



Boughton Malherbe Parish Council

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Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council on Monday 11th October 2021, 7.30pm held in the village hall

Present: Cllrs R Galton (Chair); R Turner; B Adams; N. Eastwood; G Kennaird
Clerk Mr Chris Hume

44 members of public

Cllr Galton opened meeting at 7.30pm

1. **Anybody filming or recording this meeting to declare it.** - none
2. **Apologies** – none
3. **Declarations:**
 - Any lobbying** – Cllr Turner regarding the shop
 - Any interest in items on the Agenda** – Cllr Eastwood regarding his commercial interest in the shop
 - Any changes to the register of pecuniary interests** - none declared
4. **Village Shop – to discuss the implications of the closure of the village shop and any role the Parish Council might play in exploring options for a replacement**
 - (i) Public Session – the attached note captures the main points raised by the public. After comments from the public, there was an informal vote in the room, in which the public present overwhelmingly voted in favour of action to continue the provision of a shop/post office in the village through community action. The following members of the public volunteered to form a committee to take forward plans to establish a new shop, post office provision, or both: Mark Oliver, Mair Chantler, Dominic Goodwin, Jacquelin Thompson, John Cheney, Janis Carter
 - (ii) Potential role of the Parish Council – the Clerk outlined the legal position of the council in any planning for a replacement shop. It can facilitate the establishment of a community-based initiative and can make a grant to a community-based enterprise within the constraints of s. 137.
 - (iii) An amended motion proposed by Cllr Galton and seconded by Cllr. Kennaird was agreed as follows: the council will prepare and deliver a questionnaire to all households to seek views on the future of the post office/shop based on the Plunkett Foundation model agreed by correspondence. There will be a two-week turnaround
5. **Further information**

The meeting closed at 9.18pm

COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (with responses from the Chairman where they were made to the meeting)

1. What do the Post Office say, are they aware? ***We are attempting make contact with the area manager. Outreach facilities may be an option, linked to an existing post office***
2. There is an Eco shop in the church. It could be developed as a service to the community. Church would be happy to help
3. Is closure of the shop a foregone conclusion. Is there a possibility of using any of the space? What other locations are being looked at? ***4/5 possible sites are being explored, the former garage is not an option***
4. Won't the shop require planning permission to convert from shop to residential. ***We need to look into this***
5. If the shop is not commercially viable then we have to accept it
6. We must thank Rob and Nick for their service to the community
7. Can we arrange a mobile post office for a while as a breathing space whilst other solutions are considered? ***Awaiting information from the post office***
8. From November unused commercial premises do not need planning permission for conversion to residential
9. Any of the sites being looked at will need parking
10. How about a volunteer driver scheme as an interim solution?
11. Can we find a way to spend more of the Quinn money on setting up a community shop? ***The council has no legal powers other than an annual grant at a maximum of approximately £6000***
12. Can the parish council borrow money to buy premises? ***No***
13. Ken Sweet indicated that it is likely that we will get permission for a container on the village green from the landowner
14. How about using the village hall? John Thompson said he thought the village hall was not suitable for a shop due to the level of bookings and lack of security
15. Can we persuade the post office to extend the deadline? ***Awaiting contact from the Post Office***
16. Place questionnaire in the village shop
17. Can a councillor take the lead in obtaining a mobile van, Need someone to drive it quickly
18. Can the council confirm the funding it will make available now? ***The first step is to form a community committee to decide what option to pursue, if this leads to the formation of a community company it can request a grant from the Parish Council***
19. Headcorn post office may not be able to help as it is currently consulting on their future.
20. Containers are a cheap and easy solution
21. Has anyone approached the council saying they are interested in running a shop commercially ***No***
22. Look at creating something different than before. What would we like to have? Café, library? Be more ambitious
23. A container on the village green might be divisive – what about people living nearby?
24. Have we contacted our MP for advice? ***No, we do not think they can help***
25. What does the post office currently offer? ***Most of the full range of postal services plus banking***
26. Morrisons will provide home delivery to vulnerable people for £2.50 charge
27. Chris Wheal has identified possible sources of grant funding