

Intro

Derek Mellor, now in his 9th year as the County Cllr for Tadley, Baughurst Ashford Hill, Headley, Bishops Green + villages

a/ Difference between Councillors....an MP's area represents about 74000 constituents; a County Councillor has approximately 14000 and the local Borough Councillors – depends very much on Geography etc have 3 borough councillors in each ward of around 5000. Town/Parish Councils membership is in line with precept and varies with the size.

b/ County Council has responsibility for about 85% of the local authority expenditure in the County area- and some 90% of that is on Social Care, Education i.e Schools and Childrens services, Highways and Waste Management. The 11 Districts and Boroughs share the rest of the expenditure items- Community and Leisure, Planning and Kerbside Collection dominate there; HCC turnover is c.£2.9Billion.

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Report for the year 24/25.

Politically very hectic; the last election left the Conservatives with a County Council make up of some 55 Conservatives, 16 Lib Dems, 3 Labour, and the other 3 being "independent/green/ community". However, such are the responsibilities of the County most of the work is very cross party. Well all this is about to change and that probably explains why I am here for my 9th year as opposed to having retired (supposedly last month) as was planned and announced some months ago....until the new Govt. advised in January that there would be a **Devolution White Paper and Local Govt Review** being gradually introduced in 2025/6/7 with a Mayoral Authority effective in May 26 ; elections would therefore be postponed for 12 months.

Suffice to say, Hampshire was approved as one of the 6 Priority County Councils to move forward on the creation of a Unitary system; at present all the Priority Councils have not yet been able to agree on the geographical combination of Boroughs/Districts in line with Govt advice re size/mix. I hasten to add that the incentive to the proposal is financial. For the County, only one third of our income comes from Council Tax; the balance is mainly in the form of centrally controlled Grants or statutory expenditure over which locally we have often to bid for, and which to a certain degree, notwithstanding statutory and legal obligations, it is these that will be devolved. Powers would be extended in many areas- so they say. Following the Devolution Paper will be a Local Govt Review- Fewer Councillors with effectively elimination of one tier of the Authorities and indeed overheads should create a financial benefit. At present talks are ongoing with the 13 District Councils and Unitaries in the County over respective

boundaries/combinations and other issues in preparation for submissions to the Govt. There are political considerations too- recently the Govt turned down a request from Hampshire for a one off 10% Council Tax increase above the legal max of 4.99% (including Social Care supplement) yet approved one for an alleged "deprived" city of 15% to help them financially; citing too that 'Hampshire was doing OK', was not in 'trouble until 26/7!'. So, before I outline our achievements at a difficult time let me enlighten you on our financial plight. County Councils must stick to the budget/settlement and cannot plan to go beyond that as opposed to the many Councils that do overspend- e.g Birmingham, Woking, Eastleigh- etc on either ignoring the statute, poor local investment or working on the basis that HMG will bail them out. HCC expects to be in a position of not being able to make a 26/7 budget by c£180M- budget would be c£2.9Bn+ for that year. According to the Councils network, about 65% of Councils will be in a similar problem. A summary of the financial position is at the end of this report. It must be seen too that HCC had Council Tax freezes for 5 years (2012 to 2017) and has also in the last decade saved over £700M in expenditure while Central Govt has seen large increases in staffing/ lack of productivity. Suffice to say, owing to their more limited responsibilities, many of the Boroughs have surpluses.

So, let's look at the performance of the County. The two categories that are by far the most challenging and those where we are doing well relatively are **Social Care and Childrens Services**. In Childrens Services we continue to be the only County that meets an overall Outstanding performance through Ofsted. We continue to build schools- 12 more currently on plan but I understand that some criteria such as the falling birth rate since 2021 is starting to have an effect on the PAN, the increase from c5000 in 2020 to next year's est 20000 qualifying for SEN /EHP support in Hampshire alone and our focus on some integration of SEN into mainstream schooling as well as building special schools for the more seriously impaired/disadvantaged is now leading to a different focus. We are now expecting the demand for Home to School Transport to reach £100M by 2027 because of outdated legislation. Locally, well we have an Academy in Ashford Hill again getting some 20 pupils to 'join ' next September; we have seen the Hurst improve its establishment in the past 3 years such that they are effectively full .In Tadley , Burnham Copse has a recent all round Good performance by Ofsted; indeed we do expect 90+% of the Hampshire Schools to achieve this. Bishopswood has expanded its Federation with an additional school in Silchester. Schools' performance is good and appealing to those residing outside their catchment area and outside the County boundaries. The only blot on the performance is at The Clere School in Burghclere- not in my Ward- but a student from my patch do attend this school which earned a 'Requires Improvement' from Ofsted and is now under a new Leadership Team. The schools have had to live within their budgets and all have done so. Again, County wise, not just schools, but children's homes- we have c1400 children in such, many from outside the County; education of 'refugees' from HKG, Afghanistan

