ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

28 October 2025

Agenda

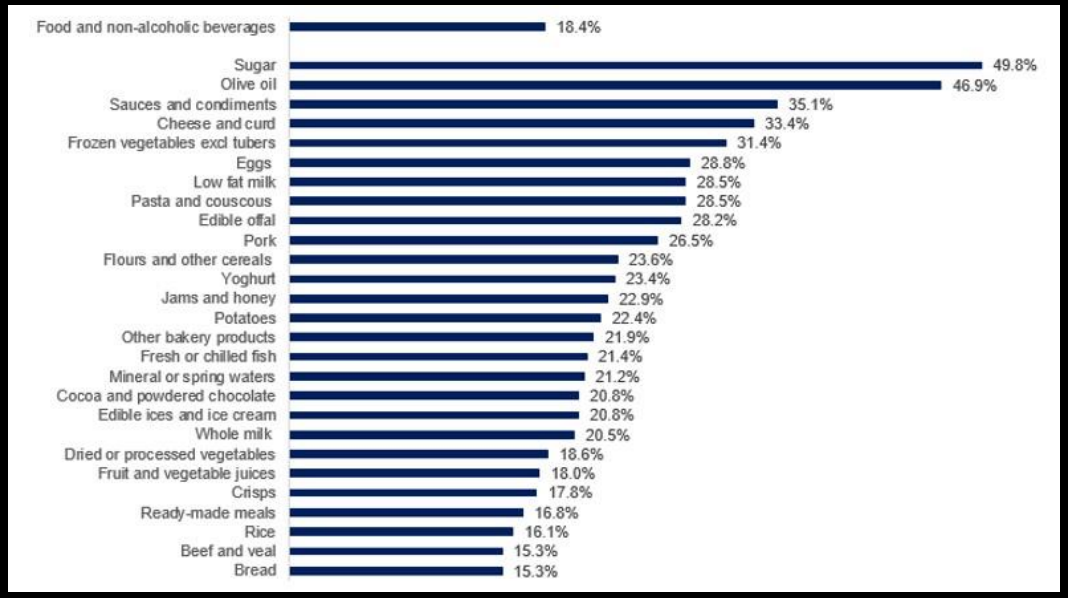
- Chair’s Report
- Treasurer’s Report
- Election of the Management Committee

Chair’s Report

HIGH STREETS
ON THE BRINK
60,000 small shops & 150,000 jobs are at risk in England without reform.
GOVERNMENT MUST ACT NOW TO PROTECT SMALL BUSINESSES ON OUR CORNERS.

The Cost of living Crisis

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE AHEAD


Food and non-alcoholic beverages 18.4%
Sugar 49.8%
Olive oil 46.9%
Sauces and condiments 35.1%
Cheese and curd 33.4%
Frozen vegetables excl tubers 31.4%
Eggs 28.8%
Low fat milk 28.5%
Pasta and couscous 28.5%
Edible offal 28.2%
Pork 26.5%
Flours and other cereals 23.6%
Yoghurt 23.4%
Jams and honey 22.9%
Potatoes 22.4%
Other bakery products 21.9%
Fresh or chilled fish 21.4%
Mineral or spring waters 21.2%
Cocoa and powdered chocolate 20.8%
Edible ices and ice cream 20.8%
Whole milk 20.5%
Dried or processed vegetables 18.6%
Fruit and vegetable juices 18.0%
Crisps 17.8%
Ready-made meals 16.8%
Rice 16.1%
Beef and veal 15.3%
Bread 15.3%

National Insurance Number
Amount
264.60
Deductions
PAYE Tax
National Insurance
Budget blamed as job cuts hit 'f
high' and price hikes loom

How have we attempted to address these challenges?

Challenge	Resolution
Too much stock and waste	Introduced new EPOS system to better control stock and identify non-selling items
Underselling some produce/goods	Updated prices and keeping them constantly under review
Increase in RRP price-marked goods	Shopping around for best deals and reducing RRP marked goods
Shortage of some produce/goods	Increased our list of suppliers and now shop around to locate the things we need
Need to increase revenues	Introduced new products in the shop and new offerings in the café
Wage costs increasing	• We closed the Post Office on Saturday pm and Sunday am • Operating with minimum number of paid staff hours to cover shop, Post Office and Café opening times • Reduced overtime • Manager did not take a salary increase in April 2025

94% recommend (14 reviews)

Sean Barnett recommends **Benenden's Community Shop, Post Office & Cafe.**

29 Sep ·

Sunday morning, following a wedding at the village church, 7 of us popped in in the hope of getting a bite to eat. We hadn't realised that the cafe isn't open on a Sunday in September. However, the manager saw our plight and was amazing. Toasted tea cakes, sausage and bacon baps, cheese scones and full English alongside tea, coffee, juice and hot chocolate with the trimmings. Reasonably priced, lovely cafe, fantastic staff. couldn't have asked for more 11/10

Adele Back recommends **Benenden's Community Shop, Post Office & Cafe.**

3 Sep ·

Such an amazing beautiful village shop full of amazing local products , the sandwiches from the Hawkhurst Bread Shed are the best sandwich's I have ever tasted , I met the lovely manager today and her team who were all so helpful , I would highly recommend the village shop what an amazing community shop ! ❤️

Delicious sandwiches

1

Lesley Taylor recommends **Benenden's Community Shop, Post Office & Cafe.**

29 Sep ·

Lovely little village Community Store that we popped into on a Sunday just as the Cafe was closing but we were received with a very warm welcome and catered for by the friendly lady manager and staff member. Delicious scrambled eggs and coffee. The store is also well stocked with other goodies too! Would highly recommend and will be back to see you soon.

