pm in Barnwell Village Hall**

**Present:** Cllr Heather Hanlon, Cllr David Brown, Cllr Graham Wise, Cllr Chris Soanes , Cllr Geoff Shacklock (Parish and District Councillor), Cllr Nick Bould, Cllr Phil Holden. Also in attendance approximately 60 members of the public (predominantly residents of Barnwell)

The meeting was opened by Heather Hanlon (HH) who outlined the reason for the meeting. The present owners of Barnwell shop and post office (Jay and Vicky) have decided they no longer wish to continue with the business in its present form and are looking at a number of options.(HH) mentioned that Ian Simmonds –Landlord of The Montagu Arms has offered part of his premises as a potential new location for a Community Shop.

- To rent out the area of the building currently occupied by the business to a third party J&V do not wish to move from the house and would charge rent for the area used and would also wish to sell off the existing stock as part of the agreement. It is not clear if they would be prepared to let the premises for uses other than a shop/post office.
- If J&V do not get a third party to take on the business as it stands they would be very keen to close the post office and just open the shop for a half day.
- J&V are keen to remain in the village.

At this point (HH) opened the meeting for general discussion.

Cllr.Phil Holden) stressed that The Parish Council were only facilitating the meeting and would not be involved in running a Community Shop.

Councillor Geoff Shacklock said “it is sad that the Post Office may close after a two and a half year successful fight to keep it open”.He had spoken to Tom Pursglove our local MP who had informed him that the J &V would need to give 6 months’ notice to The Post Office of their intention to close.

The current location of the shop/post office is considered by planning as a house with shop attached. It may not prove too difficult for J & V to apply to planning to convert the whole property back to residential.

Charlotte Croser had spoken about Barnwell Post Office/village shop with a friend who also happens to be the postmaster at Thrapston, he had expressed the following opinions:

- From his experience or the shop and post office to be successful it ideally needs someone living in and operate over 7 days as an extension of their lives to be viable
- J&V could give up Post Office and the Post Office would advertise for someone to take over
- He thought it would be difficult for a Community shop to get a post Office as would need a consistent manager to keep on top of business.
- He felt more likely that Post Office would assess to see if worthwhile to offer an outreach service-possible 2 x 2 hours per week.

Peter James spoke to the meeting about the Titchmarsh Community shop a project which he has been and still is closely involved. The shop has been trading for 12 years and serves a community of approx. 700 residents. The shop initially made a small profit but still requires

continuous fundraising to keep viable .A full time manager is employed for 35 hours per week and the shop has over 40 volunteers to make up the shortfall in hours. The shop is open 7days a week(only closing on Christmas Day) They have been offered much support from The Plunkett Foundation (a charitable Trust specialising in Community project support).The Titchmarsh shop pays a peppercorn rent to the Parish Council for the premises. Titchmarsh had been offered the opportunity to take on a Post Office operation within the business but had decided not to take up this option as they felt some responsibilities would be too onerous for volunteers. Titchmarsh had 200 villagers buy shares at £5.00 each and all have an entitlement to speak at the AGM. Members of the Management Committee are selected from Shareholders.

After general discussion it was decided that villagers interested in looking at potential project should leave name/contact number

Points to be considered:

- Set up a working group
- Look at alternative locations
- Carry out survey of village re needs/desires
- Something that would enhance community eg.coffee shop/free range/special items
- Look at other successful shops eg shop at Barrowden good example.

It was agreed a further meeting would be held in approximately 2 to 3 months when more information about the situation with the current shop may be available.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm