

HOTV public Management Committee meeting (Zoom) minutes | draft

7 September 2020, 7:30pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), David Crabbe (Treasurer), Nick Sloan (Secretary), John Davison, Chris Reah (intermittently) and up to sixteen others

1.1 Apologies from Mike Blair.

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were unanimously agreed to be accurate.

Feedback from open day at the Royal Oak

3.1 GG invited Susan Crabbe to talk about the comments that had been harvested. SC: a wide variety of views, many comments on improving the external appearance of the building and the patio (awning/pergola); great enthusiasm for zero waste in the shop and a surprising number of requests to attract back motorhomes. The full list of comments is published on the website [*under Community Liaison on the HOTV Documents page*] and will be updated as more comments come in. GG: some of the suggestions contradict one another, but there is a lot of agreement on most matters. JD had had conversations from Church Close residents who opposed camper vans; more consultation required on this and other topics.

GG felt that the open day had been a very successful event, that there was a huge amount of positive energy behind the project, and that a commonly expressed comment was that the building was much bigger than people had realised.

NS suggested that we should repeat the exercise for those who were unable to come the first time round.

Trading update

4.1 Carolyn Dauncey gave an account of the last month's progress in the shop. They are continuing to stock new lines and attract new customers. Customers had been understanding about the lack of papers on Saturday due to the Extinction Rebellion Protest. There had been a lot of support for the shop's future plans shown during the open day, and a positive response to their wish-list of items to furnish the new shop. Carolyn and Jo are now working on the layout of the new shop, and the practicalities of working with volunteers in the future.

4.2 DC gave a brief run-down of the trading figures, which are on the website. There is a consistent weekly revenue of between 4 and 4.6K (net of VAT), which is excellent in the circumstances. We have some new costs, such as pensions and services in the Oak, but generally the figures are holding up well. We also made our first trading profit of £30.40 on drinks served at the Oak during the open day!

Revised business forecast

5.1 GG: our two major lenders asked us to put together a revised forecast taking into account changed circumstances since the original business plan. This revised forecast is on the website. DC has looked at it again over the last couple of weeks and sees no reason to change the overall picture in the light of recent trading figures, but invites any queries to contact@hotvssg.org. The forecast included legal fees of some 6K, whereas in fact Adrian Stables has very generously handled the conveyancing *pro bono*, for which we are extremely grateful. DC comments on the profit and loss table: the sum for pub profits in 2020 should be discounted since the pub is now unlikely to trade effectively until 2021, though this deficit is

balanced by the delay in employing a pub manager. From 2021 he is confident in the current forecast. Both Triodos and Co-op Banks were impressed by how prudent we had been in our assumptions. The key challenges are in maintaining shop trading levels and building pub trade. Our loan repayments will be 21K to September 2021, then rising to 33K/year. We will be looking for other sources of grant funding to help pay these off.

GG: the significant figures are in the bottom line of the cashflow, where it can be seen that while the annual cash flow does not turn positive until 2022, there is a strong positive cash balance throughout the period. A view shared by our lenders.

- 5.2 Paul Fielding asked if there was any prospect of raising more money from willing share-holders. GG replied that people could always invest if they chose to, though the share offer is technically closed. Some other community ventures have opted to refresh their share offers every few years.

Operations

- 6.1 Work in the Oak is being divided into phases. Phase 1 is to prepare for and install the shop, hopefully by the end of October. Phase 2 is to get the pub up and running, and phase 3 is to do necessary work on the flats upstairs and the function room. Part of our phase 1 work is to take the render off the SW wall in order to cure the damp problem, and we would love to take the render off the front too to restore the original brick façade. We will also be changing the mock-leaded windows, ideally including some of the window frames.
- 6.2 While Marilyn will continue to organise the shop volunteers via 3-Rings, JD will coordinate those who have volunteered to work on the building and garden. There will be a meeting of these volunteers at the Oak this Saturday morning at 10am. Anyone is welcome to come along.
- 6.3 GG says that heating, electrics and fire safety all have to be addressed before anything else. NS mentions that James Woods very kindly came to advise on accessibility on Sunday. All parts of the building will be wheelchair-friendly except for the function room and the upper level of the bar.

