



# Toppesfield Parish Council



## Minutes of Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2018 At The Village Hall, Toppesfield at 7.30pm

Apologies were received from Councillor Paul Thompson.

All other Councillors, Clerk to the Parish Council and 6 members of the public were in attendance.

### **18/126. Address from Trisha Roberts, Postmistress.**

Trisha Roberts reported that the Post Office will close this Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> July at 1pm.

If a Post Office were to be set up again it would no longer be classed as a Community Post Office but a local one and payment would be on a commission basis only. At present this is between £50 and £70 per month so not a viable option as a business.

Trisha resigned back in March 2017 and along with Keely Clark kept the Post Office going. A job share was needed to work with Keely – only one applicant applied and it took the Post Office a year to decide they were not suitable for the post. Post Office Limited then asked if the applicant could reapply but was turned down again.

Trisha confirmed she has spoken with the Post Office to get an outreach service for the village of 2 sessions per week for 2 hours each time. They offered one session a week for 3 hours. No date as yet has been arranged for this to commence.

Trisha mentioned that the volunteers in the shop are primarily over 60 years old, there is a lack of suitable housing for younger people in the parish and property needs to be available for older residents to downsize in planning in general. Also, that communication is an issue in the village.

Trisha finished off by stating a vision is needed what we want the village to be. The meeting tonight is too late and if something is not done it could be too late for the village.

Councillor Andrew Bull expressed thanks to Trisha and Keely for the work in the Post Office and for keeping it going all this time.

### **18/127. Comments from the community.**

It was mentioned that Trisha and Keeley kept the Post Office going for 6 ½ years.

The outreach service is damage limitation.

The shop may consider a cheque cashing service – this will be put to the shop committee.

The shop will carry a larger range of stamps. A card machine for purchases will not be used in the shop due to the fact errors can be made.

Vulnerable people in the village need access to collect pensions, benefits and electric top-ups – it was suggested a service be put on 3 times a week to take people to Yeldham Post Office to allow for these services to be used.

The shop could not take in parcels for collection due to liability issues – the main parcel day is a Monday.

It was suggested the Doctors Car service could be used to take people to Yeldham Post Office – however more volunteer drivers would be required (there were people in attendance offering help in driving people to Yeldham to use the Post Office).

Trisha confirmed she is looking into a pay point service on behalf of the shop.

Communication in the village is appalling – not everyone reads Facebook, the noticeboards and the parish website, especially the older generation so the newsletter is an important communication.

There are a small group of people in the village who do a lot for and in the village – this needs to be addressed as people need to do more to keep the village going.

People need to support the shop – a wider group of volunteers is required - the shop is the eyes and ears of the village. The parish council need to work closer with the shop.

Could a noticeboard be placed at the end of the barn? The village hall noticeboard is in the wrong place – Councillor Bull to speak to the village hall committee re their noticeboard.

It was suggested that a focus group be set up between the shop, Toppesfield Community Pub, Pumphouse brewery and the school to look at joint problems and seek a way forward.

A suggestion was made for a village meeting and a communication to say you benefit from the facilities of the village but you need to take responsibility to help maintain them for now and the future. This could also include an open day for the shop so people can see what volunteers do.

There could be a bigger problem than just the Post Office closing as it could have a knock-on effect to the shop trade.

Housing needs to be addressed in the village – additional housing will be need in the village.

### **18/128. What action can the Parish Council take?**

Councillor Dave Dyson asked if there was any advantage in the Parish Council writing to the Post Office – Trisha Roberts stated they could do as there is nothing to lose but the Post Office are not good at writing back.

The Parish Council jointly with the shop will write to householders regarding what has happened to the Post Office and the need for volunteers and using the shop. This could also go out to neighbouring villages and through social media and the school/preschool.

Actions are:

A bigger core of people is needed to help out in the village

Better communication is required

Resurrect the newsletter

Possibility of using the Doctor Car Service to allow people access to Yeldham Post Office

Councillor Chinery to speak to Hedingham School (Head of Media Studies) re putting together communications.

### **18/129. Close**

The meeting was closed at 8.50pm