

## CHAIR REPORT

### Year to September 2023

On Thursday 14th March, 2024 we will be holding our 10th AGM and this is my 4th Chair's Report. It has been the most straightforward to write because the Shop and Café are in a really good place. The collective effort and input from all the stakeholders in the Shop and Café is so impressive. Our managers, the Management Committee, our numerous volunteers, our many loyal customers and you, the membership, all contribute to make this Shop and Café hum. Thank you all.

We have a group of volunteers who, week in week out, make the whole operation happen. On the Management Committee, we do not take this consistent contribution from so many people for granted. Indeed, we conducted a survey in August 2023 to check in with our volunteers - more of that later. But I am delighted to say that we continue to have terrific support from nearly a hundred volunteers and, in large part, it is because of them that we have a lively and prospering Community Shop and Café.

We have many loyal customers who are the lifeblood that make what we do worthwhile and contribute massively to the viability of the Shop and Café. We have a management team in Laura and Michele who have further established their roles and are working very well together. Their contribution is immeasurable.



<u>Table 1</u>	2021-22	2022-23	% Change
Turnover: Shop	£ 326,099	£ 334,138	2.5%
Turnover: Café & Events	£ 41,322	£ 54,241	31.3%
<b>Turnover Total</b>	<b>£ 367,421</b>	<b>£ 388,382</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
Stock Costs	-£ 258,138	-£ 268,555	-4.0%
Margin	£ 109,283	£ 119,827	9.6%
Margin %	29.7%	30.9%	3.7%
Staff Costs	-£ 45,354	-£ 49,827	-9.9%
Overheads	-£ 36,345	-£ 35,070	3.5%
<b>Cash generated from Operations</b>	<b>£ 27,584</b>	<b>£ 34,930</b>	<b>26.6%</b>

These ingredients, blended together like one of our sumptuous home baked cakes, mean that we can achieve our purpose: providing the services of a village store and small café, and a meeting place that helps to enrich the lives of our Ilmington Community. More than this, we can do it in a financially secure and successful manner (see Table 1). The results in 2022-23 have been the highest Sales and Cash Generated ever. Indeed, we have created surplus funds for the last three

years and the Management Committee now believe it is the right time to agree with the Members a new process for managing the use of these surplus funds appropriately - see below.



## Volunteer Survey

In August 2023, the Management Committee conducted a survey of our volunteers to gain insight generally and to understand how we might improve our volunteer experience. Three members of the Committee read the feedback and prepared a summary of findings in an anonymous format for the whole committee, Michele and Laura to review. There was lots of positive feedback which we are very grateful to receive. The areas that could be improved upon that were mentioned by more than one respondent were:



- ✿ Volunteers didn't always feel fully supported in the Shop or Café, and this was regardless of how long they had been volunteering.
- ✿ Volunteers wanted the experience to be more fun and sociable.
- ✿ Pay a cleaner to do basic cleaning once a week – some volunteers did not want cleaning to be part of their volunteering role.
- ✿ Develop more formal on-shift training sessions for new volunteers.
- ✿ Offer refresher training sessions to all volunteers.
- ✿ At the start of each shift Michele or Laura to welcome each volunteer and to discuss any changes to procedures and what is required on this shift.
- ✿ When volunteers end their shift they need to be asked if there was anything unclear or they needed support with.
- ✿ Care needs to be taken when volunteers are put on the Rota to make sure they are able to do what is required of them on that shift.
- ✿ No volunteer should be expected to carry out tasks without reasonable training. This pertains particularly to the Café.

There were other individual pieces of feedback that the Committee are considering as well.

In response to the volunteer feedback, the following changes have been or are planned to be introduced:

- ✿ From the start of February, we have been trialing a new shift Rota that, where the shift holders want it, has a third volunteer on shift. The hope is that this will give more support to volunteers as volunteers have time to support each other and Michele and Laura will not be so tied to helping in the Café and will have more time to allow them to support where needed. Also, it is hoped that there will be more time for having fun and being sociable on shift.





