

Council October 2022

Item 8 Groombridge Post Office

At its 26th September meeting the Finance Committee considered a request from Withyham Parish Community Interest Company for additional subsidy from WPC towards Groombridge Post office and shop.

An extract from the Minutes from Finance Committee, including their recommendation, are below. Council is asked to agree this recommendation.

“Cllr Watkins reported that When the Post Office/ Shop opened last October it was agreed that WPC would provide an annual subsidy. This was initially £15,500 for 2021/22 but reduced to £13,000 for 2022/23 based on the then projections of the likely shop revenue and costs.

The Shop revenue return is currently insufficient to cover the running costs together with the revenue from Post Office Counters and the current WPC subsidy. In addition, the hours currently allocated in the Post Office and Shop Manager’s contract are insufficient, the salary attached needs to be more competitive, and cost of living increases are impacting.

The implications were set out in the Cashflow analysis circulated to Committee members prior to the meeting, which showed that an additional subsidy request of £6,000 in 2022/23 was required, bringing the total subsidy to £19,000. The additional £6,000 would be taken from the General Reserves. The WPC cashflow forecast (item 14.4) demonstrated that, with an additional £6,000 taken from General Reserves, they would still be within the recommendation of 30-50 % of the Precept.

The CIC would be making an application to the Prince’s Countryside Fund for a grant to help the cost of running the shop. As the outcome of this application is not known they cannot rely on this to help at the present time.

The Committee were also told that the CIC would be looking at whether volunteers could help more with tasks.

Members of the Committee noted that the CIC needs to devise a long-term business model which tackles the above issues and considers how to encourage post office customers to use the shop more. They agreed that delegation to volunteers would be helpful where they have the skills and time, but that retention of the existing Shop Manager was imperative.

002365 RESOLVED to recommend to Council that an additional £6,000 subsidy is granted to Withyham Parish Community Interest Company for the Post office and Shop in 2022/23.”