

HOTV Management Committee (and manager) meeting minutes | draft

The Village Hall, Tuesday 4 October 2022, 7:00pm

Present: Graham Gleed (chair), Mike Blair, Jon Cochrane, Simon Dauncey, John Davison, Paul Fielding, Nick Sloan, Ann Woods

Maintenance [*Due to the late arrival of NS, GG chooses to start at the end of the agenda.*]

- 1.1 GG lists a few areas in which the fabric of the building is beginning to look decrepit, and asks if a posse of painters could touch up where necessary. **PF to organise.**
- 1.2 GG asks whether we need to take out Directors' Liability Insurance. [*NS arrives*] Decision deferred while **MB seeks clarification of the risks.**

Preliminaries

- 2.1 The minutes of the 22 August meeting are agreed to be accurate.

Accounts from AC Mole

- 3.1 GG has circulated the draft accounts to 31 March 2022. A £16K adjustment in salaries and PAYE needs to be explained.
- 3.2 £6K in bank charges, which seemed remarkably high, turns out to be mostly card and EPOS transaction charges. (JC had mooted the idea of switching from HSBC to Co-op Bank in order to reduce bank charges, but GG considers that the work involved in transferring all the payment arrangements would not justify the saving.)
- 3.3 PF identifies a few minor anomalies to be corrected. Subject to that, and clarification of the issue in 3.1, it is agreed that we recommend to the Members acceptance of the accounts at the AMM.

Financial planning

- 4.1 GG: the annual accounts suggest that we made a reasonable trading profit of £26K, but the cost of loan interest and repayments reduces this to an overall loss. We have a large VAT bill coming up, plus a payment of about £3.5K to AC Mole. We need to take action immediately to make good the £3K monthly shortfall and avoid running out of cash.
- 4.2 GG: we need to make improvements in each of three areas: the shop, the pub and our financing arrangements. Jo has responded well to the need to curb spending in the shop, but we still need to improve weekly sales by about £500. The guest chef week demonstrated that the pub can do good trade with the right offering. We need to find ways of increasing weekly pub take to about £3K a week, involving at least a basic food offering. The last and most crucial element is to negotiate our loans in such a way as to reduce the monthly payments. In addition to these measures, it would certainly help if we could increase the number of volunteers and find other cost-saving opportunities. We need to achieve break-even or better over the next few months in order to ensure a viable future for HOTV.
- 4.3 JC confirms that we need to find an extra £35 to £40K per year. We must reduce costs and where possible increase sales and margins before we can give the necessary assurances to Triodos Bank that we can cover our loan interest payments. We need to act fast, with clear actions and responsibilities. Recruiting more volunteers is a

priority. We should consider radical changes such as reducing opening hours or redeploying staff between the pub and shop. HOTV contributes very significantly to the fabric of the village, and must be preserved, but this calls for serious renewed effort and support.

- 4.4 GG feels that we should attempt both to increase revenue and to cut costs. JD offers to work closely on all aspects of the business, including with all three managers, to help identify business efficiencies and opportunities for increased revenue. He is prepared to work day to day, and give as much time as is necessary for three or four months to apply himself to the problems in a way which managers and committee members are generally too busy to undertake. Having a history of turning businesses around, he has many ideas and is confident that we can achieve and hopefully exceed the necessary ~~increase in~~ profitability for the businesses to thrive. This includes restarting pub (and café) food in an interim form, looking for a practical solution to a full food offering, exploring different purchasing opportunities and acting as a regular liaison between the managers and the MC, working together with SD, MB and AW. GG stresses that any contribution needs to be “additive”: we should be careful not to duplicate tasks, nor to pull in opposite directions, but to work together to achieve better outcomes. SD is very happy to have JD’s support, and feels that Phil would benefit from this too.
- 4.5 AW says that there are five volunteers who are trained to work on the till (four on the coffee machine), but that it has been difficult to find time to train more and that there is too much pressure on the existing volunteers. It is agreed that we need to re-energise the volunteer base and recontact those who were involved originally. JD suggests that once he has become more familiar with the routines he can work on this too. JC points out that we have an opportunity at the AMM to set out the position plainly to Members and ask for their support in restoring the number of volunteers.
- 4.6 JD’s offer to undertake these tasks is much appreciated. He is enjoined to call on other members of the MC for help as and when needed.
JD to report back on his findings on all relevant issues at the next MC meeting.
- 4.7 JC restates the position on financing that we need to act fast to reverse the decline in our cash balance before we could consider consolidating our loans. The recent rise in interest rates has only added to the difficulty in achieving this any time soon. In the meantime we have approached all three banks to request suspending capital repayments until we have rebuilt our reserves. SCEF has responded positively to this request and we await a response from the other two.
- 4.8 It is agreed that GG provides JC with the account details and authority needed to take over negotiation with the banks, and that GG and JC between them agree a plan to take this forward. JC also requires an action plan which will be informed by JD’s work with the businesses in the next few weeks.
- 4.9 GG makes it clear that it would be inappropriate to ask Members or the wider community for more money until the renewed viability of the business has been established. All agreed.

AMM preparations

- 5.1 GG raises the question of reallocating roles when he steps down at the AMM. Although he will no longer be an MC member, GG is happy to continue with any of the practical tasks he performs currently for as long as that is needed. He proposes that MB as vice-chair takes over the chairmanship, that JD takes on the role of Operations Co-ordinator with help from SD on the pub side and AW on shop and chef recruitment, that PF assumes the role of Maintenance Co-ordinator (with help from Martin Keswick if he is agreeable), and that the other roles remain unchanged.

Other

- 6.1 PF asks if annual appraisals for the managers are due. GG thinks nearly a year ago. **JD to undertake these this year.**
- 6.2 MB asks how we are doing with social media and publicity. It is agreed that Carolyn is making a good job of this but publicity about pub events could be improved.

Meeting closes at 9 pm

The postponed Annual Members' Meeting is now at 7pm on Wednesday 12th October in the function room of the Royal Oak.

The following MC meeting is at 7pm on 18th October in the Village Hall.