

## SPEEN STORES...WHERE WE ARE NOW...

### A Glorious Future (we hope!)

It has been a while since we announced with a heavy heart that we would be moving on in December 2020 and we thought in light of recent events, it was a time for an update.

It's been a tumultuous few months to say the least, what with Covid-19, some bold new cake recipes from the Copper Kettle, Ali creating new human life, the air conditioning unit having a mind of its own and Connie's foot playing havoc with village life. Yet, whatever has been thrown at us, Speen Stores, with your help, has continued to thrive. This is in no small part thanks to all of you and as ever, we remain hugely grateful for the unfaltering support and kindness we've received.

Special thanks must go to the Speen Stores Crusaders for all of their hard work researching the feasibility for a community run shop. The Group has poured a considerable amount of time and effort into researching how to set up and manage a community run enterprise. They concluded that setting up an entity to run the business within the available timescale for relinquishing the shop was too complex. Furthermore, they did not believe there was sufficient voluntary capacity in the village to run such an operation.

Following a meeting with the working group in which they discussed their findings with us, we quickly moved our intentions to selling the business to a third party. We sprang into action and scoured the local area for a new owner that we feel is up to the task of serving this community. This has proved easier than first thought, with a number of people quickly expressing an interest in acquiring the business. As a result, we are very pleased to announce a deal has been agreed to sell the business, including the Post Office to a third party.

The potential new owners are a lovely couple who share our vision for the continuation of a shop and post office which places the local community at the heart of all it does. Over the next few weeks, discussions will take place with the Post Office to ensure a transfer of the business which protects the continuation of the current service. Our buyers will also need to negotiate a new, longer lease with the owner of the building, Bucks Housing Association, prior to us being able to complete the deal.

#### **However, we still need your help to save Speen Stores and the Post Office!**

You may have heard that without our knowledge, Bucks Housing Association have put in a planning application to apply for change of use of the first floor to residential. This application would remove the kitchen facilities, toilet facilities and emergency exit from the shop, along with a parking space, thereby leaving the shop business inoperable. If permission is granted, the deal with our purchaser will not go through, we will be unable to sell to any other party and the shop, alongside the Post Office will close forever. The existing planning for the entire building is for commercial use. Speen Stores and Post Office is a fully

viable, profit making business with someone waiting in the wings willing to pick up exactly where we leave off. There is no mention in the plans of the residential unit being for future tenants of the shop and therefore no justification by Bucks Housing for their move.

If you would like to see the shop and post office continue, we would recommend challenging the change of use application as soon as possible. Objections to the application must be submitted to the council before 16<sup>th</sup> September. The attached documentation and link provides details of the procedure for objecting, should villagers wish to do so.

Once again, we thank you all for your continued support and we hope that together, a way forward can be found that protects the shop and post office well into the future.

Ali, Bob, Connie and Ian