



MUSTARD SEED 26th AGM
13 November 2020
 6.30pm: ZOOMED

Present:	Present (contd):	Apologies:	Apologies (contd):
Sjoerd Vogt (Chairman) Katie Foot (Manager) Karen Vogt (Manager) Lois Chell (Treasurer) Andrew Chell Mairead Boyce Tony Fecher	Peter Foot Sue & Keith Thrower Malcolm & Val Swift Helen Jackson Dave Headey Jonathan & Barbara Mapley		

After catch-up zoomed chatting, the meeting was opened with bible reading and prayer .

Minutes of the 25th AGM were signed as a correct record of the meeting held 15th Nov 2019. No items outstanding that are not discussed below.

NEW HAMPERS RECORD – NEW WAREHOUSE – NEW LEASE – NEW STOCK!

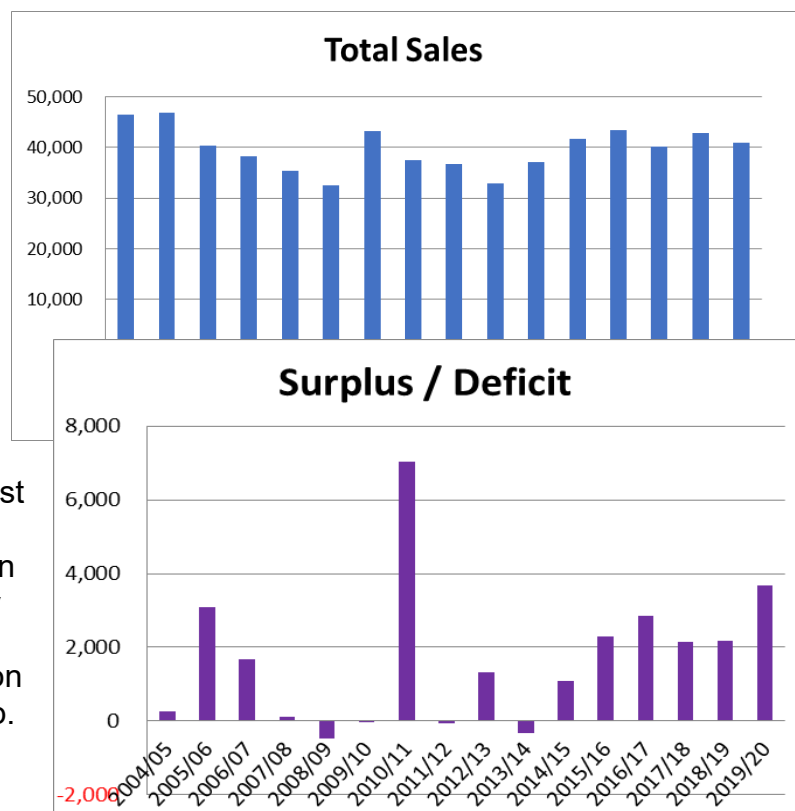
This time last year, we were ruminating over our very comprehensive 2019 investigations into “The Plum Tree” café possibilities. With the benefit of covid hindsight, perhaps it’s a good thing that we chose to be cautious.

Yes – it’s most certainly been a year of two halves. There have also been many positives, perhaps the most significant is the resilience and flexibility shown by so many of our wonderful volunteers.

Thank you to you: our amazing team!

NEW WAREHOUSE: We also have Katie & Peter Foot’s generosity to thank for the **new warehousing arrangements** (their garage!) - which have been in place for almost a year now, and are working remarkably well.

NEW LEASE: **The new lease** (on the same very favourable terms as we were on previously) was signed just before lockdown. Thank you to our landlord John Loosemore, and to John Beaumont for guiding us so efficiently through the fine print. At this point, it’s appropriate to mention the damp in the back area of the shop. The landlord has now agreed to take action to remedy this.



NEW STOCK: Also just before lockdown, Katie and Karen really pushed the boat out in loading up **with new stock** (at very favourable discount) from a range of fair trade suppliers.

NEW RECORD: Also of note; the income from **Christmas Hampers** end 2019 - at more than £2200 to the Mustard Seed - also set a new record! Many thanks to Karen.

SMALL BUSINESS GRANT

Early on in lockdown, we were successful in our application for the 10K grant offered to all businesses who also qualify for small-business-rate relief. This has given us the reassurance that we can continue to pay our fixed costs, even when our income from sales has been significantly compromised.

THANKS

Special thanks go to our joint managers Katie and Karen; our unflappable treasurer Lois; Mairead - who manages all the weekly takings in her quietly efficient way AND juggles the monthly rotas with consummate skill.

We also thank Malcolm and Val from the Lighthouse Bookshop in Highworth for their unstinting support, helped by Keith at this end.

We thank the Committee, representing the Churches Together.

