



**Minutes of the Public meeting held
on Thursday, 31st July 2014
at 7.00pm
in Bulphan Village Hall**

Present: Janet McCheyne (Secretary), Naomi Cooper (Treasurer), Cllr. Brian Little, Kuldeep Singh, Amrit Kaur & Aman Singh (Current Shop Owners), 91 residents.

1.	Janet welcomed everyone to the meeting and described the reason for the meeting which was to discuss “the future of the Village Shop”. Apologies had been received from David Gilbane, so Janet McCheyne chaired the meeting.
2.	Janet asked all to bow their head in tribute to Erwin Hannemann who passed away peacefully on Monday night 28th July 2014. Janet informed the meeting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulphan residents and Phil the postman attended Linda Fewtrell’s funeral yesterday; • the mobile library would be up and running by mid-August; and • where the fire exits were and the fire alarm “fire!”.
3.	Janet stated the rules of the meeting; stand, state your name and road, when the chairman indicates it’s your turn to speak. The meeting is about the future of the Shop, not about what has happened in the past. The microphone was used so all residents could hear.
4.	Janet gave a synopsis of the situation now; the Shop closed on 9 th July and since then retail interest has been shown, however, no decisions had been made yet. Owners are seeking buyers to run as a shop. The owners are not obliged to sell the shop, and if they do seek a buyer, they don’t have to ask a realistic price. This meeting is being held to discuss options as a village if no buyer is found. No change of use would be allowed by Thurrock Council if no shop were available within 400m (<i>Policy SH12 indicates that where there are no other shops within 400m of an application site serving a convenience shopping function, permission will only be granted for a change of use where the applicant can demonstrate there is no longer a need for a retail use of the premises (Jonathan Keen, Planning Officer, Thurrock Council – sent July 2014 in response to a question from Janet)</i>). A request had been submitted by the Forum to register the village shop as a “community asset” under the localism bill and a decision regarding this will be made by Thurrock Council by September. Janet explained the Plunkett support for Community Shops http://www.plunkett.co.uk/whatwedo/rcs/ruralcommunityshops.cfm . 47% of convenience stores over 20 years have closed, compared to 4% of Community Shops.
5.	John Everett, Church Lane; Q Would the owner be building on the plot? A The owner does intend to build on the plot.
6.	Judy Wright, Church Road; Q Will there be a Post Office? A Possibly
7.	Kuldeep Singh, shop owner; explained there is currently interest in the shop. However, he has divided the plot into two in order to build a house at the rear and would like residents to not object to his applications to build a property there.
8.	Vote: How many think there is a need for a shop? Unanimous, no abstainers, none against. Vote: How many people think they would support a Community Shop? Approximately half
9.	Janet outlined what a Community Shop is: managed by a Steering Group, invested in by the community with an equal vote, much like a cooperative - for the community, staffed mainly by volunteers.
10.	Terry Launder, Church Lane; Q Why is Mr Singh not actively marketing the shop? A There is interest already, people are coming forward.