3

Jodie Regan recommends **Benenden's Community Shop, Post Office & Cafe.**

22 Aug ·

Visited this quaint and vibrant coffee shop yesterday. Time stood still as I was watching the shoppers pop in and out catching up and chatting. These types of community spaces are rare to find but I'm so glad I did. I will be a regular visitor to the shop. I would like to call out Daisy in the coffee shop who spent time chatting to me which made me feel appreciated and welcomed. The food was outstanding I'd recommend the lasagna. Thank you for having me.

Sara Tidy + 2

Dear Sir / Madam,

My wife and I travel some miles to have breakfast at your Community Shop / Cafe at least once per week. We love the friendly welcome, the community spirit, the staff and the whole ethos of the business.

The staff, including the Manager, make us welcome, keep us informed of changes, the Christmas open evening etc; a very welcoming establishment. We notice that they chat to elderly, lonely customers, some who may not see another sole for days. What a wonderful, welcoming gesture - well done. It must be a major admin nightmare for the manager(s) having to work with a varying workforce of volunteers. There being a difference in ages, capabilities and attitudes. I would find this very frustrating trying to please all the people all the time. However, they, in their own way seem to manage the situation admirably; we wish them good luck.

May we bring to your attention one item. A couple of times, outside the shop, we have heard an elderly lady 'slagging off' your shop, loud enough for everyone to hear. We are sure she used to work in the shop. This is neither warranted or helpful to the strong community spirit we have always felt. You should be made aware of this. On the whole, keep doing what you are doing, we love it.

Good luck,

Earl and Rita West

Good morning Benenden's Team,

We just wanted to let you know how grateful we are to have such a fabulous shop and cafe in the village.

It's so easy to take it for granted, but driving through other villages recently, it reminded us again how fortunate we are to have Benenden's.

You always have such a varied range of products to cater for so many different needs. We love being able to get organic risotti rice, local wines as well as Milton tablets! We always find what we need and things we didn't realise we needed!

We are also so grateful for the Post Office, particularly now there are so few banks around. Sending presents to friends in Spain and America are always treated with the same efficiency as more straightforward packages. The Post Office staff are very knowledgeable and extremely helpful in translating all the different delivery options!

It's a weekly treat for us to have coffee and breakfast at Benenden's. We always get such a warm welcome from Jules and the team who seem genuinely interested in people and full of ideas of how to make improvements to the menu. They're also so accommodating with our very specific coffee orders! We love the chatty and friendly atmosphere they create within the cafe. After a bit of a stressful start to our week, sitting sipping coffee and eating our breakfast on Tuesday morning, our moods were immediately uplifted and transformed our morning. We really admire how they manage the busy buzz of the shop and the cafe with such efficiency.

We would be very grateful if you could pass on our thanks to all the team.

Have a great Autumn and thank you again for providing such a brilliant service.

Sue and Stu Roberts

What a recent Volunteer recruit thinks

Give It a Go - Volunteering at the Village Shop
A few months ago, I moved to our village to stay with my son and daughter-in-law.

After settling in, I found myself wondering what I could do to give my days more purpose. When I asked for ideas, my daughter-in-law suggested volunteering at the village shop, which is owned and run by the community.
At first, I hesitated. I thought, "Who would want an old 80-year-old like me behind the counter?" But my daughter-in-law is very persuasive, and eventually I agreed to give it a try.

I'm so glad I did. From the very first day, I was made to feel welcome and useful.

Helping in the shop has given me a renewed sense of purpose and reminded me that we all have something to contribute, whatever our age. I've also met so many friendly villagers I might never have got to know otherwise.

So, if you've ever thought about volunteering but held back because of self-doubt, please take it from me - your help will be truly appreciated. You'll be joining a warm, welcoming team and you might even find, as I did, that it adds a whole new spark to your week.
Go on — give it a go!

Lady Whistledown doesn't recommend **Benenden's Community Shop, Post Office & Cafe.**

17 Aug ·

What was once a delightfully precious commodity in this picturesque village, is now nothing more than an overpriced shop, selling ridiculous faddy foods, and the staff are rude. The lady who manages the shop appears to have hired her family to run it and the volunteers are disappearing in their droves because it is losing any community feel it once had.

To Gary Bell

Chair of the Community Shop

Dear Gary,

I don't know your address so I'm sending this through the village hall. I hope it reaches you.

