

HOTV Management Committee meeting minutes | Draft

The Royal Oak, Tuesday 22 August 2023, 6 pm

Present: Mike Blair (chair), John Davison, Graham Gleed, Martin Keswick, Paul Fielding, Nick Sloan. Apologies from Ann Woods.

Preliminaries

- 1.1 The minutes of the 8 August meeting were agreed to be accurate.

Matters arising

- 2.1 PF has been looking into joining pool leagues, but they seem to be mostly town-based. MK mentions a history of running bank holiday knock-out tournaments in the Oak. The siting of the pool table is still an issue: a conflict of interests between playing pool and eating in the upper bar.
- 2.2 GG reports that from the end of August, the travelling Post Office will no longer be visiting the Oak on Thursday mornings. Instead there will be a van from 11:30–12:30 on Fridays.
- 2.3 MB has arranged for our insurance renewal **and will circulate the documents.**

Annual Members' Meeting

- 3.1 NS says that at the upcoming AMM on 25 September, the Rules dictate that three committee members would need to seek re-election, and there is one additional vacancy. Some members are minded to step down, but concerned that there should be continuity and sufficient committed new members to replace them. GG has drawn up a list of potential candidates to approach. **It is agreed that MB will first put out an update appealing for candidates in general before GG approaches those on his list.**

Finances

- 4.1 GG has received the Annual Financial Report from AC Mole. This reads very well: instead of an £8K loss last year we had a £13K operating profit to April this year, representing a net turnaround of £21K. PF suggests a few amendments **which he will send to GG.**
- 4.2 PF asks why the figure for shop sales in the recent Financial Report is lower than the year before. GG explains that this is due to a marked post-Covid slump in sales last summer from which the shop has now recovered.
- 4.3 PF raises the issue of whether we are happy with AC Mole and should retain them. This is a decision that needs to be taken at the AMM. It is agreed that we should at least explore alternatives. **GG to do so and report back.**
- 4.4 GG proposes that he and NS sign the (amended) Financial Report and pay AC Mole's invoice. **Agreed.**
- 4.5 GG says that August trading is looking close to target. The shop is above target, food on target, drinks just below though improving. Café food is proving very successful, raising over £50 a day. Issues with reconciling pub cash have been resolved.
- 4.6 Despite some major outgoings the bank balance is improving. We have a reclaim for over-payment of VAT on water worth about £500. GG says that if the bank balance continues to rise, we will have to decide, perhaps at the end of the third quarter, whether to increase capital spending or start paying off loans. This depends partly on

the grant situation, and is likely to be raised at the AMM. Our financial position is far more positive than it was at the last AMM.

Volunteers and staffing

- 5.1 GG says that we deperately need more volunteers to take the pressure off the excellent and committed volunteers who are currently working long hours. MB and MK ask whether we should be offering some sort of an incentive scheme, such as free pub meals. GG suggests a monthly draw. [*Anyone to take this on?*]
- 5.2 GG suggests that a lot of money is being spent on casual work in the pub. It is agreed that this help is required but sometimes wasted when business is slack. It is very difficult to predict when it will be needed. There is a growing list of people willing to work both in the kitchen and behind the bar.
- 5.3 MK says that Jenna's first appraisal is coming up. It is agreed that she and Phil are working very well together. NS suggests that we should think about looking for an understudy for Jenna to mitigate the vulnerability of the food offering. GG agrees that this might be one thing to consider spending any excess cash on.
- 5.4 GG has had a meeting with Jo to discuss various issues including working with volunteers and documentation. Rachel House is to be thanked for an excellent write-up of till procedures. Jo says that there is some confusion about who on the MC she is supposed to be answerable to. It is agreed that MB is technically her line manager, GG is an adviser and MK acts as liaison with the MC for any staffing issues that come up across shop and pub.

Shop

- 6.1 JD says that his understanding was that while all our deliveries would come from Bookers Taunton, with a separate retail account they could source groceries for us from Bookers Exeter who have a far wider retail stock. This has not so far happened. Our intention in concentrating our ordering on Bookers was to avoid dealing with multiple suppliers with overlapping stock, but so far the service from Bookers has been chaotic, with faulty deliveries, unanswered emails and unpaid credits.
JD to talk again to Stuart Beesley to ensure that all these issues are resolved.

Events

- 7.1 MB says that Jo will be organising the Christmas Fair on 4th December this year [assisted by Ann Woods]. The last Bike Night will be held on Thursday, with MK and Alison providing venison burgers.
- 7.2 PF asks if we should be considering having someone other than Phil and Jo to plan events. It is agreed that this would be a very valuable role if anyone was prepared to take it on.
- 7.3 PF mentions the upcoming Rugby World Cup. It appears that the TV License needs to be renewed. **MK to ask Phil to send last reminder to GG for payment.**
- 7.4 PF has been approached by a musician who would like to do a gig with a friend in the function room. JD asks if James Brown would be prepared to do another. **PF to find out more and report back.**

Pub operations

- 8.1 In answer to a question from MK, GG clarifies that Phil and Jenna should seek approval from the MC for capital expenditure greater than £100.

- 8.2 MK is working with Phil to analyse purchase and sales prices in order to establish the margin across the range of drinks. Target margin for drinks is 58%, for food 50% and for the shop 25%.
- 8.3 MK suggests that the kitchen needs a deep clean. GG agrees that a regular commercial clean would be justified. **MK to research and cost.**
- 8.4 MK asks what benefit we are expecting to derive from the new kitchen equipment being funded by Valencia Communities Fund? NS says reliability (much of our existing equipment is old and unreliable), efficiency (the combi-oven and induction hob should cook more quickly using less power), and increased flexibility in the range of cooking techniques available.
- 8.5 MK says that a bigger bottle fridge is needed behind the bar.
MK and Phil to price and ask GG to approve.
- 8.6 MK: the equipment for a new zoned speaker system has been sourced, and he plans to wire it in soon.
- 8.7 PF asks what the position is with 4G backup when the wired broadband fails. NS says that in theory the 4G disk should take over automatically, but this receives a very poor signal. MK suggests that when it is needed, Phil could take the disk to the top floor and connect it with a long cable to the router. NS also mentions that following the recent outage, the wifi network name and password have reverted to factory defaults.
MK to ask Phil to change them.

Grants

- 9.1 GG reports that some CIL money is still available from the PC and suggests an application to them for funds to improve accessibility. NS proposes a more accessible staircase to the function room plus a stairlift (or conceivably a lift). MK suggests heating would be needed too. **NS to research an application to be presented by MB.**
- 9.2 PF asks if there is any possibility of improving accessibility of the toilets while we are waiting for Phase 3. NS says only an unsatisfactory compromise by combining two cubicles in the gents. MK suggests that accessibility to the front entrances to pub and shop could also be improved.

Meeting closes at 8:03

[The next MC meeting will be on Tuesday 12th September, at 6pm in the Royal Oak.](#)
[The Annual Members' Meeting will be on 25th September at 7pm in the Royal Oak.](#)