and elsewhere, notably Ukraine, to look after and the expense is high. Fostering is a big item in Hampshire with continual growth. The Children are in good hands and getting a good start. Regrettably to the future, some non-mandatory expenditure must be shelved but recent examples such as the closure of a special secure school facility in Hampshire has been reviewed following a massive campaign involving the local parents/Councillors and Staff and alternative measures found. Incidentally there are only 14 such schools in the country and the Dfe did not want to lose this one and the alternative will be hopefully funded by them. The Govt imposed VAT tax on Private Schools may have an impact- to date not significant but we will know come September just how much as the State schools will have to accommodate.

People expect and receive more in Hampshire. The continued Household Support Fund made available for schools to identify children in real need is rarely used in my ward; indeed, we have an average figure of just 13% on Free School meals at present. **Home to School Transport**- much of it private taxis with safeguarding escorts for SEN etc – has rocketed since COVID from £30M per annum to a forecast £100M+ in '27 for a variety of reasons. Our coach (sub) contractors have incurred a big hike in costs/wages since COVID which HCC finds hard to meet...but does so. Currently we are working on a scheme for Community Transport and Home to School Transport to “cooperate” to get some Economies of Scale benefit. SEN though has become a major National ‘item’ and needs a review.

Again, on **Social Care**, every year the figure of those reaching the age of 85 increases by 1000+ in Hampshire, many requiring assistance. Suffice to say every year another 300 people find that their savings/pension is insufficient to cover their contribution to housing- believe it or not this alone costs us £18M pa. Minimum wage levels have increased substantially- to cut this down, Hampshire has created its own recruitment arm to eliminate agency fees and step up the establishment. More Technology, be it reminders to take your medicine or even robotics to assist a single person lifting the patients etc continue to keep us ahead of the game. Again, apart from the fact that we have had to cut down on grants to the likes of Age Concern and Citizens Advice, etc, valuable charities, no real cuts in service standards; statutory responsibilities will always be met although the little extras such as day care centres may have to be addressed if HMG does not increase their contribution.

HCC's Hampshire Pension Fund Board is perhaps one of the most successful Boards with a current surplus of around £2Bn on its £10Bn portfolio/turnover. The current fright (my words) for the future is that the incumbent government has not only pooled some of our resources with other such Boards through Access, but it is also now trying to get the Boards to invest in some of their projects, be they Green Energy etc. Moving on may I briefly cover **Public Transport** which is the County Council's domain; of course, in the likes of the villages in the N West corner of the County, demand is negative- even the

option to pursue again Community Transport not sought. In Tadley and Baughurst, the No2 service is virtually a flagship service- high frequency, on schedule, well routed options with low energy – soon to be all electric-equipment catering for the commuter, the hospital worker or outpatient as well as local travel. Hampshire was one of the few Counties prior to 2020 to have consistently increased its passenger uplifts; sadly, working from home and other factors stagnated that growth. We have now locally in the east of my ward, a 3 to 4 service frequency per hour; the only negative comment has been the problem of certain categories of traveller not being allowed free travel before 0930- f. Matter under discussion. New shelters with more online information and light controlled bus lay bys to ensure priority for the buses are now being phased in. Likewise, we now have 80000 Blue Badges- of course very few driven by the badge holder- seeking more parking bays and facilities. Which brings me on to the big worry in the East of my ward, **parking**- with incessant demand for parking outside housing on a public road; subsequent demand for access over green areas where there are no drives garages, much as a result of the EV explosion. Govt decision on expenditure to ease the situation is awaited. The West of my ward all has sufficient off-street parking; Tadley and to a lesser extent Baughurst as a result of the housing boom of the 60'/70' with no garage or off-street parking provision is the problem. No real problem in Ashford Hill/Headley in respect of residences but with MUGA and other activities at a draft stage(?), then there could be. Any new housing of course is now built with fixed cars per household ratios. As the new Govt keeps saying, there is little deprivation in my patch what with 2 cars per household on many roads so there will be a parking problem. I have localised what is a national problem requiring a (expected soon) Government strategy.

