

Report to the Parish Council 2019-2022 STEEPLE ASHTON VILLAGE SHOP

A recent Village Shop survey included the comment “ The Village Shop sold the village to us as we had such a great welcome there “

The Parish Council has always been very supportive of the Shop and its position in the Steeple Ashton Community.

Shortly before the official lockdown, the Parish Council published a list of villagers willing to help in various ways. About 15-20 names emerged, willing to volunteer in the Village Shop many of whom had no previous connection with being a shop volunteer. The training of a few took place just before lockdown, but most ‘learned on the job’ from experienced volunteers with supervision from the Manageress -Julie Ludlow

The STASH Committee had its own dilemma as several members had to Shield so reducing the number that could provide physical help. Fortunately the remaining members volunteered to do shifts and provide help with running the shop.

The Manageress - Julie Ludlow played a major role in keeping the shop running and well stocked, with support and assistance from her Line manager and Treasurer Diana Hunter. A major task was to ensure that essential goods were available. She sourced new providers and discovered that several of our usual suppliers could provide other items that have been introduced into our range. Unfortunately, our regular baker was taken ill but she was able to source frozen uncooked bread from an existing supplier which enabled us to provide freshly baked bread until he was able to resume.

With fewer volunteers and health and safety restrictions, it was decided that it would be necessary to reduce the opening hours to ensure that the order, delivery and collection systems operated to appropriate safety standards for customers and volunteers. The Rota Organiser (Alison Wilson) was faced with developing a completely new system with different working hours and new patterns of working. This was done in such a way that all volunteers felt at ease with their contribution.

The loss of the Coffee shop was felt by many regular users but the Take Away service has proved very popular and we have fulfilled our pledge to stop the use of plastic and only use paper cups.

Financially we are grateful for a Government grant received via Wiltshire Council which has provided financial security throughout this difficult time.

This past year has continued to be one which has fluctuated with the National picture of the Covid pandemic

Throughout this time the shop has followed all the nationally issued guidelines to ensure that our customers are kept as safely as possible.

However the changing Covid picture has meant that we have gradually been able to return towards the more normal working that we have at present and The rhythm of the year has reflected this with a Xmas and Easter raffle being well supported by customers.

We would like to thank the Parish Council for its support throughout these difficult 2 years both in Spirit and in practicalities. The use of the Parish Office made a huge difference initially because it allowed more space to be available which meant volunteers could work but not be too close to each other. Ad hoc deliveries could be stored and for the 2020 and 2021 Xmas deliveries the Office provided invaluable extra storage space at such a busy time.

The business of managing the shop was much affected by the restrictions imposed on us and this meant that the AGM was delayed until July 2021 after which a new Chairperson Guy Bagnall was elected..

We have recently undertaken a customer survey which we hope will be helpful in our future development and we look forward to the next year being one of good trading and continued service to the Community.

