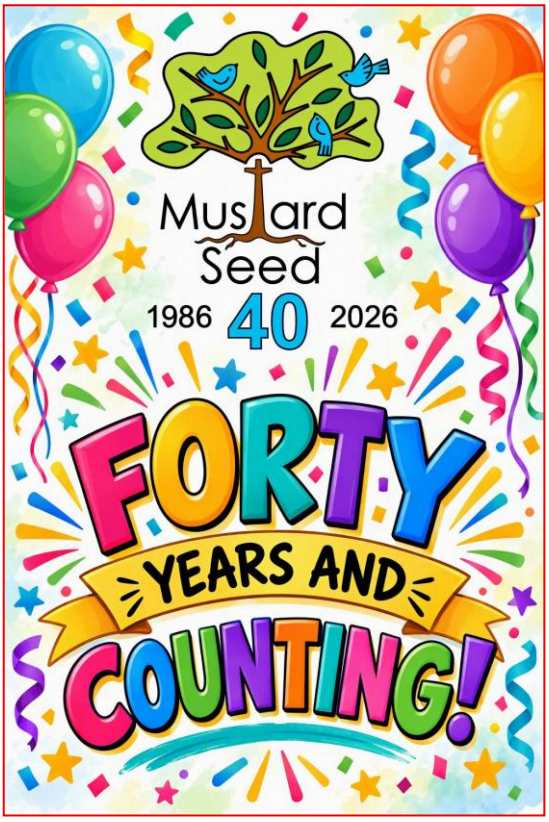
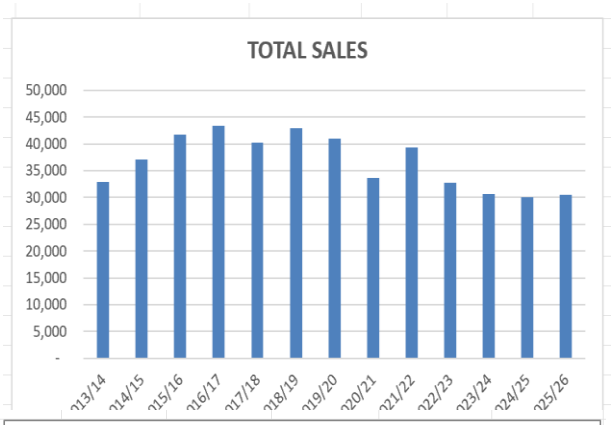
MUSTARD SEED AGM 2026
Friday 13th November - Barber Rooms
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



CHALLENGES and OPPORTUNITIES

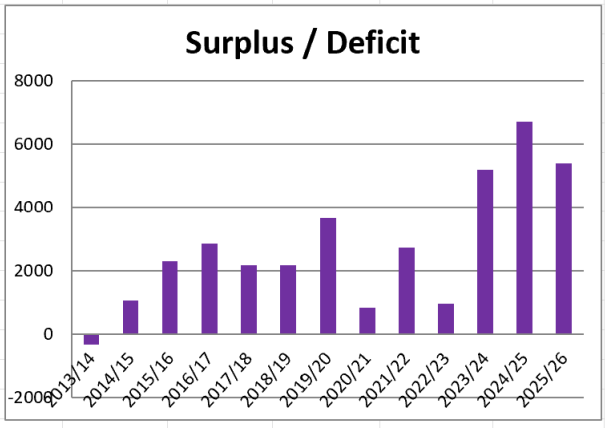
Even though we're now a full four years out of lockdown, we continue to face a raft of lockdown-related challenges. Instead of having a single reliable supplier for our fairtrade goods (previously Traidcraft) we now have to work with more than a dozen suppliers – ALL of them less reliable - meaning significant frustration and extra work for Karen, and empty shelves in the shop. Basic goods such as sugar or coffee can be impossible to get hold of for months on end. Lower footfall in the town generally still means mornings only for most of the year; and inflation/increased prices translate to increased customer cost-sensitivity. And yet – we continue to survive! This is perhaps all the more surprising when we see what's happened to other fairtrade shops and Christian bookshops in the area. This makes us acutely aware of the many challenges that we continue to face.

