

HOTV Management Committee meeting minutes

The Village Hall, Tuesday 1 November 2022, 7:00pm

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

Preliminaries

- 1.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be accurate.

Financial update

- 2.1 JC says there are signs of improvement in pub margins since prices were raised recently. Trading is random from day to day, but the trend seems positive. Shop gross margins have also been steadily improving. The long-term cash position remains critical however. Pub events like quiz and music nights have a positive impact on sales. SD is encouraging Phil to do more in this line. There is a demand for a karaoke night, maybe monthly.
- 2.2 JC has taken over liaison with banks from Graham and has written to two of the three lenders to request a one year freeze on capital repayments, which would save us about £1500/month, though this will be partly offset by increasing interest payments. We are not in a position to restructure our loans until we can assure the banks that we can finance repayments out of improved trading. We can arrive at this position, but only by taking the measures that are being worked on at the moment to control costs and boost revenue.
- 2.3 MB asks if we have a clear record of when major items of expenditure occur?
JC: main ones are payroll (monthly) and VAT (quarterly). Payments for essential maintenance etc are random, and to be minimised except in the interests of safety.
- 2.4 NS asks whether we should rethink our policy of publishing trading updates on the website. We have an obligation to keep Members informed, but not the wider world. JC feels that we should update Members regularly but cease to publish financial information on the website. [All agreed.](#)

Operations

- 3.1 SD suggests that the pub provides the same service during the Stoke Stampede that it did last year, with the help of volunteers. A Christmas Fair will take place again at the Oak on 5th December with about 16 stalls in all areas.
- 3.2 JC proposes a more organised programme of events, planned several months ahead. It is agreed that this would be desirable. For pub events this would ideally be generated by the pub manager. **JD to discuss with all managers.**
- 3.3 JD has begun working on the three principle areas of improvement previously agreed: recruiting more volunteers, improving stock control and restarting pub food. An email should have gone out to 70+ potential volunteers listed in 3Rings, to be followed up by a phone call. An appeal will also go out to Members. Tim Slattery is putting out appeals in local magazines and a poster will be circulated.
- 3.4 JD and MB are working with Jo to tighten up ordering procedures and have all stock entered on EPOS. This will enable stock levels to be rationalised and reduced. The ultimate aim is to have nearly all ordering online and most of it automated.

3.5 JD: hot snacks will be available from this Wednesday with some volunteer help. Phil's dad Danny has been advising how we might build up a food offering in the future. JD and SD are to continue discussions and produce costings for an increasing, but still volunteer-based, food offering.

3.6 PF proposes an MC WhatsApp Group and offers to set it up.

Administration realignment

4.1 MB has had a couple of sessions with Graham Glead to make sure that we have all the information we need, including the register of Members. MK has taken over the energy supply file and credentials from David Crabbe.

NS to establish with Graham that all necessary share certificates have been issued.

Warm Hub and other initiatives

5.1 JD asks if we need to decide whether or not the Oak can be used as a Warm Hub venue. NS replies that there is too little information at present on what is being asked, but that after the soup-and-rolls lunch which the Warm Hub Group is running on Monday Nov 7, it should become clearer and the MC can then decide what can be offered.

5.2 JD: The Remembrance Day Sunday lunch is being very generously organised and cooked by Sue Smyth and Cherry Dobson. It is cost-free to HOTV and we will also be receiving the profits.

5.3 JC suggests that any proposals for outside groups to use the pub should be submitted in writing and agreed by the MC. NS argues that it should be possible for Phil (or others) to accept bookings on an operational level without recourse to the MC. It is agreed that Phil should be able to accept bookings, but that there is a need for everyone to be aware of the dates. NS suggests setting up an online HOTV calendar.
NS to look into this.

5.4 JC asks what our charging structure is for exclusive use of areas such as the function room. There is currently no clear policy on this. JD proposes that a policy is defined.
JD, SD to discuss with Phil and work out a provisional policy.

Contingency plans

6.1 MB asks if we should be developing a contingency plan that could be triggered if we looked like running out of cash. JC argues that the best approach is to take action before that point, which is what we are doing. The value of the building is ultimately our security, but we have plenty of scope for keeping the business viable provided we are willing to take the necessary decisions, such as reducing business hours and taking other cost-cutting measures. We expect that the measures we are currently taking will bring us into overall profit, but a reduction of the bank balance to £5K should trigger more drastic action to reduce costs. **Agreed.**

Management liability insurance

7.1 NS recently circulated an analysis suggesting that we should not take out management liability insurance as recently proposed to us. **All agreed.**

Utility costs

8.1 MK has undertaken an extensive review of our electricity demand and supply which he will circulate. Our consumption is massive, primarily due to the number of fridges and freezers that run continuously. The PV system saves us about £12 a day or 24% of

our annual consumption. We need to find ways of reducing our consumption by minimising the use of fridges, converting any non-LED lighting to LED and making more use of the chilled cellar.

MK to arrange for a smart meter to be fitted and to monitor consumption of larger fridges with a view to reducing the number in use.

Meeting closes at 9:06 pm

The next MC meeting will be at 7pm on Tuesday 15 November in the Royal Oak.