11.	Cllr Brian Little, speaking as an individual and not as a member of the council, considered it is difficult to obtain change of use. Also that another building/residence would be very unlikely as there is thought to be not enough room nor in keeping with the village.
12.	Rob Vogel, Church Lane; Q I don't believe there is enough support judging by the amount of people at the meeting this evening. Also, I don't think local people use the shop much, so would it be a viable business proposition to a potential buyer? A There are 750 people living in the village, not everyone could make the meeting for various reasons, the potential buyers are experienced retailers who would make that judgement.
13.	Gill Miles, Stanley Road; Camelot (old site of shop) had terrible trouble gaining change of use.
14.	Carol Moring, Church Road: Why not keep the Shop and create affordable housing - such as flats above for younger people to be able to afford?
15.	Janet outlined options of other sites for a shop such as the Village Hall or any land offered by a resident. A Steering Group would investigate options.
16.	Vote; Do you feel a village survey would be beneficial to gather ideas? Yes
17.	Judy Wright, Church Road; Q Why has the shop failed in recent years? Would it also fail as a Community Shop? A A Community Shop is run in a completely different way. Donna Edwards, Stanley Road; Q Could you explain what a Community Shop is?
18.	Janet explained more about community shops: A community shop is a social enterprise, which reinvests its profits in the business or the community and does not function to maximise profits for its owners and shareholders. Its legal framework therefore reflects this social objective when it is registered as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS). It is based on a co-operative structure, meaning that members are the owners, buying shares in the business and having active involvement in its direction and day-to-day running. It works on a one member/one vote basis (rather than one share one vote). Whatever amount of money you put in, you have an equal voice. Over the last 20 years, 47% of convenience stores have closed but only 4% of community shops. There are currently 303 community shops in England, Scotland and Wales. Most employ a part-time manager and a range of volunteers. It is over seen by the Steering Group.
19.	Donna Edwards, Stanley Road; Q Where would a Community Shop be located? A Location is Step 8 on the list of things a Steering Group would do. Jeff Vickers, Church Road; Q A shop at the village hall would cause problems for people living opposite A All sites will have their problems – it's the Steering Group's job to investigate location and sites could be rejected on noise/nuisance. John Everett, Church Lane; Q How much would the Mr Singh like for the building? Would the sale of shares be enough to cover the cost? Historically the shop has served the Village excellently and with an operating Post Office, is a viable business.
20.	Kuldip Singh; I can wait for one, two years, however long it takes. Someone is interested in buying now. I have partitioned the back part separate from the shop. I want to build on the back part.
21.	Sandra Thompson, Victoria Road; Q If Mr Singh wants to sell then why not give us the chance to buy it? The village could buy the front/shop site, and Mr Singh could pursue his application for the development in the back garden. Keith Blackmore, Church Lane; Q What support does Mr Singh want from the Village? Does he want villagers to back a planning application on the rear section? Kuldip Singh; I had planning granted for 600sq ft extension on the back in 1989 I want to sell the shop freehold. Jim Mortimer, Church Lane; Summarised - we want a village shop and someone to run it; the owners want a return on their investment. There are change of use and planning permission stumbling blocks.

	A If a retailer wants to buy the shop, let them, a Community Shop is the last resort in order to keep a shop in the Village.
22.	Kuldip Singh; we will not sell the shop unless permission is granted for a house on the rear plot.
23.	Donna Edwards, Stanley Road; Q Cllr Little, would the council grant planning permission for the back plot based on village support? Cllr Little explained council procedure: Planning applications are decided by a Planning Officer or Planning Committee. There are rules and regulations that need to be adhered to which include looking at objections and support as part of that process. Thurrock rules state that change of use would only be allowed if there was another shop within 400m or it could be demonstrated that there is no demand for a shop. The whole case would be weighed up by the Officer/Committee, adhering to legislation, even if the whole village were behind it.
24.	Carol Moring, Church Road; Q What would happen if the Shop was not re-opened? What are the chances of getting permission again from the 1989 lapsed permission? Cllr Little; A Each application is looked at separately and under the rules of today without looking back. My personal opinion – no chance.
25.	John Everett, Church Lane; Summarised – it seems there is a spirit for a Community Shop and there needs to be the ability within the Steering Group to be able to run a Shop. It all comes down to money.
26.	Naomi Cooper, Forum Treasurer: Q What is the next step? A The Forum could do a village survey. Once results are analysed a Steering Group would need to be appointed - this would need another Public Meeting.
27.	Vote: Should we take the first steps and do a village-wide survey? Unanimous Yes
28.	Gill Miles, Stanley Road; Q In the meantime, we have no shop, what will those do who can't access other shops? Judy Wright, Church Road; Mobile shop? Market stall? John Berry, Church Lane; ask Tesco? A The Forum will investigate options for a quick-fix shop, bearing in mind the outcome of the recent interest by retailers in buying the shop.
29.	Katy Fitzgerald, Church Road; I am willing to volunteer to knock on doors to get shopping for people who need help. I think a shopping buddy system would work better than a centralised system for this.
30.	Eric Lawday, Church Road; Q Maybe the Council will help out on rates with the Community Shop? It's worth asking. A That is something for the Steering Group to consider if we adopt the Community Shop option.
31.	Diane Perkins, Church Road: Consider options for a port-a-cabin rather than bricks and mortar.
32.	Chair's Summary The Forum will create a survey for the whole village which will determine if there is enough support for a Community Shop – this will be done in the next few weeks. The Forum will assist in creating a Buddy Shopping System where possible. The Forum will investigate options for some kind of stop-gap shop/service.
33.	Iris Aedy, Church Lane, thanked Janet McCheyne and the Forum for their hard work on this situation.