

HOTV public Management Committee meeting (Zoom) minutes

2 November 2020, 7:30pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair (Vice-Chair), Nick Sloan (Secretary), John Davison, Chris Reah, Jo Bown, Carolyn Dauncey and about 20 others. Apologies from David Crabbe (Treasurer)

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

Financial Update

- 3.1 CD spoke about shop trading in October: steady but a little quieter because of the road closure last week. The shop has started selling fish, which has been well received. Trading will continue over the coming lockdown, and deliveries will be arranged on request. CD and JB are very grateful for the display items that have been donated. New chillers and a coffee machine have been ordered, and a dry goods dispenser will be ordered this week. Orders for Christmas items will be available soon.
- 3.2 The shop needs as much support as possible; even just buying a loaf of bread is appreciated and makes a difference.
- 3.3 GG, speaking on behalf of DC: a couple of soft trading weeks, but even so, sales for October were over 20K, which is in excess of what we were forecasting. Further details will be made available [on the website].
- 3.4 GG had asked DC to calculate a break-even point for trading from the Royal Oak. His preliminary estimate is that we need to be selling £6K of goods a week, net of VAT and PayPoint, but including the café. We are currently achieving about 4 to 5K in the box, so we feel this is a readily achievable aim in the new premises.
- 3.5 As of this morning we have a balance of about 114K. Expenses incurred on renovation are 14.5K to date. Total cost (spent and anticipated) is around 43K, which is far less than the 75K in the Business Plan, so despite unexpected difficulties we are in pretty good order financially. Pub trading remains the big imponderable.
- 3.6 Dave Evans suggests that CD and JB be given permanent contracts. GG advises that new contracts are under consideration and will be discussed at the next meeting.
- 3.7 GG relays a question that has been asked: now that HOTV is well under way, do we want to make it known that shares can still be bought? NS and JD say yes, and Tom Stobie points out that there will be newcomers arriving in the new houses who might be interested. **NS to ask Ian Upshall if it is too late to include a reference in his new Green Gazette.** [*Too late for this, but other ways will be found to spread the word.*]
- 3.8 Dave Evans mentions that other community ventures have sometimes used a second share offer to finance particular aspects of a project. Liz Bennett agrees that this might be a good way of finding extra money without sounding desperate.
- 3.9 GG says that we would probably be eligible for many grants, but only for specific projects that we have not yet started. Solar panels for the skittle alley roof is one possibility. Helen Gittins suggests that garden and skittle alley renovation might be two others. Liz Bennett suggested that kitchen renovation (and expansion) might be another eligible project. **HG to research funding for the garden.**

Work Groups

- 4.1 GG: we have had to reassess our working practices in the light of the recent announcement of a new lockdown. We are still aiming to open the shop on the 23rd November, but not the café, though take-away coffee will be available. Most of the work in the shop will be completed before this Thursday, and any work after that date will be done by a maximum of two people observing social distancing rules. Removals is a permitted exception, so we will stick to the plan to remove the fixtures and fittings from the Tilley's stable next week, following protocols to be agreed by JD and NS.
- 4.2 JD: we aim to make the move on Thursday 12 Nov and to set up the shop on Friday and all of the following week. We have volunteers for the move and could do with a few more, but no-one should feel pressured to help in the circumstances. GG asks if anyone present has concerns about our social distancing policy. No response.
JD and NS to develop a social distancing protocol for the shop move

External Work

- 4.3 GG reports that the shop window has been replaced and transforms the appearance. NS says that the removal of the render is almost complete, and thanks Neil, Paul, Tom and Robbie for their help. The NE gable end will not be stripped, but the NW (back) wall is being stripped, revealing not brick but Blue Lias. Sandblasting to clean up the brickwork is to start next Monday, following which a limited amount of brick repair will be necessary.
- 4.4 JD thanks John Hembrow and his family for taking all of the rubble and garden waste, which has been a great help and saved us a lot of money in skip hire.

Membership Liaison

- 4.4 GG reminds everyone that we have a Membership Liaison Officer, Chris Reah, who can be approached (via contact@hotvssg.org) with comments and concerns, which will then be sent on to the MC. This week there was one very strongly worded objection that the porch had been taken down without sufficient consultation. The reasons for taking it down are stated in an HOTV News item on the website, and no other concerns have been received before or since. GG asks whether any of those present have any concerns about the way the refurbishment is proceeding. No response, except that Paul Fielding suggests that we publicise [again] Chris' role as a channel for feedback. **We will flag this up.**

The Pub

- 5.1 GG: we advertised the pub manager job two weeks ago on caterer.com, and have so far received 63 applications; a shortlist of six has been selected for Zoom meetings before we embark on formal face-to-face interviews. Very few applicants are local, and the suggestion was made that we make it known in the local press that the job is available. Helen Gittins suggests that social media could be used to link to our job advertisement as well.
- 5.2 GG: it is unclear when we will be able to trade and in what form. We will continue to monitor the options as the pandemic evolves, but we would like to be able to sell drinks to accompany Carols in the Square and other local events that are able to take place.
- 5.3 Paul Fielding asks how much work needs to be done before the pub can open. JD replies that the only significant structural work is to widen the lower entrance to the

bar from the passage. It remains to be decided whether to press on with this now or to leave things as they are for the time being in order potentially to be able to open sooner.

Marketing

- 6.1 GG: we are still waiting for a response to the search for a marketing student at Bridgwater and Taunton College to take on our pub marketing as a project.
Graham to contact the member of staff involved.
- 6.2 Tim Slattery has sent news releases out to about 26 media outlets. Tim says that HOTV is a good news story to counterbalance the endless diet of Covid. Tim thanks Jenny Brown and Linda Silcock for documenting the story with photos. These will be a valuable resource in years to come.
Tim to mention the search for a pub manager in future press reports.
- 6.3 Paul Fielding asks whether we should be using social media to attract more volunteers. Marilyn Clarke (Volunteer Co-ordinator) says that Jo and Carolyn cannot cope with too many volunteers initially, while the shop is finding it's feet in the Oak and while Covid restrictions are in place. Volunteers are still very much encouraged to come forward since having sufficient numbers in the long term will be vital.
- 6.4 MC says that volunteer cake bakers are also being sought. They will need hygiene certificates which can be obtained online; the £12 cost of this will be borne by HOTV if requested in advance. Carole Joll has kindly offered to circulate the Stoke Meals cooks in case any of them would be interested in baking for the shop and café.
- 6.5 MC asks how numbers in the shop will be managed when it opens. JD felt that it should be possible to set up a procedure for controlling numbers from within the shop without using gatekeepers. Ann Finn points out that N Curry shop uses a bell.
The current Covid protocol to be updated for the relocated shop.
- 6.7 Tom Stobie proposes a big thank you to all the volunteers who have put so much effort into decorating the shop and café in time for the move. All agreed.
- 6.8 MB reported that while it had been the intention to gather volunteers to clean the kitchen and toilets, this will become impractical during the new lockdown, so he and Judy have volunteered to undertake the task themselves. Much appreciated by all present. MB has contacted a company for a quote to deep-clean parts of the kitchen.

Meeting closes 8:30 pm (60m)

The next scheduled meeting is the public HOTV meeting on Monday 7 December, at 7:30pm.