Membership liaison

- 6.4 CR monitors the email address contact@hotvssg.org and will respond to any incoming queries.

Finance/systems

- 6.5 DC and Sally Taylor are working on streamlining the accounting system using Xero, and refining the use of EPOS together with the rest of the shop group.

SITR

- 7.1 HMRC responded very quickly with an SITR3 form, and certificates have been sent out to all the initial applicants so that they can individually claim 30% tax back from their investments. A few later applicants will be receiving their certificates soon.

Three favourite pubs

- 8.1 NS: we have asked people to list their 3 favourite pubs as an easy way of deducing what people value in a pub. Most of the information is coming in via the contact email, and will be collated into a pub league table. The results so far appear to suggest a broad agreement on what makes a good pub.

Marketing the business

- 9.1 NS is talking to Emmy Batten who has volunteered to help with putting the word out over social media. Nothing specific to report so far.
- 9.2 Nicola Clark asked whether there would be overnight accommodation in the pub. GG replied that this was highly likely, but DC clarified that while the first floor flat was very likely to be let, it was unlikely that it would be available for short term or overnight stays. The plans for upstairs are however undecided at this point.

Landlord search

- 10.1 We have a carefully composed job description for a pub manager, on which we have taken advice, and which is available for inspection. While this is ready to run, we are not yet ready to advertise the job since we do not know when we will be in a position to employ a landlord. NS: although we are not actively recruiting, the appointment is so crucial that we should be keeping a lookout for any suitable candidates. DC: we may have to find a way of running the pub in the short term using volunteers from the village with the help of those who have had experience in the trade.

Pension plan

- 11.1 DC: we have set up a pension plan for employees into which we are paying 8% of eligible earnings per month.

Use of function room as a gym

- 12.1 Katy Ribton presented her idea for setting up a small independent gym in the function room. Work is needed in drawing up a business plan and in establishing whether it would be structurally viable, especially if the wall between the alleys were to be removed. There is no comparable facility nearby, and Katy felt that there was a need and that the health and other benefits could be considerable. Ann Finn asked if the gym would involve permanent equipment. KR: yes, leased and not huge. NS felt that the idea was generally worthy of support, but had reservations about tying up the function room in the long term. In the short term, it would be an advantage that access problems should not apply to gym customers. JD asked whether the gym could use only half the space. KR: very possible, and the toilets could be adapted easily. Liz Bennett felt that it would be good to put the function room to use while there were no other plans for it. Graham Lofting was concerned that allocating the function room to a gym in the long term would preclude its use for other things and could be detrimental to the project as a whole.

All but GG, DC, JD and NS leave the meeting.

- 13.1 JD raised the question of how much autonomy the operations group should have in making decisions on the works in the Oak. For example whether the group could go ahead and hire a contractor to overhaul the heating system. This led onto a general discussion of the (gas) heating and whether or not it was adequate. NS felt that in the pub it would be sufficient, especially in conjunction with the planned wood-burner. Another consideration is that ideally we would like to install solar panels on the skittle alley roof, so installing a new gas heating system could be pointless. GG suggested that grants would be available not only for solar, but also for improved insulation and heat pumps. **GG to send details of grants to DC.**
- 13.2 JD came back to the original question of whether the ops group had the autonomy to commission work or whether everything had to be approved by the full MC. GG was clear that work on the Oak lay squarely within the remit of the ops group, and that

the group should get on with it. NS: as long as we inform people what is proposed and give them time to question it, we can make executive decisions. JD: we will put together and publish a programme of works including costing at least for the bigger things. GG: while we need to be prudent with expenditure, for a number of reasons we have more financial headroom than was originally envisaged, so the ops group should establish priorities and get on with doing the work that is needed.

13.3 NS: we also need to put more creative energy into fundraising. GG agreed.

13.4 Carolyn and Jo have asked for a face to face meeting with the MC to discuss phasing in the pub. This will be the next closed MC meeting.

Meeting closes 9:05 pm (1h 35m)

The next meeting date to be agreed with Carolyn and Jo.