

HOTV public Management Committee meeting (Zoom) minutes

1 March 2021, 7:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair (Vice-Chair), David Crabbe (Treasurer), Nick Sloan (Secretary), John Davison, Chris Reah, Carolyn Dauncey, Jo Bown and 26 others.

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

Members feedback

3.1 Dave Evans asks if the issue of excess gas usage has been explored. NS says that the outside pipework has been checked for leaks and found good. The quantity remaining in the tank had been mis-read: it was a false alarm.

3.2 Susan Crabbe asks if there has been any progress on discouraging parking in the Square. GG: the intention remains to make disabled spaces in front of the Oak, but this will require agreement with Planning and Highways. Neil Morgan asks what the feeling is about using the pub car park as a general village car park. GG and JD are relaxed about this, though it will become more crowded when the school returns. A wider discussion on parking in the square ensues, including the suggestion of moving the postbox across to the Oak.

3.3 Susan Crabbe asks if a decision has been made on the name for the shop. GG says that Jo and Carolyn are considering various options based on the availability of domain names that might be suitable for their proposed new website.

3.4 Dave Evans asks about running costs for wood-burners. GG: there is no current allowance for this. CR: any costs associated with the wood-burners will be relatively insignificant. General agreement. DE suggests that the Royal Oak could be a flagship project for village greening, aiming to be carbon-neutral. GG agrees, mentions solar panels, and points out that we have to do this in stages and in the context of all the other work that is necessary. Keeping the project green has always been an aim and nobody opposes the carbon-neutral aspiration.

GG to raise the issue with the PC Forward Strategy Group for suggestions and help.

Shop update

4.1 CD says that trading continues strong, and that the shop is attracting new customers all the time, including those from outside who have heard about it and new residents. Mothers' Day is the next event. From April 12, the lifting of restrictions will allow customers to have coffee and snacks outside. A fuller café menu will follow as soon as the kitchen is ready. More volunteer roles will be available for helping with the café. A new shop website is planned to improve the online presence. Paul Fielding asks what is envisaged for the website. CD answers that initially it will provide information about the shop, but will expand to include a blog with stories about suppliers and recipes, acting as a marketing tool. Eventually online ordering will be added.

4.2 Marilyn Clarke asks about progress on till training. DC is getting closer to finishing written training material. **DC to complete this and have it approved by CD and JB.** Volunteers (in addition to DC) will then be recruited for the role.

- 4.3 GG asks Marilyn if she has anything to add on volunteers. Marilyn is planning to restart the process of applying for work permits for 4 young volunteers. This involves extra documentation due to covid restrictions.
- 4.4 DC: February sales were very similar to January: £26K, estimated gross profit £7.9K. This pretty much balances all the HOTV running costs including loan payments. There is currently £81K in the bank, with £20K of refurbishment costs still to come.

Financial: audit

- 5.1 DC: our financial year end is at the end of March, following which we are required to have an audit. Our accountants AC Mole can give us a professional endorsement of our books for much less than the £6–7K required for a full external audit. As a CBS with a turnover less than £5 million we are entitled to waive the default requirement for the full audit with the agreement of a majority Members. GG adds that such a course is in line with FCA guidance. He asks NS how the membership might be consulted. NS suggests circulating an email explaining the requirement. AC Mole require 3 months notice before accounts have to be submitted at the next AMM.
- 5.2 Ian Upshall asks if there are specific conditions for the vote to pass the waiver. DC replies that no more than 20% of votes cast, or 10% of Members entitled to vote, must be opposed. Ian further suggests that provided operating procedures are well documented and followed, if we can demonstrate this to the Members it reduces the importance of the audit. GG emphasises that we *are* being audited by AC Mole, but because they are the HOTV accountants they do not qualify as 3rd party auditors. Olivia Sanders asks if not having an external audit could compromise grant applications. GG says no, it is entirely normal for a CBS.
- 5.3 GG proposes that we ballot the Members on waiving a full external audit. Seconded by DC, **all MC members agree**. **DC and NS to liaise on organising a vote.**

Plans for opening up as lockdown winds down

- 6.1 MB runs through the possibilities so far as these can be predicted. It should be possible to serve coffee and cakes outside to groups of two from 8 March and to 6 (or two bubbles) from 29 March. Further opening up will depend on both evolving covid regulations and work on the kitchen. In theory, limited inside service should be possible from 12 April, with further opening up in June.
- 6.2 GG comments that while we are currently breaking even, increasing revenue is essential in order to ensure a financially viable future. We should be doing whatever we can to this end as soon as possible. Paul, Fielding suggests that we document the timetable on the website. GG concurs and MB points out that further details may be read in the last [Shop Group minutes](#). **NS to post a News item on the village website.**

