

The Candover Valley Community Store

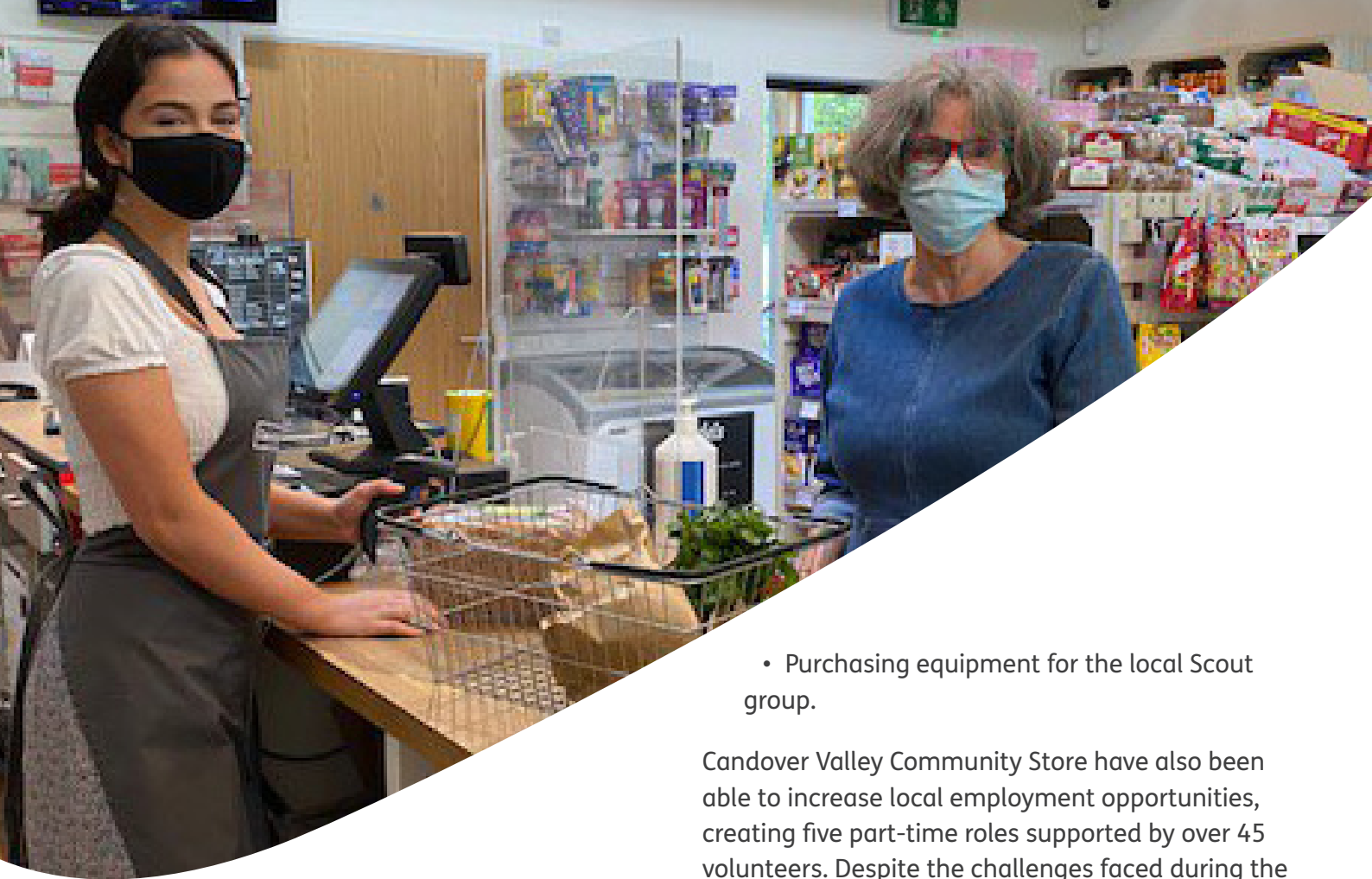
A free delivery system was set up for those who couldn't get to the store, with a 'village agent' in each of the areas in the valley organising their village's deliveries and orders. Some elderly volunteers had to step back from their duties due to shielding, but younger ones stepped up. They secured a fruit and vegetable wholesaler who provided fresh produce daily. The baker also supplied fresh bread. One of the biggest issues the store has faced has been finding storage of the volume required to keep the store fully functioning.

The Candover Valley Community Store is a social enterprise, established as a Community Benefit Society. It combines a well-stocked convenience store, a post office and a coffee shop. Opposite the local school and adjacent to the village hall, it has quickly become a community hub. Many local elderly residents don't have a car and public transport is limited, with a bus to Basingstoke only twice a week meaning the store really is a lifeline.

The Community Store opened mid-2019. Covid-19 had a dramatic impact. Trade built up considerably in early 2020 and tripled once lockdown was enforced. The store became a valuable amenity to the residents. The store manager managed to source loo roll, pasta, eggs and flour of all types when the supermarket shelves were empty!



During the pandemic, they were overwhelmed with the number of people who volunteered to work in the shop, particularly those who were furloughed. The worry was that once everything returned to normal and people went back to their normal jobs, the volunteers would disappear. However, that has not been the case.



The store continues to be very busy, with the coffee area now fully back in operation inside and out. They have been able to buy some new benches and tables which are in the grass area behind the store. This has proved very popular, not just for customers. It has provided a lovely outside space for residents, cyclists, and walkers to reconnect in a safe space. This is one of the many ways the Store has given back to the local community.

Increased trading volumes during Covid-19 have meant the store has had more profits to invest in the community. The Store has already contributed:

- Improved decking and play area at the pre-school
- Snowdrop planting for the Jubilee

- Purchasing equipment for the local Scout group.

Candover Valley Community Store have also been able to increase local employment opportunities, creating five part-time roles supported by over 45 volunteers. Despite the challenges faced during the pandemic, the Community Store has thrived during the pandemic. This community business is a great example of the positive impact that can be realised when social enterprises are supported by local communities, and can in turn invest in them.

Find out more about The Candover Valley Community Store: <https://www.cvcs.org.uk/>

