

HOTV Annual Members' Meeting meeting minutes | draft

The Royal Oak Tuesday 25 September 2023, 7:00pm

Present: Mike Blair (chair), John Davison, Martin Keswick, Nick Sloan, Ann Woods and 25 Members.

Preliminaries

1.1 MB welcomes Members.

Apologies from Graham Gleed, Paul Fielding, Graham and Helen Lofting, Rob Hensley, Tim Morgan, Jenny and Ron Priddle, Mary Nash and Ian Ashman, Tim and Gill Slattery, Tom and Hazel Stobie, and Jane White.

1.2 The minutes from the 2022 AMM are agreed to be accurate.

Chairman's report

2.1 MB delivers his report, which can be read in full [here](#).

The most significant feature of the year is that HOTV has managed to stay in business, and even improve our financial position despite extremely challenging conditions.

The reintroduction of high quality pub food, thanks to Jenna, has been a big part of this. Pub events, such as bike nights, changes to the shop such as the introduction of hot snacks, and tighter control over stock have all helped to turn things around.

We could not survive without our magnificent volunteers, to whom we are extremely grateful. We are also dependent on the hard work of Jo, Phil and Jenna, each of whom has played a big part in Making HOTV a success.

We are particularly grateful to Carolyn Dauncey who stepped down from the shop this year having made a massive contribution to its style and early success. Also to Simon who played a vital part in the reopening of the pub, and to Jon Cochrane who provided a much-needed jolt of financial reality when we needed it. Thank you too to Graham for stepping in as acting Treasurer on Jon's resignation.

Trading conditions remain challenging, and there is more work to do to secure our position, but we have plans for expansion with Phase 3 and look forward to the future with renewed confidence.

Treasurer's report

3.1 In the absence of GG, MB reads his report, which can be read in full [here](#).

This time last year we were in a rocky position but things have improved considerably. AC Mole's Annual Report provides a snapshot of conditions at the end of March 2023. It shows a significant improvement in operating profit despite a drop in overall sales, principally related to the interruption to the food offering. It does not show the actions taken to turn the business around: a planned round of cost reductions and an emphasis on increasing sales. Thanks to this our cash reserves recovered from a low of £10,130 to a year-end balance of £24,282. Since then they have further risen to around £35,000. Capital repayments on our bank loans, which were paused last year have now resumed, except for one which resumes in November. The contribution of volunteers cannot be overestimated.

In response to a request from our lenders we prepared a detailed financial forecast against which to map our progress. Actual performance has been positive, but remains highly sensitive to sales. Our outlook is considerably more optimistic than last year though we cannot afford to be complacent.

Mandatory financial decisions

- 4.1 MB proposes approval of the Financial Report to year-end March 31st 2023, prepared by AC Mole and previously published on the HOTV Documents page of the website. [Nearly all Members vote in favour, none vote against.](#)
- 4.2 MB proposes that as before we waive the requirement for a full external audit. NS explains that while it is a default requirement for all non-profit businesses to have a third-party audit (i.e. not by the retained accountants), it is normal for small Community Benefit Societies such as ours to waive this in order to save high costs and extra work where the risks of doing so are perceived to be very low. [Nearly all Members vote in favour, none vote against.](#)
- 4.3 MB explains that while GG has researched alternative accountants in order to ensure that we are getting value for money, a quote from an accountant in Langport failed to materialise in time. In these circumstances we are obliged to recommend retention of AC Mole and propose this. [Nearly all Members vote in favour, none vote against.](#)
- 4.4 Dave Evans asks if the new MC would be able to change accountants later if we received a better offer. It was agreed that this should be possible.

Election to the Management Committee

- 5.1 NS repeats, as previously explained in an email to Members, that we have four vacancies on the committee and four nominations so there is no need for a contested election. Three of the nominations are new: Trevor Daniels, Tom Duxbury and Emma Simon. The fourth is Graham Gleed who was co-opted as acting Treasurer and needs to have his position as a full committee member agreed. NS thanks and welcomes the nominees and proposes that the formal election of all four be approved. [Nearly all Members vote in favour, none vote against.](#)
- 5.2 Dave Evans says that he understands that we are anticipating a new treasurer, and asks how this would happen. NS says that a Member has offered to take on the treasurership, but is not living in the village yet. When she is available we would expect to co-opt her.
- 5.3 John Attwood voices his appreciation to Graham, John and Nick for their contribution to making HOTV happen, proposes a vote of thanks and hopes they won't now disappear. [Applause] MB also thanks John and Nick. NS says that we would never have got off the ground without John's help at the time of the original share offer. [Applause] JD graciously reciprocates. NS points out how the right people with the right skills have always popped up when they are needed, Simon and Carolyn being two more significant examples to whom we owe a lot, but the list of those who have helped HOTV to flourish is endless.

