

Funding

There are grants and match funding schemes such as ViRSA available for community shops. It is essential that good and robust business plans are presented to ensure that a sustainable future can be envisaged.

Kent and Medway Rural Access to Services Programme (RASP) offers a grant fund of up to £5,000 which can help towards establishing your community shop.

You can run fundraising events such as fetes, sponsored walks and others such as raffles at all the village events, which will hopefully encourage and increase community involvement. Sometimes several individuals make large donations, villages run a “buy a brick” campaign or if set up legally the future shop can offer shares to the community.

Parish Councils can also make grants but just like Village Halls need to ensure that they are legally covered. Parish Councils do not have the power to run a business so an independent group would have to be created to run or oversee the business.

The Kent Community Shop Development Worker can advise on all these options and direct you to various funding sources.



Who runs the Shop?

The staffing structure of your shop will depend very much upon budgets and local circumstances.

Options available are:

- Voluntary labour.
- Employed staff.
- Employed manager with volunteer assistants.

The ideal option is to have a paid manager with either paid or volunteer assistants as this can give a greater sense of control and stability to the business – and avoids many of the pit-falls of using volunteer labour; organisation of rotas, allocation of tasks, availability and sustained commitment.

If you do employ a manager (paid or voluntary) make sure there are clear guidelines on how you want the shop to be run, performance targets, appraisal systems etc, but don't forget that a manager is just that – they must be allowed to manage!

Next steps

Begin to find volunteers in your community who are interested in getting involved in finding out more about the possibility of a community shop in your village.

Contact the Community Shop Development worker at Action with Communities in Rural Kent, who can support, advise and guide you through setting up a community shop.

The Old Granary, Penstock Hall Farm, East Brabourne, Kent, TN25 5LL

T: 01303 813790 W: www.ruralkent.org.uk



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Community Shops in Kent

and how to create one in your village



A clear, straightforward guide for community groups wishing to set up their own community shop in Kent. Guidance, tips, advice and essential information all in one place.

www.ruralkent.org.uk

What is a community shop?

It is a shop set up by the community, run by the community, for the community.

Kent has 4 community shops and this number is set to increase over the next few years (2009).

The benefits of having a shop in your community are numerous. The village shop acts as an informal social centre and it is a place to:

- Meet your neighbours.
- Catch up on village issues.
- Advertise jobs, items for sale and wanted.
- Read about local events and buy tickets.
- Drop off and collect parcels or other personal items.
- Provide an important information point for delivery drivers, visitors, health workers and house hunters.

The shop can also offer an enormous range of goods and services such as an Off-Licence, fax and photocopying services, general groceries, dry cleaning, newspapers, magazines and stationery. Local produce can also be stocked providing an outlet for local farmers and producers. The village shop can also be an important source of employment in your community.



Where can you locate a community shop in your village?

In an ideal world the community shop would be sited in another shop premises which has recently closed.

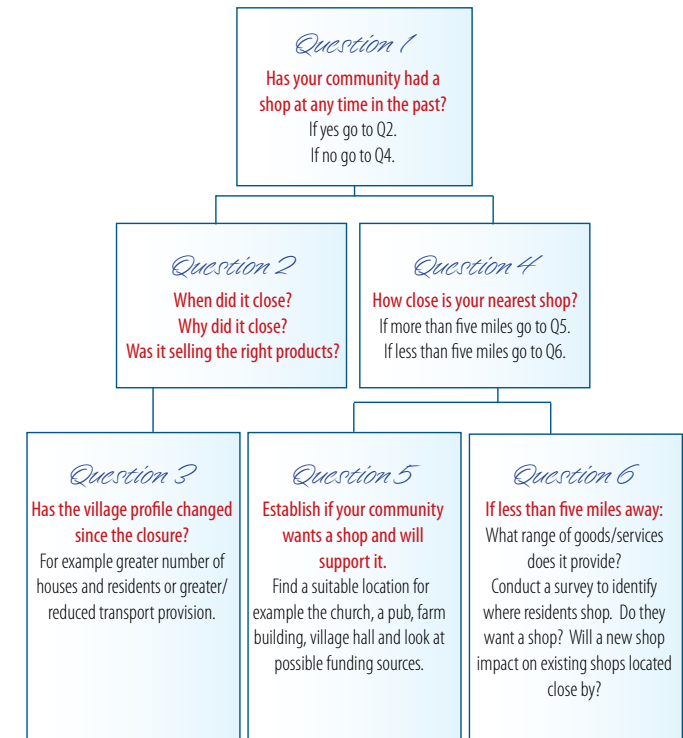
Occasionally this does happen, however other situations arise, for example, the owners are retiring and wish to continue to live in the building or a landlord wishes to sell the premises.

If a shop premises isn't available, other possible buildings which may be useful are:

- Church.
- Pub.
- Farm outbuilding.
- Shared building.
- Redundant school building.

If none of these were suitable or available options, then you could follow the example of other villages, purchase a porta-cabin and locate it on an empty piece of land or on the village hall car park. You would need to discuss this with the village hall management committee and local planning authority as it may be useful to look into the option of obtaining temporary planning permission which would enable you to assess how viable your shop will be and also perhaps to negotiate land to build your own shop in the future.

How do you establish a community shop?



Key stages of establishing a community shop

- Preliminary research into historical provision of retail services in your village.
- Establish what you have already including information on shops in nearby villages.
- Talk to other communities who have established a shop.
- Find out if a community shop will be supported by your community.
- Hold a public meeting – involving the inhabitants is key to the success of a community shop.
- Set up a steering group / committee.
- Find suitable premises.