Finally, as it is still the item that dominates my email and of course the opportunity to highlight the 36-item online reporting system we have introduced over the past two years, **Highways**. I will happily elaborate on the water issues that continually to hold up progress and usually – as this seems to be of more interest than potholes. Mailbag and the online reporting have been heavier on 'Roadworks' including last minute diversions caused by such. Our Streetworks people who try to coordinate such have a difficult job as the utility companies- e.g. BT/Virgin and other cabling companies– seemingly can do what they want when they are backed by legislation that was brought in to give them a priority under the cover of Broadband; or 'Emergency' .Development On Highways,- the Govt has now decided to dip into the coffers and make additional grants to the Tier One Councils with a targeted improvement on Highway maintenance. Rough figure- Hampshire Highways undertook about a 30% increase in road surface repair in past year was resurfaced/patched etc- in the last five months of the year, some 22000sq M ; we caught up on Engineer reporting/inspection and the A roads are generally very satisfactory; notably the A 339 and the A340.(on the A340,since January '25 up to early May, there have been no less than 60 applications mainly by cabling companies and water sub-contractors- HCC Highways with approximately 20 for access to the road).

Some strict rules are going to be enforced so that these applicants use proper traffic management systems- more programmed lights, more peak restrictions to reduce inconvenience to road users. The B3051, notably at its junction with the C111 is a separate matter and now subject of a decision at the very top after 7 years of being messed about by developers, utility companies, various sub-contractors; similarly in Baughurst we have the ongoing issue of Brimpton Road by the Hurst/Hazel Green where interim repairs have been undertaken in the knowledge that the sub surface water issues need fixing as priority. Happily, a full resurface has now made this road very acceptable. Ongoing issues with the water authority have prevented real progress. Of course, we are Rural in that we have 5200 miles of highway in the County and the focus- even including the extra money all Councils have been given by successive governments over the past two years because of public demand has helped. Again, use by the public of the online reporting system has helped; suffice to say, pothole 'claims' have halved. Still rural roads will need more attention.

Environment/Countryside

Sadly, there have been some cutbacks in the funding streams, but local volunteering has overcome some of the problems; Right of Way cooperation is one area that needs more HCC input and support for the volunteering groups in the Ward is imperative. the priority. For Hampshire, Climate Change is still vital and the focus here is very much on flood defences and, very relevant in the County, farming and local green activity.

Waste/Recycling.

Last month HCC signed off on an order for £50M for a huge additional Material Recycling Facility (MRF) to be built in Eastleigh near to Southampton Airport- these MRF's are where much of the waste deposited at Wade Road goes; indeed it has taken time to locate an additional site for such; not many residents are too keen on having such a recycling facility in their area. Of course, next year will see the introduction of further kerbside facilities- currently the domain of the local borough; Wade Road's efficiency continues to bring favourable comment re access. 7 years ago I fought to retain access to the Newbury tip; 6 years ago, such action was saved by a ridiculous sum of money and 5 years ago it was stopped primarily because West Berks could not get a similar system going with Reading; also by the fact that HCC could not concur to the amount of money being sought by WB. Nor could we find a suitable local arrangement along the A339. Most happily accept the current arrangement and with some 25 tips serving 1.8 M people, most within 12 miles of a tip, then the strategy appears to be working. We do need to recycle more, and the above changes are focussed on that.

