

HOTV Management Committee meeting minutes | draft

The Village Hall, 4 January 2022, 7:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair, David Crabbe, Simon Dauncey John Davison, Paul Fielding, Nick Sloan, Ann Woods

Minutes of the last meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the 29th November meeting were agreed to be accurate.

Matters arising

- 2.1 AW asks if there are plans to improve the supply of hot water to the kitchen. JD confirms that an instantaneous water heater to the sink is being installed.
- 2.2 AW asks if there have been any developments on cleaning arrangements in the pub. SD has discussed this with Phil, and currently there appears to be no need for change.

Financial

- 3.1 GG says that we had a good period of trading over Christmas. This has halted the decline in our reserves but has not yet been sufficient to reverse it. Our revenues and margins are just where we would have expected, but salaries and energy costs are higher than we had originally budgeted for.
- 3.2 DC: we have to clear about £16K a calendar month to break even. The shop will have generated a gross profit of about £14K in December and the pub (including food) over £5K. Shop revenue has exceeded our expectations, but pub revenue is about six months behind where our forecast, partly due to the pandemic, but also because we started offering food much later than anticipated.
- 3.3 There will be about £31K in the bank once outstanding shop bills have been paid, with foreseeable outgoings of about £10K. Even so, we would expect to be back in the mid-30s by the end of this month. We need to concentrate where possible on cutting our costs while increasing revenue.
- 3.4 GG proposes that we postponed the public meeting scheduled for 11 Jan in order to discuss the financial challenges with the managers before laying out the position to Members. The soonest this can practically take place is next Tuesday evening, so it is agreed to defer the public meeting until 18th January.
- 3.5 JD and others point out that the overall progress of HOTV is an amazing success story. We have enjoyed huge support from the community which we need to encourage and grow.
- 3.6 DC: Loan repayments are £1,160 a month, reducing by about £10 each month, which is on budget and manageable. GG raises the issue of salaries, and the great disparity in hours worked. It is generally agreed that we need to exert more control over these in order to reduce costs. **GG, DC and SD to meet the managers, to better understand how hours are being clocked up and to see what can be done to reduce them.**
- 3.7 GG: it follows from the above that the business plan should be updated to reflect trading realities. **DC to provide updated figures in support of this.**
- 3.8 GG: HSBC is putting further Kafkaesque difficulties in the way of updating signatories and providing a debit card. GG will pursue this, but also investigate switching the current account to Triodos. The issue there remains how to bank cash.

- 3.9 In order to overcome the difficulties with HSBC, GG proposes a motion to move to the requirement of only one signatory for bank payments. After some discussion this is **unanimously agreed**.

Operations

- 4.1 SD says that Jason will be updating the menu, as well as laying on specials nights for curry, pies and pizza. The quiz night was very successful and will be repeated, as well as the regular Thursday music nights, and Wednesday and Thursday skittles nights. other suggestions are welcomed.
- 4.2 JD suggests that we need to do more to to publicise the Oak and events. Phil is posting information on Nextdoor, but we still need to ramp up our social media presence. Phil is trying to establish an updated presence on Tripadvisor. MB points out that Google still tends to direct searches to the old Royal Oak site. **GG to contact Nicola to have this taken down or altered.**

Covid contingency plans

- 5.1 GG: The pandemic has impacted customer numbers over Christmas and the new year, with several cancellations. There is a sharp rise of Covid infections in the area, and a high level of uncertainty about the future, in terms of both government regulations and the willingness of customers to come out to the pub.
- 5.2 GG refers to contingency plans prepared by SD in the event of pubs being closed down. We would have set up to provide take-aways, though the likelihood of having to do this seems to be receding. In the event of Phil catching Covid or having to self-isolate, it is agreed that we could probably man the bar with volunteers, and SD has volunteered to keep the cellar running. If Jason catches Covid we would have to close down the kitchen. We would attempt to keep the shop open if the managers were unavailable, but how to do this would depend on circumstances.
- 5.3 Assuming the Stoke Stampede goes ahead on Sunday 9th, SD suggests that the best plan would be to provide for customers out of doors, taking drink and bacon roll orders through the window.

Consolidating purchasing

- 6.1 GG raises the issue of whether we could streamline our purchasing by using a smaller number of wholesalers, automating some of our ordering processes and potentially having more of our stock delivered from more local outlets. JD says that the Broughton community shop has [most of] their stock controlled by their EPOS system and refreshed automatically every Thursday. Moving to a comparable system would save time and go a long way to obviating current problems with stock control. Our first priority should be to research and update our EPOS system, including any additional hardware required. **Agreed that we put everything in place soon to streamline purchasing from Bookers, and minimise small-scale purchasing from Martins. To be discussed with shop managers at 11 Jan meeting.**
- 6.2 AW asks about the cost of wastage from out of date stock. A lot of time is spent by volunteers checking dates and reducing or disposing of outdated items. DC says that this is difficult to quantify because it is rolled into the cost of sales. Broughton Shop book wastage more explicitly in their accounts and it is agreed that we should do the same. **DC to make necessary changes to book-keeping system.**

- 6.3 MB asks if useable but end-of-date stock could be passed to the kitchen, as is standard practice in some businesses. It is agreed that more effort should be made to make good use of stock before it has to be thrown away and in any case to record wastage.

Disabled access

- 7.1 AW points out that while a lot of trouble has been taken to widen doorways and install ramps, there is no table for more than two in the wheelchair-accessible parts of the bar. The café has been used as a bar extension, but it is agreed that if booked in advance, a larger table could be arranged in the main bar for wheelchair customers. NS repeats that we would like to provide an accessible toilet as soon as possible (it is a crucial element of Phase 3), and wheelchair friendliness was always a core aim.

Personnel discussions

- 8.1 GG reported back on fruitful discussions he had held with all the managers to review issues that had cropped up over the last year. One aim was to identify any vulnerabilities to the business and to adapt practices accordingly. (e.g. items 3.6 and 5 above). Trading objectives were set for next year: £7.2K/week net sales for the shop and £3K for the pub.

Phase 3

- 9.1 GG raises the prospect of applying for a Queen's Jubilee grant aimed at community businesses. NS says that Olivia has offered to help with grant applications. GG suggests that if possible Phase 3 should be grant-funded in the first instance, and that a cost-benefit analysis should determine any further self-funding.

PV panels

- 10.1 DC reports that the PV panels have so far generated 950K kW hours, which is good going considering the season and weather.

Other

- 11.1 MB asks if there are any developments about the damaged wall (opposite the shop). JD has established that the part that was knocked over is not the responsibility of HOTV, and will be rebuilt by the owner. The ownership of the rest is unclear, but it is not considered dangerous. **JD to pursue.**
- 11.2 GG compliments Roger Brown on the fruit and vegetable shelter that he is building outside the shop. Some discussion ensues on whether it is sited in the optimum place. JD raises the possibility of swapping entrance gate and fence. **JD and NS to discuss.**

Meeting closes 8:54 pm

[The next meeting will be a public meeting on Tuesday 18th January at the Royal Oak.](#)
[The next MC meeting is scheduled form Tuesday 1st February at the Village Hall.](#)