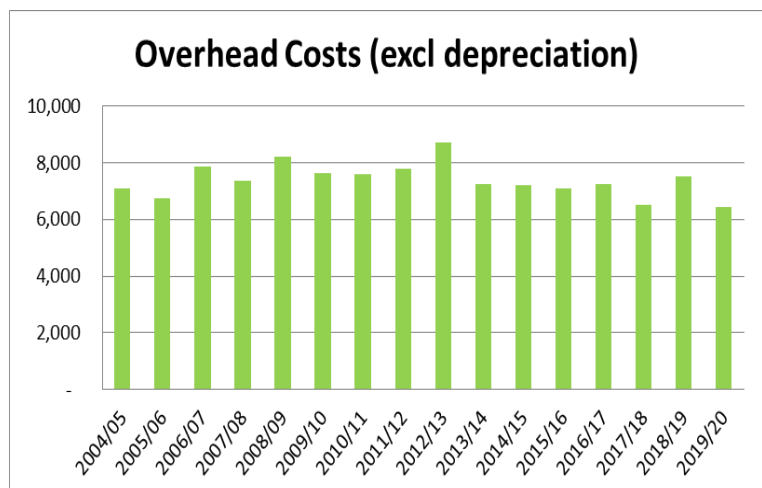
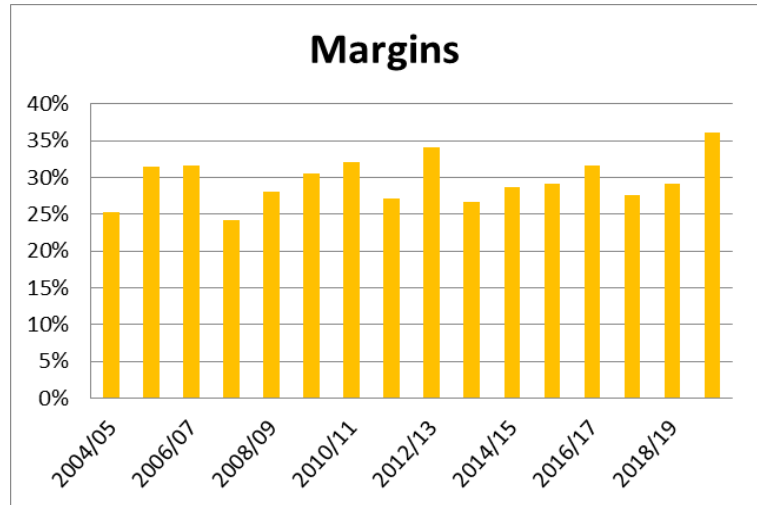
And we also get support from the wider community, for which we are very grateful.

We have our annual accounts fully audited by Alder Demain Akers free of charge. Thank you.

On behalf of the committee, our warmest thanks go out to all those volunteers and members of the community who support us in so many ways.

And last but not least, we also warmly thank our loyal shoppers.

As always, the team of volunteers need your constant support and prayers.



Sjoerd Vogt
Chairman, The Mustard Seed
November 2020

MANAGERS' REPORT FOR AGM, 13th NOVEMBER 2020

Well, none of us could have expected the year we have had (and are still having) – but The Mustard Seed is doing extraordinarily well, thanks to our magnificent team of volunteers.

When lockdown started, towards the end of March, one of the shop managers had unaccountably fled the country on a long holiday (which ended up being even longer), while the other rose to the challenge and did a fantastic job taking orders and delivering them (often on her bike) to many of our regular customers, thereby keeping at least some income coming in. By mid-May, when the wanderer had returned and finished her isolation, we were also able to start some market stalls which also helped cash flow. Many thanks to Rosalind and Sue for helping with these.

The new “warehouse” arrangements are much more flexible which has helped both with receiving and making deliveries.

The shop was allowed to re-open in mid-June but since a number of our shop staff are over the magic age of 70 or still shielding for medical reasons, we only had enough people to open in the mornings (including some of the over 70s, to whom grateful thanks). Surprisingly, however, we haven't done too badly compared to our usual weekly/monthly takings – in the first few weeks, customers were so delighted to be able to shop again that we sold a great deal, helped in part by the enticing new wares that Karen and Katie had ordered from the Birmingham Sustainable Trade Fair in February but which had only been delivered just before lockdown. Even now, we are holding our own, but that will only continue to be the case if we can all remember to remind our friends and neighbours to order through the website.

Staffing

We are hugely grateful to those who have felt able to keep the shop open since restrictions were eased, but absolutely understand why others have not yet felt able to – we continue to pray for the whole team and send very special thanks to Mairead for juggling the rota each month so there are as few gaps as possible – and these are almost always filled by the time the day comes round.

Window Dressers

Thanks are also due to the window dressers, ed by Libby, without whom the shop would be far less attractive to passers-by, with the mix of Traidcraft and Seekers' Light goods. We love the creativity that each brings to the topic of the fortnight/month.

The window will be particularly important during the next month – our busiest time of the year normally, so we can't afford to let things slip. We will be turning the big table round to face the window and changing the stock regularly to encourage people to order online – please tell your friends and neighbours they are welcome to photograph any item they would like to buy (or find out more about) and send it by email to karen@vogt.org.uk.

Orders

We still want to encourage customers to put in a regular monthly or occasional order for e.g. a bale of loo rolls, tea, coffee, cereal. In the present climate, please encourage friends and neighbours to look on the website and email or telephone Karen (details elsewhere in this report). Stamps and greetings cards can also be ordered and delivered.

