



Use it or lose it!

How many of us go shopping? The answer is all of us. How many of us use our local shops to go shopping? The answer is probably not that many of us – In fact how many of us even know where they are?

It is a fact that we need to buy things such as food, toiletries and clothes - the basics for life. However where we chose to buy them can have far reaching consequences.

In Iffley village there is a local community shop. There they sell postcards and stamps, food and drink and offer other services such as printing and photocopying, parcel collection and the promotion of local produce.

The shop is run by members of the local community who take turns to serve in the shop which is open most days. The staff do the ordering themselves and have an agreement with one of the local supermarkets who give them a competitive rate when purchasing the supplies. This helps the shop to remain open and provide a much needed service for the people who live nearby, many of whom rely on the shop especially in bad weather. A good example of a local community supporting each other.



We wondered if the current economic situation was affecting other local shops.

Not far away there is a small news agents and grocery shop called

Old Man's Premier. The manager, Anna Delal, told us that she had noticed more recently people had stopped buying expensive brands and luxury items. 'Even the children have less pocket money to buy sweets and whereas they used to come in with £2-3 they now come in with only £1 and this is affecting my business' she said.

She explained that smaller shops are losing out to the bigger supermarkets because they cannot carry all the range of goods that the larger retailers offer. To keep customers coming into her shop she has changed her brands to cheaper ranges and offered more deals such as half price on some items.

However it is not just the customers who can help. Anna suggested that the Council could do their bit to help the local shops and economy by lowering taxes or giving more of a rebate.

When asked if she thought she would survive she replied 'We have to!'

In contrast, next door was The Oxford Bed Company. In order to try and get people to buy their beds they have slashed their prices by up to 50% and have spent thousands of pounds on advertising to try and attract people into the shop. Unfortunately this has not worked and we found out the shop was closing down.



In fact on the day that we spoke to the gentleman who ran the shop, it was his final day in work and he was finishing for good.

He told us that he had been here for twenty years 'but you can only go on so long trying to pay the bills such as heating and lighting.... A drop in the rates would help but people are just not buying new beds and headboards, they can't afford them.'

Without the support of the local people a shop which has been there for twenty years has disappeared and the effects reach far wider than most people appreciate.

We found this out as we realised that a member of our own school community was directly affected by what had happened to The Oxford Bed Company. Her father was the man who had just lost his job there. She agreed to talk to us and explained that she hadn't known in advance that her dad was going to lose his job. 'Maybe he didn't want to upset me by telling me before hand' she said but our family felt 'shocked and upset'. She reckoned things were going to change now with less money coming into the house, such as not having as much pocket money. The biggest difference she has noticed is the fact that her dad is there every morning and in the evenings and ended by saying if her dad didn't get another job she felt 'life would be different in the long run'.

It brought it home to us just how the world economic situation we hear about on the news and don't pay much attention to actually can affect us all directly which made us appreciate even more the efforts our local Community run shop goes to in order to survive.

So the message seems to be to all people in communities across the United Kingdom, when it comes to your local shop USE IT OR LOSE IT!

A story for the BBC School News Report by Paul, Daniel and Chris from Iffley Mead School in Oxford.