

Freshford Community Shop

The meeting held on 4th April – and the commitments needed by 1st May

Dear Resident,

As you may know, we held a village meeting on 4th April to discuss the future of the Village Shop. The meeting was well and enthusiastically attended, and heard presentations from the project team and a specialist guest speaker.

We are writing to you now to summarise what the project team said, and to tell you about the commitment we need from the villages, if the campaign to save and relaunch the shop is to go ahead. For those with access to the Internet, you can soon have a look at our presentation on www.freshfordvillage.co.uk.

How do we think the shop can prosper in the future?

We reported to the meeting our research and calculations about the shop and its future prosperity. The main conclusion is that to prosper, the shop needs takings of some £10,000 per month.

Takings of £10,000 per month shouldn't be impossible. The shop in Faulkland achieves more than £15,000 per month now, and estimates that 65% of that comes from the village.

Freshford Shop needs more than the hope of turning over £10,000 per month. It needs reasonable certainty. That is the only way it will raise enough capital to pay for the purchase and re-launch.

After considering all the alternatives, the project team adopted the "Reverse Credit" model for the shop. This model, which works well elsewhere, entails households in the village pledging to spend a fixed amount in the shop on a regular basis, based on their own shopping needs. This regular commitment is made via a standing order to the shop, translating into credit that you can redeem against your normal shopping.

What level of commitment is needed?

The shop needs a substantial commitment from the village in order to reach its target. One way to achieve our target would be if at least half of all the households in Freshford, and one in ten of those in Limpley Stoke, spent £15 per week or more.

That seems like quite a lot – but perhaps you might like to think about your weekly grocery bill, and how much of it £15 would represent. If you bought all of your milk, bread, cereal and orange juice in the shop, would that add up to £15? What if you added a couple of bottles of wine from time to time? What about pet food, or washing powder, or stationery?

Will the shop be the same as it is today?

In a word, no. In exchange for sufficient commitment from residents, the shop will change in many ways:

- It will be refurbished to maximise space and allow for more goods to be displayed at once
- It will carry a wider range of goods, including local produce, locally sourced and prepared ready meals, deli goods, and goods specially requested by customers
- Although prices will not match Tesco, they will be good value and, of course, the shop is conveniently on your doorstep; especially as ...
- It will stay open longer, including after work and Sunday mornings
- Special orders and regular deliveries will be taken in response to the needs of its customers
- It will carry wines and some spirits, papers, and cigarettes
- It will continue to deliver to those unable to come to the shop.

What are the alternatives to buying the premises?

There is the possibility of a new village community centre being built on the Memorial Hall site some time in the future, incorporating a shop, café, surgery, and other activities. However, the long-term nature of those proposals means that unless the present shop is maintained and improved it is most likely that there would be a period when the village is without any shop. Experience of other villages across the country shows that once a village loses its last shop it is very difficult to start another. In the event that the new community centre is built the shop could be sold and the money invested in it.

In conclusion

Please think carefully about the commitment you would be prepared to make, and about how much you value the shop. The project team will be meeting in early May to assess your responses. If we have not reached our target, the campaign will be wound up, and it is overwhelmingly likely that the shop will then close and be converted into a private residence.

Please also think about other forms of help you may be willing to give. (PLEASE TURN OVER.)

COMMITMENT FORM (please complete)

“In order to show my commitment to the new shop, I will participate in the proposed Reverse Credit Scheme. If the plan to establish a Community Shop in Freshford goes ahead, I will set up a monthly Standing Order valid for two years in favour of the shop for expenditure of:

£43 (= £10 weekly) **£65** (= £15 weekly) **£87** (= £20 weekly) other **£** _____

Example of a £15 shopping basket

40 teabags - £0.84, Yeo Valley Whole Milk - £0.82; Yeo Valley Apricot yoghurt - £1.34; Orange Juice - £1.69; 1/2 lb butter - £0.85; Brie, small portion - £1.75; 8 pork & herb sausages - £2.69; bottle of Chardonnay – £4.99. **Total - £14.97**

I understand that the monthly sum will be credited to my shop account, which will then be debited by the amounts of my purchases on a day-to-day basis. Any credit balance will be carried forward each month.”

Safeguards

The shop association will release me from my commitment to the Scheme

- If I move away,
- If the Freshford Shop is terminated for any reason or
- If the proposed level of products and services is significantly reduced.”

Signature _____

OTHER FORMS OF HELP

Helping to purchase the shop. Grants and special loans may be available if match funding can be provided by the community. We are hoping therefore that SOME residents will be willing to help with capital contributions to the purchase. They would have a stake in the enterprise but there would be no return, and there could be no guarantee that the money could ever be withdrawn. Our question: Are you willing to be approached by members of the committee about such a contribution? Yes / No

Practical help. Please tick as appropriate below:

I would like to be considered for the Management Committee

I would like to help by working in the shop as a volunteer (we envisage five-hour shifts)

I would like to be considered for the shop manager / sub postmaster's post

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Please complete and return this to

Gitte Dawson
Hillside Farm
Church Lane
BATH BA2 7WD

If you have any questions, please call Gitte on 722 511 or email gitte.dawson@virgin.net, or call Hugh Delap on 722 524, email mhdalap@aol.com.