Along with the order form for food and cleaning products, there is now an extra Christmas food and Advent calendar one on the website. It's more difficult to think of how we can sell gifts during lockdown as we now source from many different companies, not just Traidcraft, so the catalogue does not cover all our stock.

Hampers

It's difficult to know whether hamper orders will be up or down this year – people shopping local versus not being able to meet and share presents with loved ones. Usual choice available: standard (I choose), bespoke (you choose) or specials – Chocoholics, Organic or Palestinian. **N.B. Friday 13th November (AGM Day) is the deadline for hamper orders this year – order forms available on the website www.mustardseed.org.uk or ring/email Karen at 01367 241707 or karen@vogt.org.uk**

Outside sales

We normally have regular outside sales in Blessed Hugh church and Stanford in the Vale, but these has been more difficult to hold this year, with the churches closed for many weeks, and now again for at least another month. Again, online orders from some of these customers have helped us.

Seekers' Light

We remain deeply grateful to Malcolm and Val for the very important contribution that Seekers' Light offers to making The Mustard Seed the successful Christian witness it is in Faringdon. Val comes over virtually every week to check the cards when the shop is open and Malcolm is always at the end of the phone for queries and orders of books. Keith Thrower has been instrumental in keeping the displays up to date at the Faringdon end, including with new shelf labels and book reviews in the church magazines from time to time. Even during lockdown, we have been able to sell a number of books and, of course, the regular orders of Bible study notes, organised by Sue Thrower. The team who do the regular "Highworth run" on a Monday morning are crucial to this liaison, and special thanks are due to Sue and to Brenda Barber who have been keeping this going since lockdown. If anyone from other churches could volunteer to join this team, we would be extremely grateful – it's only about once every 6-8 weeks with a full team, just to take a box from The Mustard Seed to The Lighthouse and return with the new stock and any orders from the previous week – maximum an hour of your time.

Postage stamps

Sales continue to go very well. They are usually delivered to us within 24 hours of putting in the order, so if anyone wants a large number for any purpose, such as Christmas cards, just let Katie know. This year's Christmas stamps are now in stock, all with a religious theme so please take advantage and order yours now – you may have some extra time during the lockdown to order and write your cards and have them ready for posting in early December! This year, we think cards will be even more appreciated by family, friends and neighbours.

Free gift before Christmas

We are again offering a FREE jute bag to any customer spending £20 or more in the run-up to Christmas.

We both continue to be very grateful for everyone's support in these unusual times. Please do spread the word about ordering via the website, www.mustardseed.org.uk or by emailing karen@vogt.org.uk

Katie Foot and Karen Vogt

Treasurer's Report for 2019/20:

- See report for details
- Overall shop sales holding up extremely well: 41K vs 43K
- And expenses under control
- Surplus way up : 3.7K
- Overall, cash flow good – although the 10K grant in June was vital – because of stock that had to be paid for!

*Lois Chell
Treasurer*

Election of Trustees, Directors & Committee Members

Trustees (Mustard Seed Oxon.): Sjoerd Vogt, Richard Bolter, John Seedell

Directors (Mustard Seed (Faringdon) Ltd.) : Dave Headey, Katie Foot .

Chairman: Sjoerd Vogt ; **Managers:** Katie Foot/Karen Vogt ; **Treasurer:** Lois Chell

Committee members: The above four - plus Dave Headey, Richard Bolter, Malcolm and Val Swift, John Seedell. Total= nine . Mairead and Keith also copied in on Meeting notes.

All existing officers and committee have agreed to continue in their current roles.

Proposed: Barbara Mapley. Seconded: Mairead Boyce . No dissent.

Appointment of Auditor/bookkeeper:

Antony Akers from Alder, Demain & Akers have kindly agreed to provide their services as our accountants. Will be presented with their usual Christmas Hamper.

AOB and Open Discussion (will be taken forward to next committee meeting)

Keith had two comments on the Managers' report : a. that we also need to thank the book-run people - especially Sue & Brenda. B. The wording on the lockdown volunteers suggests that it was only *under-70s* volunteering! Katie will tweak <done – see above> .

Malcolm passed on the sad news that his predecessor Tony Chapman died last week. His funeral is Tuesday 17th November. Contact Malcolm if you remember Tony and wish to attend virtually.

Katie mentioned that Rotary & TC are doing Christmas presents for 25 children – identified as particularly in need. All happy that MS could/should support – up to £100 .

Peter suggested that we sell off any BC stock on eBay!

John asked about the idea that he'd heard from Karen – about doing videos of existing stock & using social media to sell. Karen explained that both she and also the person in question (Sally Hayter) were having to self-isolate - both because of same super-transmitter (Sally's mum).

John also asked for his hamper order to be increased to 14 !

Barbara gave vote of thanks to Sjoerd – saying that he makes it easy for other volunteers to enthusiastically support!

John mentioned that he'd had conversation with Brenda Barber. Faringdon United Charities sometimes have to turn down requests for funding – because they don't quite meet the criteria. Perhaps these requests could then be passed on to MS ? John will inquire.

The meeting closed with the grace and this year was followed by shared supper - in Spirit!