Work groups

- 7.1 JD: nothing much new: pub renovation is proceeding apace with help from Dave Dyer and the eager band of volunteers. The new temporary stockroom is installed. There is a limited amount of work to be done on the flats, mostly decoration plus a new boiler, some replacement glazing units [and two fire doors].. Work on the garden will resume as the weather picks up.
- 7.2 NS: there has been a fierce debate about the external paint colour ever since sample patches went up; an informal poll of passers-by has suggested a large majority in

favour of the muted green. This would therefore be the default choice in the absence of serious objections. Susan Crabbe asks how many people have been asked. NS says a couple of dozen or more, confirmed by JD, who says we will not please everybody. SC agrees, but says that it is a significant building and green would be a big change. Why not ask the Members? GG argues in favour of green, and says that any consultation would delay things, but agrees that this is an option.

- 7.3 Liz Bennett says that she was unaware of the discussion and would have like to have been consulted. She feels that ochre/pink/orange is the vernacular range for the area. Sarah Evans says that paler colours tend to be cheaper than more pigmented colours, and suggests that CD and JB should be final arbiters. Ian Upshall objects to the lack of consultation or information, and suggests white. Choosing the colour is an issue and must be decided democratically so that we can move on. GG proposes therefore that we hold a vote by circulating the Members and asking for their opinions, either by email or on a chart in the shop. **GG to email Members.**
- 7.4 Liz Bennett reports that her home internet connection was down last week and 90% of her work being online she was able to work from an upstairs room in the Oak, for which she thanks JD. She wonders whether there are plans to offer hot-desking as a regular service at the Oak. GG replies that this seems a good idea and we will look into it.
- 7.5 Marilyn asks whether the £20K allocation for completing the refurbishment includes the kitchen. GG and DC say no. DC says that we have a very provisional budget of £5K, depending on what needs to be done and when. MC asks when the kitchen is likely to be ready. MB is working on a plan, and aims to prepare it for basic cooking as soon as possible. Sarah Evans thinks £5K sounds too little but NS suggests that from what we know so far, there should not be too much to do. Neil Morgan asks if the kitchen is to serve the pub as well. GG says in the long term, yes. Paul suggests that we can start work before all Mike's research is concluded and offers his help. GG and MB agree. **MB to arrange for cleaning of extractor and appraisal of gas fittings.**
- 7.6 GG thanks Robbie, Olivia and Neil for work on the repointing of the brickwork and asks when it is likely to be finished. NS hopes by the end of March, but it is weather-dependent. GG points out that flowers are blooming both in the car park and the side of the shop. JD thanks Paul Foley for offering railway sleepers for use in the garden.
- 7.7 MB says that Carolyn and Marilyn are busy working on updating all the documentation on shop operations. Aprons for shop volunteers are also being planned.
- 7.8 MC asks if the leak in the kitchen roof has been mended. JD: yes. Susan Crabbe thanks JD for sorting out the corridor lighting.

Personnel

- 8.1 GG: we are adopting a different approach to seeking a pub landlord since our initial advertising produced such a low number of viable candidates. We are now putting the word out via various contacts in the trade. We may employ a temporary barman in the early days of reopening depending on how the search goes.
- 8.2 Marilyn asks if short-term letting of the flat is worth pursuing as long as we have no landlord. GG: it remains an option. Dave asks if the flats have EPCs, and says that it is illegal to let out accommodation with an EPC threshold lower than E. CR refutes this.

- 8.3 GG has submitted an application to the government Kickstart programme and is waiting to hear back. The programme offers paid work experience for young people in the area for 6 months. We would not be obliged to hold the job open beyond the 6 months, but might if it was working well. Either way it would get the employees started in employment and enhance their prospects for further job applications. In terms of the scheme, "local" is a wide term, so if anyone knows of young people in the village who might be interested, they should register for the scheme with the DWP. Olivia suggests posting information about this on Nextdoor.

Publicity

- 9.1 GG thanks Tim Slattery for arranging for the mention on ITV News, and for the article in the Leveller. Tim has more publicity planned.

Annual Member's Meeting

- 10.1 It is agreed to hold this on 6 September. It will include an election for up to 3 MC members.

Meeting closes 8:47 pm (1h 47 m)

[The next scheduled meeting is the public HOTV meeting on Tuesday 13 April, at 7:00 pm.](#)