**Chalke Valley Stores – report for the year to April 2023**

It has been a very challenging time in the retail sector as a whole. The Hub has not been spared from this, having had to contend with rising wholesale prices, variable availability across most stock lines and increased general costs from oil and electricity to transport costs. This scenario continues.

The situation is exacerbated by pressure from competitors, especially from the supermarkets and their increased delivery van presence in the Valley. Also, all these commercial enterprises can obtain better wholesale prices then we can.

As flagged at the Hub’s Annual Members’ Meeting in March and mentioned previously in the February Broadsheet and other Valley newsletters, the Hub is trading at a loss. Fortunately, we have a good level of reserves which ensures we are solvent. As reliance on the reserves cannot continue indefinitely, we are establishing ways to improve income and to manage our overheads.

An overall increase in prices is impracticable as we need to do what we can to ensure our prices are competitive. We have a range of budget products which is what some of our customers require but conversely there is a demand for premium lines as well. Being a community provider, we must strike a balance.

We are pleased that our appeal for new people to join the volunteer team has borne fruit and we can always accommodate more!

Come and buy, come to the Café, come and volunteer!

Terry Jolly

Society Secretary

Chalke Valley Community Hub Ltd.