And Finally, **Finance** and HCC's position. My opening page highlighted the plight, but I should confirm HCC is one of the financially strongest Councils despite the constant comment by some in opposition that we are 'bankrupt'. This year we are dipping into Reserves of c £700M (on top of the £700M HCC has saved in the past decade); our Council Tax is the second lowest County (and that by just £5 pa!) and we have an active Capital expenditure programme around £800M on new infrastructure. Our budget ensures all minimum service levels/statutory expenditure are met and of course we have had to take certain steps in staff reduction (not in operational areas) to meet the budgets. The external audit was sound but delayed because all the big 4 audit companies were seeking a different approach to the audit (now resolved) and the final definition of Value for Money was given by the external Auditors on February 28. Many councils are not in that position.

HCC has always worked two plus years ahead with its financial planning/commitments. As Chair of Audit for the County Council I am satisfied we are in good shape! Of course, the outcome of the Local Govt Review in September will have an impact on this.

In terms of the 'Other appointments' that go with a County Councillor position, in the last three years (until May) I have Chaired Governance of the Hampshire Isle of Wight Fire Authority; been a member of the Southampton Airport Consultative Cttee and internally spent time on the Hampshire 2050 Select cttee which scrutinises all the changes/strategy.

Much of this report has focussed on the current Devolution Paper which will in the Autumn move on to election of a Regional Mayor and then under the Local Govt Review, a new structure in Hampshire.

Annual General Meeting 12th April 2025

Chair's Report (State of the Union)

Community Speed Watch Reboot

Last year we bought a new “state of the art” ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) camera. I must admit there was some hesitation as it was quite expensive and we didn't want it to be underutilised. Training has taken place but it has yet to be used. Some of the reason for this relate to resource availability but there was a good deal of initial enthusiasm and we must get on and employ it.

Multi Use Games Area

A subject I cannot avoid!

This was started with good intentions to provide an additional facility and the initial survey indications were a majority in favour so the process of applying for planning permission commenced.

This has taken much longer than anticipated and resulted in not meeting a deadline to secure a grant opportunity. At the same time the extent of resistance has not been reflective of the initial support and has even been divisive which has been upsetting to all.

Currently we are awaiting the Planning committee to deliver its verdict but if permission is granted I shall need convincing persuasion if built it would be used.

Tree Management

This I believe has ended as a positive item but unfortunately without any intention to do so also became contentious. The PC has a duty of care to ensure the areas under its trust management are safe and certainly at Headley it was patently obvious there were many unsafe dead trees. Two that had fallen but were inadequately supported we immediately had removed before commissioning a professional arborist's survey and recommendations.

However in the meantime the contractor who took out the initial two trees did his own survey and identified trees he wished to comment upon with biodegradable paint. This led to concern amongst residents some sort of tree cull was going to take place, possibly in part to make room for the MUGA.

When the tree survey was published and matters explained people seemed reassured and the subsequent tree removal that did take place was accepted as justified. I accept that the PC didn't do as good a job as it might have done in better communicating matters but it was salutary to observe that people's initial reaction was one of mistrust which quite possibly stems from the MUGA phenomena. Hopefully relationships have been somewhat restored and we can learn and move forward.

Headley Pavilion

Still regularly used by Kingsclere Men's Football Club but not otherwise. We have improved access and installed external lighting but would welcome any ideas to further improve take up.

On the subject of recreation grounds we now have Kingsclere under 9s using part of the pitch on a Saturday for training purposes which is good.

S106 Funding

This money is obtained as part of development conditions.

In truth we are not utilising this enough, in part due to project initiatives not forthcoming although we have formed a AH sub-committee to try and come up with ideas there.

We have however bought some more benches and a picnic table which seem to have been well received

Any further suggestions on improvements to our villages would be welcomed.

Children's Play Areas

The wooden fencing at Headley had deteriorated badly and we have replaced it and are looking at installing items suitable for children with additional needs in the form of finger mazes, comms boards etc.

Cheam School

I am pleased to say our relationship with Cheam School continues well and they are keen to contribute to the community. We met recently and they have undertaken to helping with tasks such as cutting the grass around the community shop, tidying up at the village hall and helping with football pitch maintenance.

Also they have undertaken to purchase a new noticeboard for Headley that we propose to mount opposite the shop but will be available to residents to post notices also.

At the same time AH village Hall Committee have undertaken to replace their noticeboard at the village Hall since we pointed out the plastic "glass" had become opaque. We are very grateful to both organisations for their support.

