

Dear All

Well, it's been an eventful year! The start of 2020 saw us making all sorts of plans to increase our takeaway business and to attract more visitors and then everything changed.

Expanding our take-away service has been put on the backburner, and we have had to close our garden seating area for now, but the shop has stayed open throughout. Since the beginning of the first lockdown, we have tried to adapt what we do to provide safe shopping and associated services for our community whether it is through deliveries, 'order and collect', personal shopping slots during the run-up to Christmas, or by providing a Covid-secure environment for those still happy to venture out into the shop.



A number of our volunteers have paused their involvement until they are fully vaccinated. We look forward to their return when they feel able. But alongside that, we have been fortunate to welcome many new volunteers, some of whom are new to the village. Of course even in these times, amongst its many benefits, volunteering affords an opportunity to get to know other village residents (although whether we will all recognise each other without masks remains to be seen). We've also taken on two new members of permanent staff this year: Jackie Hassall, who is our week-end supervisor, and Rachel Booth who is cleaning the shop for us each evening.

Many of you will have seen a copy of the brochure that we produced for the winter / Christmas season. This was a tremendous success generating a deluge of orders for Xmas hampers and a lot of interest in new products on sale including the facemasks being produced in the village by one of our volunteers with profits being donated to the British Heart Foundation.

Financially, we have been very fortunate throughout the pandemic. Our sales have been significantly higher than they were in 2019-20, and the emergency Covid funding which we received from Craven District Council and the Two Ridings Community Foundation covered the costs of employing temporary assistants while many of our usual team of volunteers were isolating. In addition to that, we have now received the full £10,000 of the match trading grant from the Community Business Trade-Up Programme. This has been spent on landscaping and equipping the garden for cyclists and other visitors, publicity which has included sponsoring the Village Newsletter in August last year and producing our Christmas brochure, extending the counter and installing attractive wood panelling in the shop windows, buying a couple of new freezers.

During 2021 we will continue to look at improving our services to ensure we meet the needs of our customers and the community as a whole. The website will be improved over the next few months, and for more traditional communication methods, we are putting a noticeboard outside of the shop with information about new products and offers. We will also continue to collect donations to local foodbanks; something we started to do in the run up to Christmas.

On a more formal note, the Management Committee decided at its January meeting to update our Model Rules in line with the latest version developed by the Plunkett Foundation and approved by the FCA. A document setting out the key changes between the two versions is attached to this newsletter and both versions of the Rules are available on our website. If you have any questions to do with this, or if you wish to lodge an objection then please contact our Secretary Diane Elphinstone before 31 March. (cosec.cvs@gmail.com).

Finally, before signing off I'd like to take the opportunity to praise and thank the contribution and efforts of all of our staff and volunteers. Working in the shop during the pandemic has at times been difficult and stressful, but despite that everyone has met the many challenges we have faced with a smile.

**Harriet Naden**

**Chair of the Management Committee**

info@claphamvillagestore.co.uk / 015242 51524