

Hello everyone,

## #1

For those who don't know me, I'm Sam and I'm your shop manager. I just want to tell you a bit about what we've achieved so far, and a few of our plans for the future...

## #2

As you're all aware, the community purchased the shop and Post Office back in March and from the off, we had a lovely new coffee machine and a smart electronic till, a stock of wine, and we'd launched delivery and collection services by Evri.

## #3

Since then, we've expanded our hot food offering and launched a range of delicious home-made cakes; we have a selection of locally-made jams and marmalades, and after a few legal hiccups we've bought back the wooden figures; we have a slightly bigger, albeit still limited range of everyday frozen food; we've now got kindling ready for the cold weather, and last week we took our first delivery of this season's potatoes.

You'll have noticed a few changes in the displays, which have created more space for us all to move around the shop. These internal changes are very much work in progress and will evolve with sales monitoring, stock changes and so on, over time. We've made the front steps safer; we've welcomed new members of staff as well as a small bank of volunteers.

## #4

And now we're looking to Christmas with an expanding range of gifts, food and drink hampers, wreaths, cakes, treats and goodies, and of course the shop's traditional damson gin. And while I'm talking about Christmas, don't forget the Post Office sells a range of gift cards.

And there are more changes to come. I've been looking at local demographics, the neighbourhood plan and the results of the survey carried out in 2023, to identify further opportunities for improvement.

## #5

We're seen by many as the heart of the community, and when the proposed alterations are complete, we'll have a lovely terrace where members of the community can sit with a coffee and cake, one of our lovingly hand-made sandwiches or hot food, perhaps even a glass of wine or two while catching up with friends, neighbours and fellow villagers.

To make more space on the terrace, we're planning to bring the newspapers inside onto a smaller stand while exploring ways of repurposing the old one.

I plan to replace the old freezer so we can further expand our range of everyday frozen food, most notably with a selection of good quality, ready meals. The temperamental fridge will be replaced with a bigger, more energy-efficient model, which will enable us to stock more fresh and chilled produce including bottled soft drinks, some nice soups, cheeses and salads, and perhaps mini bottles of wine for those who want a tippie without feeling compelled to finish a whole big bottle!

## #6

In the meantime, Rebecca and I are also looking at launching bacon butties by pre-order, for the winter.

There were many suggestions in the survey results, including a refill station, longer opening hours and a greater range of vegan and gluten free options. These haven't gone unnoticed and I will look into the viability of these in due course.

Now, I realise that we're not an outlet for a weekly grocery shop. We obviously don't have the buying power of the supermarkets, but we do seek to fulfil the needs of many different markets and we try to remain as competitive as possible. In the Post Office, our customers are online shoppers, marketplace sellers and those doing their everyday banking. In the shop, it's most prominently local villagers popping in for essentials and treats, and there are so many people who work at local businesses as well as tradespeople (either working in the village or purposely make a detour to come to us) to buy their lunch, drinks and snacks.

## #7

We have around 1,200 different products on our system. Of our top 10 best-sellers (and this is a recurring daily/weekly pattern), 4 are hot food options, there are 2 newspapers, Stella Artois sneaks in there, and that leaves the staples of eggs and milk as well as Danish pastries. Our gorgeous chicken & bacon sandwich ranks 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> on the list,

sitting just above cans of Coke and Red Bull, and the Cette Nuit rose is our best-selling wine.

## #8

We're busier than ever. The shop sells around 275 items every day, and our till system records around 650 transactions every week. In the Post Office, we serve around 500 customers and handle around 380 items of mail every week, including 130 or so Evri parcels. As I said in the Village News, it still surprises me just how many people don't know that we're an agent for most High Street banks so they can pay money in, withdraw cash and bank cheques – yes, cheques are still a thing!

## #9

This graph shows the weekly performance of the Post Office. The top blue line shows the amount of transactions we've processed on a weekly basis this year, compared to previous years in other colours. As you can see, we're doing well! Notice the peak in December - we're all looking forward to that! In all seriousness, this is fantastic and we do love being busy.

But we could be even busier. As you can see by the top selling products, our lunch trade is our lifeblood. It's great to see our regular, local customers and I send a massive thank you to them for their continued support, but there are still many people from this and the surrounding villages who – even if they use the Post Office – don't buy anything from the shop.

## #10

So, I want to encourage everyone to please support us – even if it's just buying a packet of biscuits or a slice of cake, a pack of toilet roll or birthday cards (which are lovely by the way and very competitively priced), it'll make a difference. Our committee members provide valuable support to me and the staff, and if you'd like to volunteer some time to work in the shop every now and then, we'd be very grateful.

I'm looking at suppliers and our costs so that we can provide even more of the products our customers want at the best possible prices. In fact, I'm planning to put out another survey to really drill down into specifics, and I will always welcome your feedback, requests and suggestions.

Our current committee has done a fantastic job in securing the purchase. Now, we're in this together, and together we can continue to build on the success of our thriving

village shop and Post Office. It is the heart of the community and that's how we all want it to stay – for now and long into the future.

Just one last thing - a thank you to Millie Miles for the loan of the glasses, and I hope you like the wine – it is available to purchase from the shop!