

WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL



NOTES FOLLOWING AN INFORMAL PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL PROVISION OF POST OFFICE AND SHOP FACILITIES FOR WETHERSFIELD

The Meeting was held on Thursday, 17th May 2018 at 7.30pm in Wethersfield Village Hall and was attended by approximately 120 residents.

Questionnaires were handed out to gauge interest in a community shop project and to find out the various skill sets people in the community were willing to offer.

The Chairman of Wethersfield Parish Council, Barry Vincent, welcomed everybody to the meeting. He confirmed that the current shop will be closing on 30th May and explained that the Parish Council has applied to make the Post Office/shop building an ACV (Asset of Community Value), but that a decision has not yet been made by Braintree District Council. He briefly explained the ACV process and stressed that even if the building was made an ACV it would **not** stop it from closing at the end of the month. He also made it clear that the Parish Council was not in a position to fund any proposed project and that the purpose of the meeting was to look forward, not to make recriminations on what has already taken place.

He explained he has been in contact with the Plunkett Foundation, a registered charity which offers help and guidance to communities to take control of challenges and overcome them through co-operation.

The main points which came out of the meeting:

- Several possible venues for a Post Office/community shop were mentioned, these included:
 - (i) The current Post Office/shop site, Silver Street
 - (ii) The former Little Legs Nursery, Silver Street
 - (iii) A mobile container to be situated on the DFPFA playing field or car park
 - (iv) The former garage site
 - (v) The Old Fire Station, Silver Street

- A suggestion was made that the small hall of the village hall could be used. It was thought this would not be a suitable venue as there would not be enough passing trade to make it financially viable and access would also be a problem.
- The successful community shop at Toppesfield raised £156,000, mostly from the community, and took 16 months to be brought to fruition.
- The shop at Stebbing sold shares for £50 each to raise the necessary capital.
- Community shops have a high success rate at 96%
- It was felt that the best possible outcome would be for a “pop-up” Post Office with limited opening hours, which could be in the community shop. It was thought unlikely that the Post Office would open a permanent facility and it would only happen if a solid business case was put to them.
- The Parish Council was asked to consider raising funds through a loan and increasing the precept over a number of years to repay the loan.
- A group of volunteers came forward and agreed to form a committee to explore the potential for a community shop further. The village hall will be made available free of charge to host meetings.

From the number of residents who attended the meeting, and from the general feedback, there appeared to be strong initial support from the community.

18th May 2018

