

## HOTV public Management Committee meeting (Zoom) minutes

5 October 2020, 7:30pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair (Vice-Chair), David Crabbe (Treasurer), Nick Sloan (Secretary), John Davison, Chris Reah, Jo Bown, Carolyn Dauncey and 14 others.

- 2.1 The minutes of the last (closed) meeting were unanimously agreed to be accurate.

### Financial Update

- 3.1 CD gave a brief report on trade in the shop over the last month. Several local developments may have caused a slight dip in sales recently, but the managers are keeping a close eye on the range stocked and rising to the challenge of keeping the shop profitable. Pre-orders for fresh fish are now available. Work is proceeding on the design of the new shop, and CD thanks the many people who have donated items.
- 3.2 DC comments on the trading figures, illustrated with a spreadsheet of sales for the first six months of trading. Despite the recent dip, sales as a whole have been far higher than expected. Shifts in the amount of stock held have distorted the figures to an extent; a stock-take is recommended once the shop has moved into the Oak, followed by the annual stock-take on 31st March. Direct costs are about £30K for the six month period, with a trading profit just under £2.5K. This is before a few exceptional costs and repayment of loans. The cost of utilities will rise in the Oak, and we are looking into ways of reducing it, including plans to generate our own energy. We will be able to reclaim business rates, and may find ways of mitigating potential domestic rates. The first loan and interest repayment of £777/month has been paid, and this will rise by about a further £1K as Triodos and SCF loans kick in. Budgets for spending on the refurbishment are being drawn up.
- 3.3 Another table is displayed to show average shop sales/customer visits/spend per visit over the first six months. Customer visits are consistent, and similar to the previous year, but spend is up. PayPoint transactions form a significant element. It is important to track these trends in order to inform our forward planning.
- 3.4 Dave Evans suggests that if a flat is let to a [pub] manager as part of a remuneration package, it might not be liable for domestic rates. **DC to investigate.** Tim Slattery, with public health in mind, asked whether tobacco was still top of the list of sales items. DC says that tobacco is still a big seller but not a profitable one. CD confirms this, but says that most people who come in to buy tobacco also buy other things.

### Work Groups: Operations

- 4.1 NS explains the decision to remove the render from the front and sides of the Royal Oak, primarily to cure the damp that was being retained by the cement render, but also to restore the architectural character of the building. We would like to remove the LH porch for the same reason, but we are waiting until we can see the condition of the brickwork behind it. The main shop entrance will become the door in the side wall which is more accessible.
- 4.2 The front windows and a few of the side ones are also being replaced; most of the existing windows are damaged and the lattice panes have proved very unpopular. We

aim to replace all existing windows over time as funds become available. GG displays a picture of the Oak in 1948. [Also available online, on the HOTV News page.]

- 4.3 GG mentions that a building-wide fire alarm system is being installed and that we are required to produce a fire assessment. CR is waiting for quotes for this.
- 4.4 JD: work is proceeding on the shop space; the electricians have nearly finished there. Dave Dyer will be tidying up and hanging a couple of new doors, and about 20 volunteers have joined a group co-ordinated by Tom Stobie to do all the painting. The flooring will be completed soon afterwards. The damp wall is drying well, the chimney needs to be capped to prevent water entering from above, but we are reasonably confident that damp will cease to be a problem. We probably won't be able to move the shop by the end of October, but early in November is a distinct possibility.
- 4.5 In response to a list of purchases required for the shop and café, the MC agreed to allocate £10K to JB and CD for this purpose.
- 4.6 GG squashed a baseless rumour that we were planning to demolish the wall behind the bus shelter.
- 4.7 GG raised the need to generate more volunteers to work in the shop once it moves into the Oak and the café opens. Marilyn Clarke has sent out emails to previous volunteers and will continue to canvas support. GG thanks her on behalf of HOTV. This will become an increasingly significant subject.

### **The Pub**

- 5.1 GG: a "non-material amendment" has been submitted to Planning to regularise our change of use, since the orientation of shop and pub has changed from that shown in our initial planning application.
- 5.2 GG: a variation of the alcohol license application to add off-sales has also been submitted. By the time the shop moves we should be covered for both on-and off-sales from 8am to 11:30pm.
- 5.3 GG: we need to generate revenue from the pub as soon as possible and would welcome ideas. JD points out that a limited amount of building work needs to be completed before we can use the pub side.
- 5.4 Dave Evans asks if we had progressed plans for marketing. GG replied that while JB and CD are handling publicity for the shop, we have not yet found anyone to do the same for the pub, but that pursuing a suggestion from Gill Slattery, Bridgwater College may be interested in taking us on as a project for their students of marketing.
- 5.5 GG: we are finalising the details of our landlord job description with a view to searching for suitable candidates as soon as possible. **GG and JD to confer.**

### **Gym**

- 6.1 GG: no material advance on the use of the function room as a gym. He feels it might combine well with a space for young people. Graham Lofting has reservations about tying up the space full time, and about the potential for attracting enough customers in the right age bracket. GG invites GL to join the discussion as it develops. GL agrees. Dave Evans asks if the financial forecasts in the Business Plan assumed the use of the function room as a pub space. GG says not specifically, and that we need to remain flexible about the ways in which we maximise community benefit in our use of the building. JD points out that the gym could have its own entrance, and that there are

many options for configuring both function room and skittle alleys. Susan Crabbe has noticed quite a lot of enthusiasm for the gym idea, and points out that it need not be there on a long contract.

### **Telephone Box**

- 7.1 The box by the playing field gate was bought (for £1) by the PC five years ago. It was initially to be restored by the Scouts, but this has not happened. There is a suggestion that it could somehow be incorporated into the Royal Oak. **For further consideration.**

### **Any other Business**

- 8.1 Paul Fielding: any reason why we could not use the café area as an ad hoc pub for evening drinks sales? Secondly, any news on further grant applications? GG: DC is looking into submitting an application for one particular grant to reduce our carbon footprint by installing solar panels. NS: we are aware that we should be applying for further grants and it is a high priority (among many others).

Kathy Davidson asks if volunteers involved in serving food would have to attend a food safety course. GG confirms that this is so and will be arranged.

Tim Slattery, reverting to an earlier discussion, supports the idea of providing facilities for youngsters, which, as GG points out, was one of the original aims of HOTV. NS says that there are many ideas for ways of using the building, for instance a film club in the function room. GG says that we have to be careful that different proposals do not compromise one another.

*Meeting closes 8:39 pm (69m)*

[The next scheduled meeting is the public HOTV meeting on Monday 2 November, at 7:30pm.](#)