In May 2026, we celebrated an amazing 40 years since we first opened our doors on the other side of the Narrows. This makes us the third oldest shop in Faringdon (only Pat Thomas & Lilian's are older) .
We all need to continue to rally together to ensure that the Mustard Seed will still be around for another 40 years!



FOOTFALL

Faringdon is much better off than many Market Towns of similar size – with new retail businesses continuing to take the plunge. It's a town centre that continues to evolve and we can help in steering the direction, but we certainly can't take anything for granted. We thank our amazing team for their resilience and their flexibility.



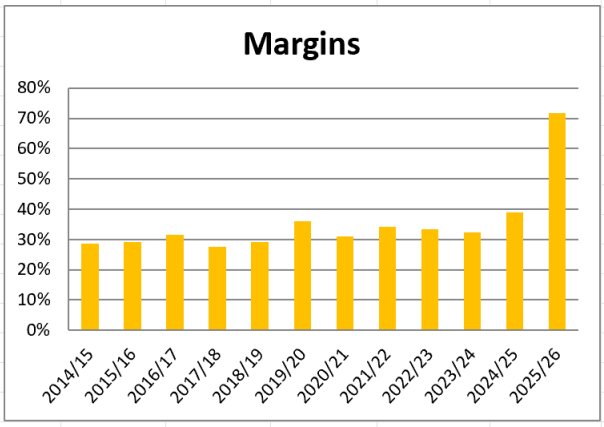
SALES & COSTS

Sales very slightly up on previous year; with margins up also and costs under control. Therefore, we are still able to pay our bills and our cash flow remains healthy.

Nonetheless – we cannot be complacent. Going forward, our new five year lease means that our rent is increasing from £4400 to £6000 per year. This is still a very competitive rent – and we are grateful to our landlords for this.

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

£1000 each to Faringdon Foodbank and to Sanctuary Faringdon.

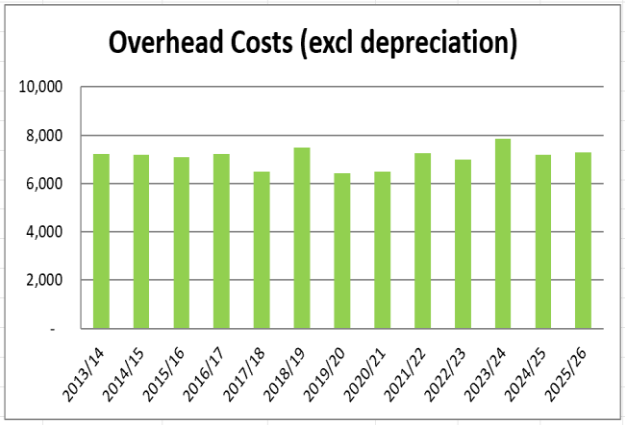


THANKS

We have Katie & Peter Foot's generosity to thank for the ***warehousing arrangements*** (their garage!) - which have been in place for almost six years now, and continue to be working remarkably well.

Special thanks go to our joint managers Katie and Karen; and our unflappable treasurer Lois.

We thank the Committee, representing all the Churches Together.



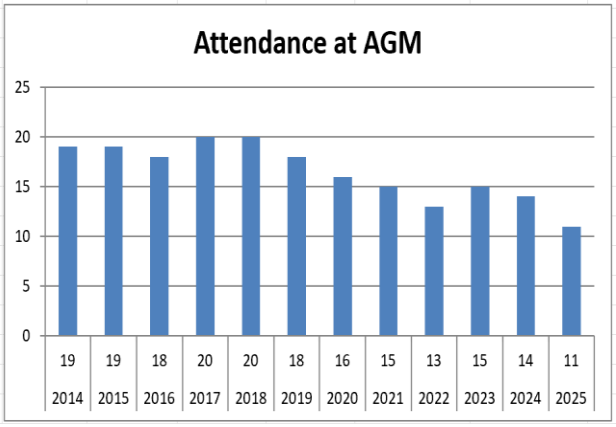
And we also get support from the wider community, for which we are very grateful.

We have our annual accounts fully audited by Anthony Akers (from 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 2026