My name is Tracy Booth and I have recently taken over as manager of Sproughton Community Shop following the retirement of Wendy Lavington at the end of February this year, so I’m just 8 and a bit weeks in so please be gentle with me!!

In early March 2020 Community shop Directors met and discussed Coronavirus – surely it wouldn’t affect the community shop – how wrong we were!!

Following the Prime Ministers announcement of a national lockdown later that month many volunteers retreated to their homes to shield and a group of 30 that kept the shop, going dropped to only 6, we knew we had to do something to keep the shop open and be the vital lifeline to our village and the wider community and an absolute crucial service.

A plea for help went out and a new group of 8 or so people who were in a position to help because of furlough came to the rescue, learnt the ropes super fast, and signed up to do a shift or make deliveries to the more vulnerable in the village.

The shelves were stripped bare of all kinds of items in the supermarkets, and we are all aware of the shortages that then followed.

Sproughton Community shop managed to maintain excellent support from our suppliers, and very rarely did we run out of any items, we were therefore a regular haunt for lots of villagers and those from the neighbouring communities.

With restricted hours since March 2020 the shop has managed to open for 3 hours every day, Monday to Saturday without exception and in the height of the first lockdown queues formed every day as people felt more comfortable shopping locally instead of in the bigger supermarkets. We also decided to adapt a one in one out policy to allow shoppers to take their time and feel safe.

Over the last 13 months in particular the shop has on several occasions been described as a lifeline to many providing essential supplies when travel was restricted, and support to many wasn’t available in any other way.

In the last year, we have sold over 2000 boxes of eggs, over 1500 bread rolls, hundreds of jars of honey more than 1000 plants, pounds and pounds of local rhubarb and runner beans, as well as toilet rolls pasta and milk and all manner of other everyday items.

One of our volunteers organised hot meal deliveries to villagers from the George in Hintlesham, this is something that still continues.

A foodbank basket has had over 1000 items donated in the last year, these have all been passed on to FIND supporting families in need in the local area in these hard times.

Recognition has been received from Countess Euston for our outstanding work in the community during the pandemic.

A making a difference award has been made by BBC Radio Suffolk again for the support given to vulnerable members of the village and community during COVID-19

Sproughton Community shop has been able to make donations to Sproughton Primary School, All Saints Church, The Millenium Green Trust and Sproughton Playing fields committee

None of this will of course not be possible if it wasn’t for the volunteers who have shown up every day, six days a week for the last year, done a stint behind the counter, arranged and unpacked fruit and vegetables, priced stock, delivered shopping to those in need of support, all with smiles on their faces.

Of course we need more volunteers to allow us to extend our opening hours and also the continued support of residents in the village now more than ever. As shops reopen and restrictions are lifted we really want to promote our local produce our friendly volunteers, safe and comfortable shopping surroundings and our giving back ethos.

Sproughton Community shop is a place to buy a stamp, make a friend, have a chat, a cup of tea, buy a newspaper, a jar of honey or a bottle of beer, some plants for the garden or local seasonal fruit and vegetables.

We hope to continue to be the hub of the community and greatly value the continued support of Sproughton Parish council, please tell everyone you know to shop small, shop local, support their community village shop so our success can continue for many more years to come.

Tracy Booth

May 2021