

Stoke-Sub-Hamdon Community Shop Ltd

Community Benefit Society (CBS)

Report to Members for the year ending 31st March 2026

1. Executive summary

This report covers the activities of Stoke-sub-Hamdon Community Shop Ltd (SSHCSL) during the financial year from 1st February 2025 to 31st March 2026, our sixth full year of operation.

NOTE: We changed our year end to 31st March so the figures and reports at this AGM cover 13 months of trading.

During this financial period Stoke Community Shop has continued to trade successfully and to provide a valuable service that's more than simply a shop to the communities of Stoke and surrounding villages.

Key features of the year

- Total turnover for Stoke-sub-Hamdon Community Shop Ltd - £255,773
- Profit before tax — £45,562 includes personal donations of £51,000. Therefore we have a trading loss of £5438 over the 13 month period.
- Active volunteers at end of March 2026 — 23
- Fixed assets — £2,204

This year saw the continuation of two major challenges:

- Insufficient Committee Members.
- Insufficient volunteers to ensure the sustainable operation and viability of the shop and to fulfil the objectives of the organisation as a whole.

2. Profit and loss account

The Financial Report and Accounts for the year have been made available online <https://stokeshop.co.uk/membership/annual-general-meeting-documents/>. They can also be viewed in Stoke Community Shop and at the Annual General Meeting. The reports show a reasonable sixth year of trading for Stoke Community Shop, the main income generator for SSHCSL.

This year saw an increase in turnover of £43,750 over 2024-2025. Part of this increase is due to inflation but part is a genuine increase in customer numbers.

Increases to the minimum wage and the number of paid hours have increased outgoings. Utility prices have also had an adverse effect.

3. Balance sheet

The value of our fixed assets was set at £2,204. No essential expenditure was made during the year 2025 -2026.

4. Accountancy and Bookkeeping

Chartered Accountancy firm Milsted Langdon again oversaw, signed off and submitted our accounts to HMRC, as required by the FCA. Again this year we did our own year-end stock take saving money and we think providing a more accurate stock take figure. Thanks to Matthew & Tracy Morgan

Our bookkeeper, Trudy Cronin, continued with her good work enabling us to complete our year-end accounts in just over two months. She remains embedded in the business and is proving to be a very valuable part of our team.

5. Mitigating cost pressures

The cost pressures which have existed since we opened the shop in March 2020 remain. We continue to try to mitigate the effects of these rising costs by:

- absorbing some of them and so reducing our profit margin
- shopping around for better deals on products
- attempting to keep the ongoing costs of the business as low as possible, including:
 - sourcing new wholesalers
 - tightening stock control
 - shopping around for competitive deals on energy, communications and insurance.

We do our best to contain expenditure and costs in all areas in order to remain a viable business. Our ability to do this is limited by the need for more Committee Members who can share with us the tasks of running a business.

This year we have taken membership of the Plunkett Foundation, a charity set up to advise small community shops like ours. A representative visited the shop and has sent us a health check report which we are studying. There are some recommendations which may be worthwhile. They also have pro forma policy documents which we may adopt as ours are in need of update. There are also recommended insurers and accountants which we will look at and engage if it is financially advantageous.

6. Shop premises

Our rent increased to £475per month, a very modest increase thanks to Pam & John's continued support for their old shop.

7. Stoke Community Shop staffing

We employ three part time members of staff. All other members of staff, including Volunteers and Members of SSHCSL Management Committee (Board Directors), are unpaid.

Each shift is covered by one Manager/Supervisor and at least one Volunteer. Two Volunteers are required during busier periods.

The paid posts total 51 hours per week, this is an increase of 7 hours over last year due to the lack of volunteers.

Claire Davies retired as a manager at the end of September but has returned as a volunteer, thanks to Claire for past & future service.

Gary Findlay was employed as a manager to replace Claire and has been instrumental in broadening our range of products & streamlining our computer records.

Both Ann Davison and Gary continue to make a very valuable contribution to the smooth operation of the shop and to ensuring that we remain a community hub.

8. Stoke Community Shop Volunteers

Thank you also to Helen Townson who remains as Volunteer representative.

As at 31st March 2026, we had 23 active Volunteers doing shifts in the shop, delivering orders or helping with store maintenance. To show our thanks, all Volunteers who were available for work as at Christmas 2025 were invited to a meal at the Fleur de Lis. JP provided excellent food and a good time was had by all.

We continued to enable students to come for work experience and for Duke of Edinburgh Award training which they found rewarding and we very much appreciated. Thanks to Kshanika, Charlie, Jayden and Arran.

During the summer a Boules evening was held in the grounds of the Memorial Hall, with cheese and wine, a good time was had by all. This will be repeated this July.

