

### **Coddenham Community Shop - A Year in Covid.**

As for very many other people and organisations, the last 12 months for Coddenham Community Shop, will be a year to remember.

With the initial lockdowns in March 2020 came the loss of over half of our volunteers to shielding, we closed to in-shop customers and went over to offering telephone orders and delivery. With a suspected volunteer contact with Covid 19 we also had to close the shop completely for a couple of weeks over Easter. In May, we re-opened with reduced hours for the shop and post office and to offer a café takeaway only service. With telephone orders and free delivery throughout Coddenham and the villages beyond and with superb and enthusiastic support from our manager, volunteers and committee, we managed to provide much needed support particularly for vulnerable and shielding customers throughout the area.

During the period, we applied for and received Covid related grant funding which was a very welcome help to the cash flow. We were also very pleased to receive significant recognition of our efforts from both our customers and from across the community including the “More than a shop” award from the Queen’s award for voluntary service, the BBC “Making a difference” award and significant press coverage including in the national “I” newspaper on supporting the elderly. Most recently we received the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk Award in recognition of Outstanding Service to the Community in Suffolk during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This is all down to the outstanding efforts of our “compact” team – volunteers, manager and committee.

We have also continued listening to our customers and have worked hard to improve the range, choice and quality of what we offer for sale in the shop – for instance choosing new suppliers for vegetables and fresh meat and many more locally sourced products. To utilise our “spare” café space, we expanded our “gift shop” and sourced a range of products from local craftspeople which both generated welcome profit for us, particularly over the Christmas period and provided a very welcome sales outlet for local artisans - and we plan to continue and expand on this success.

In February, we had the first general meeting of Coddenham Community Shop Ltd. This was held virtually via Zoom, but despite this, was well attended and well received by shareholders. During the meeting we reviewed our solid business performance, looked at plans for the future and in terms of governance, unanimously re-elected the committee. Overall, we received very good feedback on and support for all our activities!

Looking forward, we will continue to develop our products and services for the community to focus even more on growing our range and profitability with smarter procurement and improved supplier deals. We look forward to soon being able to fully re-open the Coddenham Coffee Stop – an important hub for the community and key profitable part of the business for us.

However, all this rests on the solid foundation of having our manager and incredibly supportive and committed volunteers, who have literally weathered the storm for us over the last year and without whom, we would not have come out the other side as strongly as we have.

Thank you all – and roll on next year!

Rod Stanley-Bell, Chair, Coddenham Community Shop Ltd.