

HOTV open meeting minutes | draft

The Royal Oak, 18 January 2022, 7:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair, David Crabbe, Simon Dauncey John Davison, Nick Sloan, Ann Woods, Jo Bown, Carolyn Dauncey and about 15 others. [Apologies from Paul Fielding and Phil Evans.]

Preliminaries

- 1.1 The minutes of the 4th January MC meeting were agreed to be accurate.
- 1.2 GG welcomes two Members new to the village: Alan and Anne Carr. We are also delighted to see Sue and Robert Smyth back amongst us.

Matters arising

- 2.1 Ian Upshall asks if a clearer distinction could be made between Management Committee minutes and the minutes of open Members' meetings. **NS to do this.** [*Website listings will henceforth read MCM for Management Committee meeting and OM for open meetings.*]
- 2.2 GG invites feedback on the quality of all aspects of the pub offerings. Olivia Sanders and MB have some doubts about the food. Most people express satisfaction but a few feel that it could be improved, and in particular that it could vary more. SD says that feedback after meals has been universally positive. CD points out that Jason is having to work within the limitations of the kitchen. It is suggested that people have difficulty in voicing reservations, but SD stresses that honest feedback is essential if any shortcomings are to be addressed.

Financial

- 3.1 GG: "an interesting time financially": stellar trading over Christmas, revenue has exceeded expectations, but so, unfortunately, have our costs, which has eroded our reserves. We should be optimistic, but also in the short term cautious.
- 3.2 DC: overall sales at £311K are well ahead of our July 2020 forecasts, though after taking the cost of buying stock for re-sale into account, the gross profit was £107K, very close to the forecast of £108K. Net profit however, after overheads such as salaries, running costs and interest repayments, was £4.7K as against a budget of £11K. The shop has performed outstandingly, and the pub respectably considering the delays and difficulties encountered, but operating expenses have been higher than anticipated, particularly electricity and maintenance costs. Fuller details of our financial performance and a breakdown of expenses can be studied in [HOTV sales and expenses to December 2021](#).
- 3.3 DC: The recently installed PV panels have not yet had a significant effect on our electricity costs, though they should help as the weather improves. They should offset about 20% of our energy consumption. In response to a question about which phase the PV panels are connected to, NS suggests that they should be feeding all three phases. This was one reason why we recently transferred circuits in order to balance consumption across the phases.
- 3.4 GG says that we are still in the process of gathering data to produce a new business plan that more accurately reflects our actual trading. It is nevertheless striking how closely reality has conformed to the assumptions in our August 2020 business plan.

- 3.5 GG tells a sorry tale of incompetence by HSBC in servicing our bank account, in particular failing to provide a debit card to obviate the need for most cash transactions. We continue to pursue this. The possibility of moving to another bank has been explored, but Triodos (one of our lenders) has stopped providing business accounts and experience suggests that most major banks are no better than HSBC. DC adds that the vast majority of our payments are made via BACS, and our main reason for wanting to update our banking arrangements is to avoid cash payments.
- 3.6 GG reports that two village organisations have requested donations from HOTV.
- 1) The Playing Field Management Committee has mentioned that Nicola used to make a donation every year in recognition of the business brought in by Stoke Stampede. Ian expresses doubts about the precedent of one village organisation asking for donations from another. Several people are concerned about paying donations when our own financial position is such that we are having to limit our spending, others speak in favour of donating. SD points out that a significant donation would negate most of our profit on the day of the Stampede. Trevor Daniels (Treasurer of the PFT) tells us that the Stampede is expensive to mount and the takings only pay for a fraction of the annual costs incurred by the PFT. A vote is taken and a majority are opposed to making a donation this year.
 - 2) A request from the Friends of the School to support mouse racing. For similar reasons it is decided not to contribute this year to the mouse racing.

Operations

- 4.1 **Shop:** CD reports very busy trading in December, including a successful Christmas Fair with 16 stallholders and lots of visitors. There was good take-up of Christmas pre-orders for meat, veg, cheese and bread, and of Christmas hampers. Ruaridh Moss has been welcomed to the team as a Kickstart employee in January and is proving very useful and popular. The team of volunteers remains very much valued. CD and JB continue to explore ways of encouraging more customers.
- GG thanks both managers for all their efforts throughout the year. All concur. GG highlights the achievement of building such a successful community business from scratch, thanks to the contributions of all who have helped, very much including all the many volunteers, including a special mention for Roger Brown for building his vegetable store.
- 4.2 **Pub:** SD is very pleased with the way the pub is going. The support over Christmas was excellent, with lots of bookings, both midday and evening for the Christmas menu. The Christmas quiz was very successful, (but if anyone has one, SD would welcome a PA system to spare his voice next time). There will be another quiz on Wednesday 26th, following which the last Wednesday of the month will become a regular quiz night. Jason is planning to change the menu as well as doing special nights, such as pizza night, which will coincide with quiz nights. He is also planning home-made burgers and pies. Lady skittlers are playing regularly but the men less so due to concerns about Covid. SD points out that the skittle alley is available for use any time the pub is open.
- 4.3 GG reiterates the sentiment expressed at the last meeting that we are keen to make the Oak welcoming to wheelchair users. Access is good though not yet perfect. If possible, please let us know your needs in advance and we will find a way of accommodating you.

- 4.4 GG asks what is being done to avoid a repeat of the overheating problems in the shop and stockroom last summer. JD says there is no real alternative to air conditioning when the ambient temperature is high.

JD to come up with a proposal that can be implemented before the summer.

Phase 3

- 5.1 GG introduces the prospect of the next phase of building work to bring the function room into use, introducing an accessible toilet, and potentially reconfiguring the layout. NS has prepared a proposal to publish with a view to receiving the views of Members and others. We do not currently have enough money in the bank to finance these developments, but Olivia and GG have been researching grant applications, so that we need to plan now what we should be doing when the money is available.

NS to publish the draft proposal on the website.

Young people

- 6.1 GG: the lack of activities for teenagers is increasingly being seen as a problem across the village. We are working with an organisation called the Community Youth Project who run several projects in Somerset. We aim to hold a meeting in the Oak where young people will be invited to say what they would like to see, and to discuss the viability of various options. AW asks if the Scouts are successful. GG replies that they are thriving but for the most part only serve the needs of children up to 12 years old. We are looking to provide facilities predominantly for children from 12 to 17+ (driving age). This is a village-wide initiative, sponsored by the PC. Ian suggests that all village organisations with any relevance to young people should be invited to participate.

Other

- 7.1 AW congratulates Phil on setting up the pub Facebook page.
- 7.2 AW asks whether a film club in the function room would be a good idea. There is enthusiasm for this but GG points out that access is a problem. This is an issue that has been considered for some time, with an external lift being seen as the most likely long-term solution. The fire escape also needs to be mended before the function room can be used for anything, but this should be done soon.
- 7.3 Anne Carr says how impressed she and her husband Alan are by HDTV and how welcome they have been made to feel since coming to the village in December. A much appreciated note to end on.

Meeting closes 8:10 pm

The next MC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 1st February at the Village Hall.