

HOTV Management Committee meeting minutes

The Royal Oak, 15 July 2021, 7:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair (Vice-Chair), David Crabbe (Treasurer), Nick Sloan (Secretary), John Davison, Jo Bown, Carolyn Dauncey, Phil Evans
[Apologies from Chris Reah]

Minutes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be accurate.

Shop operations

- 2.1 Covid policy: GG asks whether we should be changing our policy in response to the lifting of official restrictions from July 19, and suggests that we do not. CD agrees, but says that some customers may be reluctant still to wear masks. PE would not object to customers coming to the bar to pay, but would maintain table service for those who want it, and would still ask people to check in for test & trace.
- 2.2 All agreed that we ask customers to maintain current policy in the shop and café: wear masks, max 4 plus staff at a time. In the pub, customers should still be asked to sign in (one per group) but may order or pay at the bar, preferably wearing masks when not drinking. **GG to circulate update to this effect.**
- 2.3 The shop has been having difficulty with high temperatures caused by heat output from the chillers deteriorating stock, especially overnight when the doors are closed. Some remedial measures have been taken, but more ventilation is needed urgently. CD is particularly concerned that there should be no reputational damage to the shop if the problem persists. JD reports that Steve Daniels has come up with recommendations for a scheme to vent warm air to the outside. **JD to discuss this further with Steve and with Dave Dyer, and to implement a solution next week.**

Pub operations

- 3.1 The pizza evening on 14 July was well received and commercially successful, with 33 pizzas sold. It is planned to repeat this on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. Many thanks to PE's parents for providing the pizzas at cost.
- 3.2 GG asks if we have a policy on customers buying alcohol in the shop when the pub is closed and drinking it outside. CD has concerns about excessive drinking interfering with the enjoyment of café customers. The general feeling is that the practice should not be encouraged but is not necessarily a practical problem. GG suggests that it is for the shop managers to decide how to handle this, and that we can discuss it again if it proves to be an issue.
- 3.3 PE says that a few people have said they'd like to have a drink at lunchtime on Saturdays, but at the moment it is not worth the effort to open then. JD points out that in the long run, when restrictions lift and PE is living in, opening times will extend.

Financial headlines

- 4.1 DC has circulated some notes with the latest figures. The capex total so far is £79K, not including the cost of extra ventilation in the shop and installation of solar panels. We have had new investment since May of nearly £5K. Shop/café sales are currently around £7K per week and pub sales around £1K. There is a reasonably steady balance in the bank, currently £58K, though operating costs will rise by £1K from August

when higher repayment rates kick in and our VAT payments will increase as VAT reclaims on capital expenditure decrease.

Business continuity

- 5.1 GG asks how we will cope in the event that either or both shop managers take holidays or are obliged to self-isolate. CD feels that the risk of this will rise as restrictions are lifted. There are at least three volunteers qualified to work the till, but they could not be expected to work the hours required to stand in for the managers, including early starts, onerous opening up routines and coffee serving. GG wonders whether the kickstart scheme could provide a possible answer, and also whether in the meantime there might be a young person in the village who would like to take on a job as a stand-in assistant. GG suggests advertising a post on Facebook and Nextdoor, stressing that the post would be part time.
- 5.2 PE suggests that he could be trained to work in the shop to cover for the managers, since there is [currently] limited overlap in opening times. CD points out that she and JB are both qualified to work the pub as well, increasing the scope for mutual cover.
- 5.3 GG had been rung by somebody from Kickstart who said that our application had initially been blocked for want of a mechanism to ask us questions. He has now confirmed that HOTV is eligible, but it would take 2 to 3 weeks to process an application. Any candidate for a Kickstart post has to be on universal credit, registered with the DWP. GG proposes that we advertise the scheme on Facebook and Nextdoor. **GG to draft an advert, to be approved by JB, CD and PE.**

Work groups

- 6.1 MB reports that work on the kitchen is nearly complete. Someone is coming to deep-clean the kit on Monday 26 July for £130. MB has sourced and fitted parts to repair pizza oven and hob. The incoming chef (when we have one) will be free to adjust the position of equipment to suit. We can soon start bringing crockery etc. back into the kitchen from storage in the skittle alley.
- 6.2 NS: work on decoration of the flats is continuing apace thanks to the volunteers. JD says that problems with the showers have been resolved and they are nearly completed. He has a list of minor items for Dave Dyer, possibly including new electrical sockets for the café. NS to order a replacement sliding door for the main flat from Normandy. (The café/garden door is already on order.)
NS and JD to agree a ramp to provide stepless access to the car park door.
- 6.3 JD repeats that the refurbishment volunteers have done spectacular work and GG proposes a volunteers' evening in appreciation of all their work, with drinks and pizzas on the house. Tuesday 10 August is proposed for this. All active volunteers from the refurbishment team, the garden team and the shop will be invited.

Recruiting cook/chef

- 7.1 GG has advertised via SWTC/Somerset Jobs but received no response. MB has spoken to Andy Croker who has drawn a blank from his contacts. CD reports the same. There is a national dearth of people willing to do the work. There is a suggestion that we could host some third party street food on individual nights, including fish & chips, Mexican and tapas. The kitchen could be made available to them. GG suggests consulting Tom Kerridge and CD suggests messaging food providers advertising on social media. JD recalls volunteer snack nights at the King Alfred. In response to a

question from NS, CD says that volunteer cooks have to have hygiene and allergy training in order to work in the kitchen. One other possibility would be to rent the kitchen to a self-employed chef. NS asks if it would be worth our advertising more widely for a chef despite the national shortage. CD suggests that it might attract someone who wanted to move out of town. JD points out that we have generated a lot of ideas, but that it needs one person to co-ordinate them and do the research. He asks PE if he might take on this role. PE agrees, subject to further discussion.

GG to set up a focussed group to take these ideas forward as a matter of priority.

Facility for young people

- 8.1 GG: there has been a lot of casual damage around the village recently, reflecting the fact that young people have nowhere to gather and are bored. Two people have offered to support an initiative to provide some form of facility. This is the one remaining gap in our social plan. Is the time ripe to close this? Sara Sollis proposed 18 months ago that we should hold a pizza night for young people to canvass their views. JD suggests a youth club, but GG argues that what we are proposing is not an adult-supervised group but a self-guided meeting place for young people. All agreed that a meeting to invite young people to express their views is the first step.

GG to talk to Sara Sollis and Anne Merritt about organising this.

Newsletter

- 9.1 GG invites anyone to submit anecdotes and items of interest for the next newsletter.

Meeting closes 9:37 pm (1h 33m)

The next scheduled meeting is the public HOTV meeting on Monday 2 August, at 7:00 pm in the Royal Oak.