

# Houghton & Wyton Community Shop Membership Strategy 2025

## 1. Background:

Having a membership strategy is a requirement of our Rules.

## 2. Aim:

2.1 In April 2017, people became members so that we could raise the capital to acquire Our Shop creating a sense of belonging to the largest membership organisation in the village. This 'investment membership' was crucial at the start and without it the whole venture would not have got off the ground.

2.2 In the earlier years, we delivered an impressive growth in sales and improved profitability. Although the last few years, as with all business, have been extremely challenging we have continued to deliver profit year on year despite reduced footfall, a decrease in sales and increased costs. Over the years we have used the proceeds from trading and reserves to invest in the fabric, fixtures and fittings of Our Shop and support community organisations. Our strong performance to date has also allowed us to build our reserve cover to establish a financially sound base.

2.3 As we mature as a business the role of membership has now shifted fundamentally away from raising funds for the initial purchase towards a 'building membership' model.

2.4 Growth in membership is important to us because:

- it demonstrates a depth of support for Our Shop and commitment to the community benefit it is charged with delivering, which is particularly important for grant givers;
- support through membership strengthens and energises the village's sense of community and builds a willingness for Members to volunteer, including joining the Management Committee;
- new members will always be needed to replace those who need/want to leave the scheme, move away or sadly pass away.

2.5 Put simply our aim now is to **retain and attract** as many members interested in Our Shop as possible from across the parish.

## 3. Membership Strategy:

The biggest demonstration of why membership matters will come from residents recognising the vital role that Our Shop plays in maintaining a sense of community, enhancing their way of life as well as offering the benefit of a local convenience shop.

### A) Retaining existing members;

3.1 Regular and transparent communication with the membership, both listening and responding to feedback is fundamental and essential if we are to retain a vibrant and engaged membership. Our aim is to continue to:

- regularly communicate with members to keep them informed
- make minutes of the Management Committee Meetings available to Members
- to pay a small annual interest payment to shareholders, when trading performance allows

- create opportunities for members to participate in volunteering and supporting Our Shop's activities including serving on sub groups and helping at events
- create opportunities for members to help guide and shape aspects of our long term strategy and how we deliver community benefit via listening events
- encourage members and provide the mechanism for them to share their views with the Committee and Membership i.e. through dedicated email addresses, attending our Fayres, the suggestion box in the shop, talking to staff and Committee Members and networking with fellow Members at events and meetings

**B) A focus on attracting new members:**

3.2 We will continue to communicate with our wider community to raise awareness of the need for membership growth. This will done:

- through our shop and village communications including social media
- by providing welcome packs for those moving into the new developments in our parish

3.3 We have made it easier to become a member through our 'rolling' share offer which remains open all year and requires a minimal investment of just £100.

**C) Other aspects of our membership strategy:**

3.4 The position of Membership Secretary coupled with a dedicated Members email address is an important part of delivering our Membership strategy and email will remain our primary means of communication. We recognise that for some members it is essential for us to continue to communicate by hard copy.

3.6 Members have shown us that they are willing to support us in many ways, including donating their interest payments back to the shop. We will continue to ensure that this process is simple and easy for members.

3.7 Some Members have already donated their shareholding to the shop and given the experience from other community shops and charities, some people may also want to provide a legacy in their wills and we are developing a process to accommodate this.

3.8 Finally, in all our contact with Members we recognise our obligations in respect of their personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018.