**THE SHOP REPORT FOR THE 2021 AGM OF NORTH MARSTON PARISH COUNCIL**

It has been, to say the least, a worrying and tedious year for Committee, staff, volunteers and customers due to the Covid-19 pandemic and regulations.

We are very proud of our staff and customers for their patience and kindness during the difficult times. People accepted and abided by the arrangements we had to put in place in order to keep everyone safe. We hope to be able to return to in-shop service if the area is Covid-free by the 17th May. In order to protect the health of customers and staff inside our tiny shop we aim to be cautious at first and shall have some regulations in place. These are:

* Two individual customers in The Shop at a time to ensure safe distancing
* Use of hand sanitizer on entry
* Face coverings are still a legal requirement so will need to be worn in The Shop.
* Hours will be extended from 08.00 to 5.00 depending on the availability of extra volunteer staff. Hopefully weekend openings will follow in the ensuing weeks but again dependent on availability of staff.

The Shop experienced some problems in accessing items of stock during the pandemic but most problems now seem to be resolving. Most local suppliers managed to supply their delicious products and we hope to encourage some new ones to start.

With everyone locked down and many people having home deliveries from the major supermarkets The Shop began to lose money due to loss of customers. This was worrying and made the Committee look for support from charitable sources.

The Shop was lucky to get financial support during the difficult financial time when customers were in short supply. £4000 was donated by Heart of Bucks and £1500 from Buckinghamshire Covid Fund. This money helped to keep the shop alive. The Shop needs all the customer support it can get to help it to get back on its feet and moving forward. The slogan ‘Use it or lose it’ has come to mind many times this year.

The shop usually gives donations such as raffle prizes or other donations to village organisations but due to its financial situation has had to make only small donations for the time being.

The Shop usually supports the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme students to carry out their volunteering element but due to Covid restrictions has been unable to participate. We will look into re-starting as soon as it is safe to do so. The same is true for support of work experience students from Furzedown School.

It has been a worrying and frustrating year for everyone and particularly for businesses. We look forward to being able to welcome everyone into The Shop to select their own items and we wish everyone a Happy, Healthy, COVID-FREE year in our beautiful village and all the lovely surrounding villages.

Alison Finnemore

Chairman, The North Marston Community Shop Association Ltd.