

## **HOTV Management Committee (and manager) meeting minutes**

The Royal Oak, 20 July 2022, 4:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (Chair), Mike Blair, Jo Bown, Jon Cochrane, Phil Evans, Nick Sloan, Jason Wide and Ann Woods; John Davison and Carolyn Dauncey (later).

[Apologies from Simon Dauncey and Paul Fielding.]

### **Preliminaries**

- 1.1 The minutes of the 5 July meeting are agreed to be accurate.

### **Financial matters**

- 2.1 GG: For the first time in a while our bank balance has risen by about 3–4K, though it will soon be impacted by a large VAT bill and salaries; also a water bill, insurance and a bill from AC Mole. We are in a better position than we were, but we are not surpassing our financial goal to the extent that we can take large bills in our stride. Shop trading is up at least 30% and pub trading is also rising, but only slightly. We still need to improve profits.
- 2.2 JC asks why cash went down so fast in April and May. GG says that there was a large VAT bill, and also that we were still incurring some capital expenditure then. JC is concerned that despite considerable efforts over the last two weeks, the pub margin remained below its level at end May/early June. He is also concerned that the effort and expense of refurbishing the function room should be reflected in increased margin. JC is further concerned that food margins are well below targets. JW says that food prices undercut all the local competition and that we might not maintain trade if we were to put them up. JC points out that low prices require low costs. Our pub food business is unsustainable while operating at a loss, taking into account costs and overheads. GG agrees that disappointing food trading is holding us back, and asks what we can do to improve it. Better use of the function room may be one potential answer [see below].
- SD, PE and JW to discuss ways of making the food offering more effective.**
- 2.3 JC will research restructuring our loans to be repaid over a longer time-frame. While this should lower our break-even targets, it will not solve our food issue. Triodos Bank appear to be receptive to loan restructuring, though our SCF loan contains penalties for early repayment which we will have to take into account. **JC to pursue.**
- 2.4 GG: we now have a new business account with HSBC under the correct name, and should soon have a company debit card, which will ease cash management.

### **Shop operations**

- 3.1 GG: shop trading over the last few weeks has been outstanding, though it varies unaccountably from day to day.
- 3.2 GG refers to JC's suggestion of closing after lunch in hot weather and opening later in the evening. The general view is that our weather would only occasionally justify such an approach. JB reports that trade was busy during the hot weather, and that keeping the doors open midday is better for the stock. There is no immediate appetite for early afternoon closing.

- 3.3 JB raises the possibility of ending Wednesday early closing. All agree that if the managers can arrange cover from the volunteers this would be an excellent move. **JB, CD and AW to explore this.**  
[JD arrives.]
- 3.4 GG asks about the impact on our trade of other shops in the area, particularly when Grigg's Hill and Curload/Stanmoor Rd are due to be closed for significant periods. We could perhaps up our social media presence, but otherwise we simply need to respond to circumstances and keep doing what we do well.  
**CD to pursue her marketing plan and consider ways of mitigating the challenges.**
- 3.5 GG: our sourdough supplier is ceasing supply at an unspecified date. JB has approached two other suppliers in the area, one of whom may be able to supply us when Jamie stops. Collection by volunteer would need to be arranged. JB suggests that we start baking our own par-baked or frozen pastries. **JB to follow up on this.**  
[CD arrives]
- 3.6 GG raises the question of moving the shop freezer to a cooler part of the shop. All agreed that this is a long-overdue necessity.  
**CD and JD to discuss the options, and volunteers to move accordingly this week.**

### **Pub operations**

- 4.1 GG: trade in pub is on an upward trend though food sales, as has been mentioned, are not what they might be. Part of the problem may be lack of capacity in the kitchen, with JW working on his own. For this reason, the quiet days, Thursday and Sunday, are where we should principally be aiming to increase sales.
- 4.2 GG asks where we are with the suggestion of a lunch-time "McGregory's" menu aimed at kids, especially over the summer holidays. He points out that there is already a good lunch-time menu, but that better marketing might improve uptake.  
**JW to work on an appropriate menu.**
- 4.3 GG raises the need to provide holiday cover for both JW and PE. PE says that his father has offered to stand in for JW for the bank holiday on 29 September plus 31 August to 4 September, operating a guest menu. **All agree to accept the offer. PE to confirm with his father.**
- 4.4 PE would like to takes his holiday between 17 and 21 August. Martin Keswick has offered to do some of it as has Kai. **PE to discuss details with SD.**
- 4.5 GG reports that the pool table is now up in the function room, free to use, and is already attracting some customers. The function room has been redecorated by volunteers. We still need to make the space a bit more presentable, with new furniture. **PE to advertise the facility on the Royal Oak website.**
- 4.6 Lack of disabled access to the function room is a drawback which prevented a recent event being held there. GG enquires whether a stairlift would be a relatively low-cost solution. We need to research requirements and options.
- 4.7 NS says that the fire escape still needs to be fixed. It is functional but probably not fully compliant. Bradley Harris has the materials to replace the steps and the volunteers (and Martin Keswick?) could potentially help as well. **JD to enquire.**

- 4.8 GG: the organisers of the young persons initiative in the village would appreciate access to the function room one evening a month (Wed or Thurs). [All agree to this.](#)
- 4.9 GG asks about financial content in his monthly update to Members. The feeling is that there should not be too much sensitive trading information in the public domain.

**Other**

- 5.1 NS suggests a fund-raising event in the function room with the aim of raising money specifically for improvements there or in the kitchen. [NS to contact the Tilley's to see whether their Race Night equipment would be available.](#)

*Meeting closes at 5:28 pm*

[The Annual Members' Meeting is provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 7th September, in the function room of the Royal Oak.](#)