AH Cricket Club

The CC leases the use of the land from the PC and the lease is due for renewal this September.

The rent has only ever been a "peppercorn" one and in truth the PC realised it didn't properly understand the commercial basis of this. As a result we invited the CC to a meeting which was very informative and gave us both an appreciation of their contribution to the community and their struggles with finance.

This included that monies they had put aside for pitch covers had needed to be diverted to paying for operation costs. As a result not only have the PC agreed to continue the peppercorn rent but have donated £2500 plus largely through the facilitation of our clerk have obtained a matching amount from Cllr Mellor, Cllr Bound and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. This will pay for the covers that will carry the new PC logo.

New Parish Council Logo

Having mentioned it we now have a logo – not really new as previously didn't have one! Councillors voted on a choice provided by our website management company and the one chosen is a simplistic design for easy reproduction but features a red kite soaring over the countryside which was felt attractive and appropriate – I hope you will all like it.

Finally

As usual I would like to thank fellow councillors for their support remembering it's an unpaid task often involving sacrifice of their time. I would also like to thank our clerk who carries out a great deal of the donkey work!

Finally I would like to thank the residents of the parish for what I hope will be their support and ideas for the future.

Thank you.

Borough Annual Report – Cllr Kerry Morrow

Achievements this year:

Tadley Pool

New moveable pool floor. Solar panels installed and energy management system installed. Following on from completing the health suite, we have continued to invest in Tadley Pool as well as successfully applying for government funding. The most satisfying improvements is the improved working relationship with the pool operative and their improved communications with residents. A highlight being a coffee morning that was provided whilst the pool was out of action.

24 Swan Street

The Kingsclere Performing Arts and Youth Centre has signed a 25 year lease to manage 24 Swan Street and keep the social and economic value that is provided there. Now that the lease has been signed it is an exciting time full of possibilities. This was a massive victory to keep the bottom end of Swan Street thriving. Small businesses will continue to be supported and top-class teaching of performing arts will remain local to us.

Sports and Wellbeing Day

Last June saw a pilot sports and wellbeing day that brought sports teams and voluntary organisations together to showcase what we have to offer in Basingstoke and Deane. The day was a great success, with a steady footfall of residents and a legacy of collaborative working. This year we have allocated a budget to the event so that we do not rely solely on volunteers and goodwill and will also have more entertainment. The event “Limitless” will target teenagers who currently are underrepresented in what we have to offer.

Sports, leisure and culture portfolio:

The goal for the future of sport is to improve the residents’ attitudes towards what Basingstoke and Deane has to offer in both sporting facilities and sporting opportunities in the Borough. We will do this by rebuilding the relationship with the Basingstoke Voluntary Sport Council and utilising both Basingstoke Voluntary Action and our ‘Love Basingstoke’ platform to better showcase our sporting achievements.

We are also doing some work on inclusivity and disability thanks to Cllr Jacky Tustain, who has shared her passion and knowledge.

We will continue to support the arts with the goal of making Basingstoke and Deane a well-known incubator for artists and performers. Basingstoke already has a strong underbelly of culture and plenty of potential to grow. This year, we welcomed the Arts Council to the Willis Museum and they were very impressed with the enthusiasm of our local groups and the support the Borough provides. Basingstoke Festival became an award winner and our events programme was busier than ever. Let’s Glow, Basingstoke’s light trail, drew record-breaking crowds, leaving the Top of Town packed with visitors.

A major project is on track to replace our beloved Aquadrome. Unfortunately, although on the surface it is still fully functional and attracting good footfall, the reality is it’s already on borrowed time. The new leisure facility will be built adjacent to the Bowls club and is a much-needed investment in the Leisure Park. The new leisure facility will

The Future

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation will continue to bubble away and distract, but we as Borough Councillors will continue to do the best for the Borough.

My ward colleagues and I will continue to deal with residents issues and do our best to support the Town and Parish Council. Please do share your issues and keep an eye out on what is happening on www.basingstoke.gov.uk

A couple of goals I have this year is to put forward a proposal for a referral app that can help support the wellbeing of our residents. Please ask me about this if you are interested. I am also looking into the youth provision we currently have. Tadley Town Council is starting up a youth council and with 24 Swan Street providing a youth hub, hopefully there will be opportunities to recruit youth workers. I will also continue to support the ongoing projects in Headley and Ashford Hill.

