

## **HOTV open meeting minutes**

The Royal Oak, 5 April 2022, 7:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair, Jon Cochrane, John Davison, Simon Dauncey, Nick Sloan, Ann Woods and 15 others  
[Apologies from Paul Fielding and Carolyn Dauncey]

### **Preliminaries**

- 1.1 The minutes of the 1st March meeting were agreed to be accurate.

### **Accident reporting**

- 2.1 GG: this is a placeholder item to record any recent health and safety incidents. None to report since the dishwasher fire in January. JC asks if the machine was correctly fused? NS and JD confirm that it was, and that there was a serious fault within the machine itself. The suppliers replaced it with a new one which is performing well.

### **New treasurer**

- 3.1 GG: David Crabbe having resigned after a long period of impressive service as treasurer, Jon Cochrane has volunteered to replace him. GG invites JC to introduce himself. JC started his career with Clark's Shoes, then moved on to Mars where he worked in finance for 25 years and subsequently in the Middle East and Moscow. He is now retired and lives in Meare Green.
- 3.2 GG points out how lucky we have been throughout this enterprise in finding people with the right skills at the right moments. We are grateful to John for putting himself forward.
- GG proposes JC as treasurer, seconded by NS, unanimously agreed. GG further proposes that JC be co-opted onto the MC; seconded by MB, unanimously agreed.

### **Encouraging Member feedback**

- 4.1 GG says that there has been surprisingly little feedback from our 260+ Members on how HOTV is performing. Is there anything we should be doing different or better to encourage more engagement? John Attwood points out that those attending this meeting are all similar in terms of age and prosperity, and suggests that those outside this demographic may feel excluded. GG and others say that customers of the pub and shop represent a wider cross-section of the community, but do not receive Member updates and maybe we should be extending the reach of our communications. It is agreed that while we have broadly achieved the aims of our original community benefit plan, we should always be looking for ways of being more inclusive. Ian Upshall highlights the difference between communication (telling people things) and engagement (encouraging them to react). Ian suggests that we should be doing more to increase engagement.
- 4.2 Alan Carr laments the number of casual acquaintances who say they never visit the pub or shop and suggests that we might improve our publicity. GG and JD agree that this is something we have not paid enough attention to and invite suggestions. MB wonders whether it is time to conduct a new survey to invite opinions on how we are doing and what we might be missing. Discussion to be continued.

## Financial

- 5.1 GG distributes copies of a [page of graphs](#) which show the trend of the businesses across the last 12 months. Shop sales over the last year, exclusive of VAT, were £334K compared with £268K the previous year. Estimated gross profit is £111K equating to a 33% margin on sales. Pub sales for the first year of operation are £70K and has shown very strong growth across quarters (thanks to Phil, and Jason). The pub margin is about 60%. Although the performance of both businesses has been extremely healthy, we have to pay overheads of around £16K a month (mostly salaries, energy costs and loan repayments, but also continuing capital expenses) in order to break even. We are approaching break-even, and expect to surpass it as profits rise (and some overheads fall), but we are not there yet. We should be pleased with the way both businesses have performed, but we need actively to pursue ways of building trade.
- 5.2 JC talks about pricing levels in the shop and the need to increase turnover in the pub. Tom Stobie raises the issue of our vulnerability to staff sickness. GG says that we will be able to be more resilient when we have enough turnover to justify taking on more help. Sarah Evans asks whether the price of alcohol could be raised. SD says that prices have recently been raised slightly, but that we are consciously keeping them as low as possible so as not to alienate customers.
- 5.3 GG: updating our Business Plan is still a work in progress.
- 5.4 GG: significant anticipated expenditure includes replacement kitchen door and windows and a new bathroom suite for the main flat.
- 5.5 GG: work is ongoing with an application to the Prince's Trust, but the administrators have not been encouraging. AW had suggested that local Rotary and Lions clubs sometimes give grants for accessibility. **AW agrees to look into this.**
- 5.6 GG points out that obtaining grants to offset capital expenditure would not have any impact on our operating base. One option to consider would be a supplemental share offer. This could be used in a number of ways, viz to pay off loans and reduce our finance costs or to fund schemes to increase turnover. We need to come up with a plan to put to the Members. JD suggests that instead of (or as well as) going back to current investors we could push to widen the membership both to new residents and to previous sceptics. He offers to launch a fresh campaign in the autumn.

## Shop, pub and café operations

- 6.1 GG comments that Carolyn Dauncey has not been able to come because of a recent bereavement and we all send our sympathy to her. SD says that Carolyn has asked him to pass on her gratitude to all of those who have sent kind messages and to the many volunteers who have stepped in to help cover her absence, and especially to Jo.
- 6.2 GG says that following a dip in trade after Christmas, the shop has seen a noticeable rise in custom over the last week. GG is surprised by the lack of take-up of the lunchtime café menu, which is very good value. Other local businesses have also experienced a few slow months. Sarah Evans suggests that rising petrol prices should work in favour of shopping locally.
- 6.3 GG: A stock-take at the end of March confirmed the value of stock as being about £15.6K. This was much as expected and represents about two weeks of sales, though

there is a bias towards fresh produce in sales. We are working on improving our processes to automate ordering and streamline stock control.

- 6.4 JD has obtained a quote for air-conditioning the shop to cope with high summer temperatures. We are not in a position to implement this scheme at the moment because the cost is so high, but it is a problem that has to be addressed and discussions are ongoing.
- 6.5 GG says that we are very much indebted to every one of the volunteers who have done extra hours to keep the shop going recently, but there is a suggestion that we should be trying to attract fresh volunteers. Finding people to do cleaning is particularly difficult. Alan Carr says he would be willing to do bar work. JC asks if we have a record of who declared themselves willing to act as volunteers in the original questionnaire? Marilyn Clarke points out that there were several people involved in the early days who have since dropped out. GG suggests a mail drop to inform new residents who may not be aware of HOTV. **JD offers to organise this and GG to look at the survey list of volunteers with a view to inviting them to help.**

### **Phase 3**

- 7.1 This is a proposal for rejigging the building to add the few remaining features from our original plan as well as adding new ones and optimising the use of the building. The proposal can be seen on a door in the lower bar and on the [website](#) . GG says that most comments he has heard have been concerns about moving the skittle alleys upstairs, but that people have generally said that on reading the commentary they understand why this is being proposed. NS says that the proposal is a tangle of interdependent decisions, and encourage peoples to come up with comments or alternative proposals that take everything into account. We do not currently have the capital to embark on Phase 3, though as GG points out it does represent a focus for fundraising, and should lead to increased revenue.
- 8.1 Stuart Mark says that Rob Hembrow has asked him if we still want the pool table that he and Liz had very kindly offered. The answer is very much yes, although a permanent position for it will be dependent on Phase 3. For now it can be located upstairs in the function room. A discussion ensues on other potential games and their profitability. **NS to contact the Hembrows.**

### **Solar panels**

- 9.1 GG: as the weather improves and days lengthen, the solar panels are beginning to make a significant contribution to our electricity supply, £380 worth in the last month. Our total electricity usage is around £1.5K per month, of which a third is consumed in the flats and two thirds in the shop and kitchen. We expect to see our bills come down in the summer.

### **Other**

- 10.1 AW asks if the bins can be collected fortnightly rather than monthly.  
**GG to ask David Crabbe for details of the contract so as to arrange this.**

*Meeting closes 8:30 pm*

**The next meeting is an MC meeting, at 7pm on Tuesday 10th May at the Village Hall**