- ✱ We now have a paid cleaner who comes in on Monday afternoon to do a regular clean of the Shop and Café.
- ✱ When we get a new volunteer starter, we plan to have an experienced volunteer buddy on shift with them for the first few shifts so they can have greater guidance when doing the on shift training. If a buddy cannot be found on the shifts required, the managers will endeavor to fulfil this role.
- ✱ Michele has started to offer volunteer refresher training sessions.
- ✱ Sophie, Michele and Laura are developing the existing Volunteer Manual to be easier to find the help required.
- ✱ Feedback given about shift handovers, who to Rota when and having reasonable expectations of volunteers have been taken on board by the Committee and Michele and Larua are working to these suggestions where possible.

It goes without saying that we want to do everything we can to make volunteering as enjoyable for each of us as possible. Please keep talking to either the managers or the committee with your ideas on how we can achieve this goal.



Volunteer summer barbeque





## Surplus Funds Management Policy

Ilmington Community Shop did not create significant surplus funds in its first few years of trading – the day to day operation of the shop and café used all the available cash generated. In the last 3 financial years, the surplus cash generated has been significant to the extent that the cash bank balance is now consistently over £125,000. This raises the question as to what to do with the money. The Society Rules state that the Management Committee have a duty to make sure that sufficient funds are available to ensure the secure ongoing operation of the enterprise.

The bank balance is growing, and the Management Committee believe that it is the right time to introduce a *Surplus Funds Management Policy* that is supplementary to the *Ilmington Community Shop Limited Rules – April 2023*. This Policy is designed to give a definition for how much money should be retained in the business to future proof us against unforeseen circumstances (lightning strikes for example) or a downturn in income. Any funds available over and above this “rainy day” level is then thought of as surplus funds. The Policy gives the Management Committee some structure on how they should distribute the surplus funds to either our shareholders (if they request it) or our Community (the residents of the Parish of Ilmington).



Please find the proposed new policy called [ICS Surplus Funds Management Policy – March 2024](https://www.ilmingtonshop.co.uk/cooperative/) attached to the email communicating this Chair’s Report or on a separate link on the website page: <https://www.ilmingtonshop.co.uk/cooperative/>



We will present a high-level summary of the policy and take a vote on whether to adopt this new Policy at the AGM. If you have any questions about it in the meantime, please contact me at [committee@ilmingtonshop.co.uk](mailto:committee@ilmingtonshop.co.uk) or 07968 193539.

The picture above is of the Ilmington School floorball team who had their kit purchased by the Community Shop and the picture to the left is the new basket swing that we purchased in co-ordination with the Parish Council for Grace’s Playground.



## Projects in 2023 and 2024

In May, as part of the Big Help Out Monday Bank Holiday, a team of volunteers carried out a deep clean of the shop and another team built the Coronation Terrace (both pictured). It was a great fun community lead project that seemed to be enjoyed by everyone who was part of it. We also put in soundproofing panels on the café ceiling which has made it easier to hear in the café space when occupied by a large group.



A lot more preparation has gone into two major projects. We propose to make the car park easier to be used by wheelchair and pushchairs users by changing from the current loose stone surface to block paving. We also plan to put solar panels on the south elevation of the shop and café (the car park side). This is a green project that we believe is the right thing to do for the Community Shop. Also, our 3 year fixed electricity contact runs out in September and we would like to mitigate against a potentially big increase in energy costs. We hope to submit a planning application for both projects in March.



## Thank you

Before I sign off, just to let you know that we have introduced a new suggestions log (soon to be accompanied by a Suggestion Box) so we can collect and monitor all suggestions from everyone and make sure every suggestion is assessed properly. All suggestions should then either be acted upon and implemented or feedback can be given to the person making the suggestion as to why it has not been taken up. Please keep your suggestions coming in on how we can improve anything and everything.

Thank you for reading this year's Chair's Report and thanks for your contribution to the Community Shop & Café.

Take care everyone

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