Best Wishes

Cllr Kerry Morrow

Presentation Letter to the Parish Council

The importance of having recreational sport for the local community. Ashford Hill Cricket Club

Our club has been an integral part of the Ashford Hill community, fostering camaraderie, sportsmanship, and social engagement for over a century.

Historical Background

Records show that village cricket in Ashford Hill was first established in 1877 when matches were played on the grounds of Mr. Appleby at The Ship Inn. This humble beginning laid the foundation for what has become a cornerstone of our village's sporting and social life. In the years that followed, the club transitioned to the recreation ground, where we have remained ever since, with the exception of interruptions during and after the two world wars.

In 1963, there was a resounding call from the village community to reform the cricket club. Responding to this call, we re-established the club and, after a period of playing away games, returned to our current location in 1965. This was made possible thanks to the diligent efforts of the parish council in acquiring an additional piece of land adjacent to the recreation ground. This expansion has been pivotal in accommodating our growing membership and facilitating our activities. In 1989, we added a purpose built pavilion.

Community Engagement

Ashford Hill Cricket Club prides itself on being a strong social connector within the local community and beyond. Our teams have long been composed of fathers, brothers, and sons, creating a family atmosphere that extends beyond the cricket pitch. The contributions of wives, daughters, and girlfriends in supporting the teams and making teas have been invaluable, reinforcing the sense of community and mutual support.

As cricket continues to evolve, we recognize the importance of inclusivity and the potential there could be to establish a ladies' and girls' team. This initiative aligns with the broader movement towards gender equality in sports and provides an opportunity for more members of our community to participate actively in this beloved pastime.

Future Plans

Looking ahead, we are eager to enhance our engagement with the local community. In addition to cricket matches, and our Friday evening coaching for juniors we are planning to organize quiz nights, BBQs, and other social events. These activities aim to bring people together, fostering a sense of unity and shared enjoyment. We believe that by diversifying our offerings, we can cater to a wider audience and strengthen the bonds within our community.

In conclusion, Ashford Hill Cricket Club has a rich history and a promising future. We are committed to maintaining our role as a central hub for social and sporting activities in Ashford Hill. We deeply appreciate the support of the parish council and local businesses through their sponsorship in our endeavours and look forward to collaborating on initiatives that will benefit the entire community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Barry Monger

Secretary Ashford Hill Cricket Club



Headley with Ashford Hill



Community Shop Association Ltd

Headley with Ashford Hill Community Shop

The Old Baptist Church

Thornford Road

Headley, Thatcham

RG19 8AD

Tel: 01635 268849

www.headleyshop.org.uk

FSA Registration Number: 30473 R

VAT Registration Number: 915 2180 47

Dear Community Member

A Happy New Year to you all. However, the Community Shop has a less happy message.

The Shop and Post Office in Headley was taken over by the community in 2008. A group of residents felt that the Parish needed this facility and that it would be a loss if it ceased trading. Some of the original steering group members are still involved. Currently it is supported by about 30 volunteers and six part time staff, with four sharing two full time roles. Previously it was run as a business providing its owner with a living.

The Shop is operated on a non-profit making basis and this is written into its constitution. Each year, we endeavour to break-even but we still need to generate a gross profit, from selling goods and services, in order to meet the expenses of running the business including staff salaries, utilities, insurances, repairs and other operating expenses. In recent years, we have succeeded in this ambition but our losses from year to year have increased in line with increased expenses. Whilst we have sufficient cash to continue trading in the short term, at some point, we will be unable to continue. We cannot foresee exactly when that time will come because there are so many variables including increased operating expenses. Another disturbing variable is the continuing fall in customer numbers.

The annual footfall figures for the Shop (not including the Post Office) are set out below:-

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
33,171	32,396	28,899	25,996	24,226	24,010	22,559

The fact is that the Shop is attracting fewer visits as time passes. Whilst the pandemic caused a considerable drop in footfall, it was accompanied by increased sales, a trend that has not continued.