As ever, the Management Committee remains extremely grateful to our Volunteers. Without them Stoke Community Shop would not be able to operate. Our Volunteers give their time for free, and their generosity enables us to keep the shop open for the whole community seven days a week virtually every day of the year, making us one of the few community stores that offers such a full service.

We do need more Volunteers as we are finding it increasingly hard to cover all shifts and to provide all our extra services.

If you're interested in becoming a shop Volunteer – or know someone who is – please speak to a member of the Management Committee or drop into the shop and speak with the Manager/Supervisor.

9. Marketing and communications

The main aims of our marketing and communications are: to inform local people about our goods, services and events; to attract new volunteers; to increase shop footfall, both from Stoke-sub-Hamdon and surrounding villages and to attract new Members.

We regularly advertise in Stoke village newsletter.

We also have website – <https://stokeshop.co.uk/>

- a Facebook page – <https://www.facebook.com/stokecommunityshop/>

- a Neighbourly page – <https://www.neighbourly.com/project/5e776175c7ac8e1938d4118b/>

10. Shop products and services

- We provide a full range of core products, from bread, tinned and frozen goods to home cleaning products. We continue to adapt and expand the range of goods and services we offer, often at the request of customers. The lead on product sourcing has been Gary Findlay who has vast retail experience and has been pivotal in both the range and display of products we now sell.
- We have expanded the range of stationery we provide, particularly greetings cards, and sourced new suppliers.
- Post Office: We retain the out-reach services of the Post Office, provided by Josh Price from Queen Camel. This provides us with a small income per session, three times a week.
- Payzone: We continue to offer Payzone, which enables people without internet access to pay a wide range of bills and top up their mobile phone. The business absorbs the cost of this service because it benefits our customer base and attracts them to use the store.
- Newsagents: We continue to use Smiths News as our wholesale supplier. We are one of the few community shops locally to sell newspapers and magazines seven days a week.
- Fruit and veg: We now source most of our fruit and veg from local supermarkets. This is supplemented by supplies from local gardens and allotments during the summer months.

11. Customer experience

We continue to look at ways in which to make the store feel more spacious and an inviting and easy place in which to shop.

12. SSCSL Community Hub

One of the key aims of SSHCSL is to provide a community hub with the shop at its centre. We work with other organisations and businesses locally to promote community engagement.

We offer help and support to those in need on a daily basis. This includes free deliveries by shop volunteers to villagers who find it difficult to get out and about.

During the year we provided donations to Martock Christian Fellowship's Transforming Lives food bank and fund, for the benefit of those in need in Stoke and surrounding villages.

We continue to provide information for people who drop in with queries, such as bus times, where people can take parcel returns, other store opening times, contacts for local groups and so on. There are other numerous ways in which we provide support and we do our best to help anyone who comes into our shop for assistance.

13. Community engagement

In keeping with our aim of maintaining community spirit, we've worked with local organisations on several events over the past year. Events included:

- 6th Anniversary Tombola, March 2026: We held a free tombola for customers to celebrate Stoke Community Shop's 6th anniversary of opening.
- Red Nose Day, March 2026: we held a sale of home-baked cakes in the shop to raise money for this good cause. £270 was raised.
- Stoke Litter Pickers: The shop supported the litter-picking volunteers, providing them with hot drinks from Frank's Corner Coffee Shop.
- Poppy Appeal, October and November 2025: We sold Remembrance Poppies on behalf of the Royal British Legion.
- BBC Children in Need, November 2025: We held another sale of home-baked cakes for this annual charity event. £270 was raised.
- Over the 13 month period charitable donations total £1,938.

14. Fundraising and grants

No grants were applied for during the 2025 -2026 financial year. Because we are a business rather than a charity, grants are more difficult to pitch for and win, despite the fact that we are a non-profit organisation working for our community. We'd welcome input from Members who have any ideas for schemes that would be suitable - where we stand a good chance of attracting funds - and who can do the necessary research and submit applications.

15. Our Members

As at 31st March 2026 we had share capital equivalent to 211 Members. We continue to encourage people to become Members and support their local community.

16. Our Committee

At last year's AGM all existing directors stood down, Catherine Fraser and Alan Brimecombe - who were co-opted directors - stood for election as required and were elected. Our constitution requires that we have at least **three** directors on the Management Committee to operate SSHCSL.

Subsequent to the AGM Gary Findlay was co-opted by the Management Committee as a director to enable the continued operation of the business. WE WERE THAT CLOSE TO LOSING THE SHOP. Later in the year Graham Bartlett volunteered and was co-opted as a director. Gary is standing for election by Members this year as required by our rules. Graham has decided not to stand for re-election for personal reasons. Catherine and Alan are also standing for re-election. This leaves **five** vacant positions on the board.

Thanks also to Katherine Rake who remains as Company Secretary and gives valuable assistance with documentation and the website.