I can't give my name. I still use the shop and I don't want the whispers and sideways looks. The fact I have to write like this should tell you how serious things have got. I wouldn't trust leaving it in the shop itself now.

Since Mel left, the shop has gone downhill. Everyone can see it. Shelf's half empty, wrong things being bought, good people pushed out. Volunteers who gave years of their time now wont go near it. Others don't bother because there's nothing worth buying. The people who still use it, often it's because they've no choice.

I've also heard from folk who've worked there. Stock which is meant to be available but not in the storeroom. Where has it gone? Nobody can say. Maybe stolen, maybe just careless, but either way it's not right. People are worried, and with reason. We don't want the shop to go bankrupt like so many businesses are these days.

And the new staff – they are rude and sharp with locals and with volunteer's too. That's no way to treat the village who owns the shop.

We all put money and goodwill into this shop. We built it for the community. Now it feels like it's being ruined in front of us. If something isn't done soon, we could lose it altogether. And once gone, it won't come back.

Please do something before it's too late.

From a concerned villager

Fiction v Facts

Fiction	Fact
More paid staff now than ever before	7 in 2021, increased to 7 in 2022, 6 now.
Shop has always made profits	The shop made a loss in 2015/16, 2020/21, 2023/24 and 2024/25
Shelves empty and no stock	We are managing stock levels to help with cash-flow and reduce waste. Some items hard to source at times
Staff are not “local”	2 staff live in the village, the others all within 5 miles
Very expensive	We are a convenience store and will never compete with the big supermarket chains. We are cheaper than both local farm shops
No longer stock custard creams!	
Staff have been forced out	Untrue. Previous staff have left for a variety of reasons including disciplinary action, could not meet the terms of their employment contract, Settlement agreement to avoid Employment Tribunal

Support it, Use or Lose it!

- Constructive feedback and suggestions on how things could be improved are fantastic
- Letters and reviews thanking staff and volunteers are always welcome
- Lack of volunteers makes the job of paid staff harder and puts pressure on those that do volunteer

However,

- Anonymous Facebook posts and letters are unhelpful, and demoralising for staff, volunteers and the Management Committee who are all working hard to keep the shop going
- Uninformed and unverified gossip is damaging the shop.

Treasurer’s Report

PROFIT & LOSS			
INCOME	**31.03.25**	**31.03.24**	**31.03.23**
Sales Revenue	434,244	467,165	451,060
Cost of Sales	- 298,632	- 317,607	- 310,492
Gross Profit	**135,612**	**149,558**	**140,568**
Gross Margin	**31%**	**32%**	**31%**
PO Commission	15,756	14,907	14,983
Other Income, Interest	2,207	1,754	2,729
Overheads	- 185,548	- 175,264	- 153,592
Corporation Tax	**0**	**0**	0
Profit/ (Loss)	**- 31,973**	**- 9,045**	**4,688**
Overhead Comparison			
EXPENDITURE	**31.03.25**	**31.03.24**	**31.03.23**
Salaries	121,201	114,915	90,962
Power	14,351	14,584	14,799
Rent	7,500	7,500	7,375
Depreciation	8,314	8,984	11,210
Other	34,182	29,281	29,246
	185,548	**175,264**	**153,592**
Profit & Loss Comparison			
	31.03.25	**31.03.24**	**31.03.23**
Sales Revenue	434,244	467,165	451,060
Cost of Sales	- 296,853	- 317,607	- 310,492
Gross Profit	**137,391**	**149,558**	**140,568**
PO Commission	15,756	14,907	14,983
Other Income, Interest	428	1,754	2,729
Overheads	- 185,548	- 175,264	- 153,592
Nett Profit/ -(Loss)	**- 31,973**	**- 9,045**	**4,688**

Half-year 2025 (Apr to Sept)

PROFIT & LOSS		
INCOME		**30.09.25**
Sales Revenue	£	235,306
Cost of Sales	£	153,874
Gross Profit	£	81,432
Overheads	-£	92,300
Net Profit/ (Loss)	**-£**	**10,868**

Shareholder Update

- The recent share offer raised £9,310
- We added 55 new shareholders
- Total number of shareholders is now 430
- There will be an exercise to collect share certificates from those shareholders who previously withdrew some of their shares and still hold their original share certificate. Once collected, we will replace with a new certificate for the current shares they hold.

Approvals

- Approve the accounts for 2024/25

- Approve the re-appointment of the auditors for 2025/26

Summary

- Benenden's is running at a loss

- Survival will require some difficult choices to be made:

  - **Sell more –** that relies on more people using the shop and café or existing customers buying more
  - **Put the prices up** - this is likely to impact the volume of sales
  - **Reduce opening times –** this will impact revenue but will reduce wage costs
  - **Reduce the number of paid staff –** this would require us to reduce opening hours and/or significantly increase volunteer numbers (but we would then need volunteers to run the Post Office too).

Election of the Management Committee

Members of the Committee currently are:

Vacant – Chair
Paul King – Treasurer
Vacant - Secretary
Bev Beveridge - Volunteers
Hugh Rumary - Shareholders
CJ (Claire Jaques) – Property