Our Post Office provides a valuable service to local residents and businesses, is easily accessible and customers rarely wait long to be served. Based on the Post Office's own criteria, our Post Office is within the top 5% of all POs in the region in terms of performance and service delivery.

Whilst our Post Office is doing well and footfall is increasing, the simple fact is that it cannot survive on its own and is subsidised by the Shop. The Shop only benefits from the footfall to the Post Office when its customers also use the Shop.

The straightforward message of this letter is:-

1. The Shop makes a loss annually and this cannot continue indefinitely.
2. The Shop needs to increase its turnover to generate more gross profit to meet its ongoing expenses ie sell more goods and services. If our products are not right or you have suggestions, then please tell us.
3. The Post Office cannot survive on its own. If you value the Post Office then support the Shop; it is as simple as that.

The Management Committee

Carol-anne Rhatigan Graham Stewart Peter Hemmings

Caroline Hellings Javaid Iqbal Jonathan Morshead

Headley with Ashford Hill Community Shop Association Report 2024

The Headley Shop is now in its seventeenth year being run by the community, operating from the Old Baptist Chapel in Thornford Road for the last 14 years. Its purpose has always been, and remains, to provide a service to the Community on a not for profit basis. We continue to be supported by Greenham Trust as our landlords and we are lucky to have such an attractive environment from which to operate.

The trading environment, particularly for independent shops, remains challenging. There is plenty of local competition from other stores in Kingsclere as well as supermarkets/discounters in Newbury and an abundant number of deliveries from all types of retailers. In addition, in the last few years we have been through a period of higher inflation resulting in the cost of practically all the things we sell increasing. Inevitably these cost increases have been passed to our customers. Our expenses of running the business have also increased, particularly salaries and insurances. The simple fact is that we need to sell more to generate greater gross profit to cover these increased expenses.

However, we remain positive and here are some of the things happening in the past year which support this outlook:-

1 We are well supported by six staff who, under the supervision of the Management Committee, essentially run the Shop and Post Office on weekdays during the opening hours of 6am to 5.30 pm. Kerina and Sandra share the job of the Shop supervisor and Debs and Helen run the Post Office. In addition, Debbie undertakes the early morning duties of opening the Shop until the supervisor takes over and Peter delivers the papers on our significant delivery round which covers about 30 miles. We are grateful to them for their dedication and hard work.

2 It would be impossible to continue without the support of about 30 volunteers who undertake a variety of roles whether the Shop supervisory duties and deliveries at the weekends, making our popular rolls every weekday morning, standing in for our Shop employees when on holiday or helping the supervisors with the regular shop duties. But we could do with more help. Some of our volunteers are filling several slots a month at the weekends whereas the intention is that they should only be called on once.

3 We like to think that the Shop is at the heart of the community and it is certainly a place where our customers interact and come together. The Shop is recognised as a Local Valued Facility in the Ashford Hill with Headley Neighbourhood Plan "made" by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in October 2022. Village lunches take place in the Community Room on the second Friday of each month and these were started over 10 years ago. This is a well established community event and in the last few years, it has been joined by the cafe on Tuesday afternoon. Both these events are run by volunteers and are well supported by the community.

4 In July last year, 16 solar voltaic panels were installed on the open ground at the rear of the Shop. 90% of the cost was funded by The UK Government through its Rural Prosperity Fund administered locally by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council. The remainder of the cost

was raised with a grant from Greenham Trust who matched funds raised by ourselves through a quiz evening. We anticipate that the panels will generate between a quarter and a third of our power requirements and we are looking forward to the Summer months when the panels will be most productive.

To finish on a less positive note, our footfall in 2024 was 6% lower than in the previous year and over 30% lower than in 2019. During the pandemic years, customers understandably made fewer shopping trips but tended to spend more on each occasion. The reduction in footfall has been compensated to an extent by an increase in the average spend per visit but overall our takings are moving in a downwards direction and not keeping pace with inflation.

Put plainly, if the community does not support the shop by using it then inevitably it will close. It is just a matter of time before our cash reserves run out. Whilst we do not aim to make a profit, we do aim to break even and annual losses cannot be borne indefinitely. We issued a letter to the community in the February edition of the Village magazine asking Post Office customers to also support the Shop. Regrettably, there has been no discernible change in behaviour but we live in hope!