

BAYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 3rd March 2015 at 8.00pm in Clows Top Village Hall

Present – Cllr Blount (Chairman), Cllr Salisbury (Vice Chairman), Cllr Clarke, Cllr Carver, Cllr Taylor, Cllr Miles and Clerk to Bayton Parish Council.

Also present were approximately 100 people from the area surrounding the village of Clows Top including MHDC and WFDC District Cllrs, County Cllr Ken Pollock, representatives from Rock, Mamble and Lindridge Parish Councils. Also present were the Etheridge family (who own and run the Shop/PO) and Gema Bate (Reporter from Kidderminster Shuttle).

1. Apologies – Cllr Rochelle and 10 households within the Parish of Bayton sent apologies.

2. To discuss possible closure of Clows Top Shop/PO.

The Chairman of Bayton Parish Council welcomed everyone and explained that the owners of the shop had advised it would be closing. The object of the meeting was to see if there was enough interest to look into running a Community Shop.

Mr Etheridge (shop owner) stated the family had put £75,000.00 into the business and building to do repairs/improvements and were not taking enough money to make the business viable. Takings need to be £6000.00 per week to be viable. He stated how many local pubs and shops had closed within the surrounding area due to lack of local support (this would be over a period of 30 years). Supermarkets were now delivering to houses. Mr Etheridge said he is willing for his books to be looked at by anyone. The owner of the Clows Top butchers shop stated he had been in Clows Top for 14 years and is well supported, the previous owner of the butchers shop was also present and stated he had traded for 17 years and he had been well supported. It was suggested the lack of custom at Shop/PO was due to lack of stock. At this point Mr Etheridge stated he did not wish to stay due to comments being made. He and his family left meeting at 8.05pm.

Chairman stated we needed to move forward and look at options open to the community if it was felt a shop would be supported.

Clerks Report – There is a lot of support and funding to help set up Community Shops. Parish Councils can own property but cannot trade so a group would need to be set up to run the business. Shares could be sold to generate local money, one share one vote, it would be a not for profit company. Any profit would be put back into business or spent in local community, be up to shareholders to decide. Websites to look at for information are Plunkett Foundation (I have a large email from them with loads of good information), Community Rights (new funding being given in April 2015).

A group of at least 6 people needed to look into options and report back to Parish.

Other villages

Yarpole started their shop in the pub carpark in a demountable building, Council granted temporary planning permission for 2 years. PO supported the project and put in a counter. The shop eventually moved into the Church after grant funding of £250,000.00 was obtained, locally £37,750.00 was raised. Shop is managed by 8 volunteers who are elected each year, they employ a part time Manager and a Post Master for 8 hours a week, have just taken on a part time stock manager for 8 hours a week, 30 volunteers work in the shop along with others who do deliveries etc., 320 people have spent £10.00 to obtain non-redeemable shares in the shop.

Feckenham were without a shop for 20 years. Their shop opened in 2009 and was the first in Worcestershire, they now have 80 volunteers.

A web search of Community Shops will bring lots of examples up.

Options for Clows Top

Work with present owners to buy or lease present shop, may not be cheapest option.

Work with Clows Top Village Hall Committee to use some of their building as a shop **or**

Put a demountable on land by Clows Top Hall as temporary shop to see if it was viable.

Concerns raised

PO – it was agreed this would be a great loss and the options of keeping it should be looked into. We would need to have a post person, could have a reduced service if located at another building. It was stated the PO do not like to close branches.

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County Cllr stated there were only 3 shops left in the area he represents, the PO provided reduced services at some of them. Whitborne village also runs a Community Shop.

Other issues

European Funding and grant aid is available for small businesses and the present owner may benefit from looking into this or a Community Shop would be classed as a small business trust and could benefit from grants.

One resident had spoken to owners about leasing building to Community but it was felt they were not interested.

Family who owned Shop/PO 11 years ago felt it had been run down but the potential for a thriving business was there.

Londis – this is a franchise and would be unlikely to take shop on.

Colliers Shop – it was felt this shop did take trade from Clows Top. The planning permission for their building is only temporary and needs to be reviewed after 5 years.

Clows Top Shop has served the community for 100 years and it would be sad to lose it.

A vote was taken, all present use the shop and would support it more if it stocked what they wanted.

People present were asked to write to Planning Department at Malvern Hills District Council objecting to any change of use of shop into a dwelling.

Planning permission is not needed to shut shop but the PO needs 3 months' notice of closure.

Chairman asked if anyone was willing to volunteer to look into the project.

Michelle Woodhouse, Jill Priest, Anabel Lees-Barnes, Bonnie White, Simon Hill, Roger Dyer and Steven Woodison all offered. Clerk to pass on contact details and relevant information. Other residents offered their expertise if needed when the project is more advanced. Clerk to retain their contact details.

3. The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and showing their support. The volunteers were thanked for offering to take the project forward. The meeting closed at 8.53pm.

Chairman.....Date