Questions from Members

- 6.1 Sarah Evans asks whether Jo and Phil have received pay rises to compensate for a rise in the cost of living. Dave points out that the real value of a wage set in 2020 will have shrunk to 75% of what it was then. MK says the MC is very conscious of this and is reviewing the rate of pay. MB says that we have regular staff meetings to discuss such issues. NS says that we would love to pay people more but that our primary responsibility is to remain in business so that we can pay them at all. The question is noted and

taken seriously however. MB points out that any extra work, e.g. for events, is paid for in addition. John Attwood reinforces the point: "without the staff we are stuffed".

- 6.2 John Attwood asks if our monthly business monitoring could be put online. GG issues bar graphs each month showing how different parts of the business are faring. It is agreed that with GG's agreement these might be made available.
- 6.3 Olivia Sanders asks whether the shop could stock a wider range of low cost basics. MB says that we are working on this. We were hoping in particular that our new Bookers retail account would give us access to cheaper lines, but our recent experience with Bookers has been disappointing. Dave Evans has read a lot of similar complaints about Bookers on Facebook. MK says that cutting down on lines where there is too much duplication should help with the economics.
- 6.4 Marilyn Clarke raises the issue the size of the stockroom in the Phase 3 plans, suggesting that it may be too small. Sarah Evans asks if the MC know how much stuff gets delivered on a Thursday morning. JD says that most stock is delivered to go on the shelves in the shop, not to sit in the stockroom. NS says that part of the thinking behind having a smaller stockroom is that we have been carrying far too much stock. Dave Evans demands to know who has decided this? (All the retail advisers we have spoken too, stocktakers and accountants.) He thinks that we cannot afford to reduce the size much and that the most successful community shops are those that carry a wide range of stock and have it always available. He says that we have to choose between being a successful community shop with a wide range and a diminished convenience store. NS thinks this is a false dichotomy: we see value in stocking a wide range and being responsive to community preferences, we also need to keep a sharp eye on stock control so as to remain profitable. MK points out that Jo's replacement of the dry food dispensers with a hot snack cabinet has been hugely profitable and popular, whereas some might have seen this as a restriction of range. Kathy Davidson and AW are agreed that most customers are impressed by the range of stock. Susan Crabbe and Olivia are agreed that using local suppliers is important.
- 6.5 Dave Evans feels that there is a fixation on reducing stock levels and that the Phase 3 stockroom would be too small. JD points out that all the village shops he has visited have smaller stockrooms, and challenges DE to find another community shop with a stockroom as big as ours. DE persists in equating range of stock with size of stockroom, but AW says that we don't need to *hold* large stocks because most suppliers deliver weekly if not twice a week. Susan Crabbe likes to take advantage of offers on frozen food that is close to going out of date, but feels that this may be a result of over-stocking. MB says that the Broughton community shop has a stockroom half the size of ours. DE says that we need a large stockroom to order in quantity. AW says that we order in the quantity we need, and that Jo is the expert on this.
- 6.6 Ian Upshall asks if thought has been given to preparing a forward plan for HOTV, covering not just finances, but our vision for the future. He feels that this would provide something for the Members to take an interest in and could enhance Member engagement. Emma Simon agrees that Members who may not be so interested in the financial forecast would take more of an interest in a plan setting out the direction of HOTV in terms of services and aspirations. Greater engagement should lead to greater involvement and support. NS agrees that Ian's suggestion is a good one. The reason that it has not been implemented recently is that the MC has been preoccupied with

fighting to keep the business afloat. Now we have a bit more clear water he agrees that it would be a good time to take a longer view. Ian suggests that this does not necessarily have to come from the MC but could be subcontracted to others in the Membership.

- 6.7 Marilyn Clarke wonders whether there would be value in a group to discuss issues like this, or any other matters outside the immediate operational concerns of the MC—an HDTV “think tank” suggests Olivia. NS says this could be set up organically, it would not need the authority of the MC. Marilyn volunteers to organise something along these lines. MK says that there are several questions to explore, such as what sort of a pub do we want to be? The MC does discuss these matters but they are not questions that can be settled in the course of a long executive meeting. MB says that we would like to be more community-centric provided that we can ensure that we have the funds. NS points out that it was always the aim to be community-orientated rather than profit-orientated. Ian suggests that having a clear long-term vision could inspire confidence in suppliers and partners and engender support from them. Dave suggests that an early open meeting to further this idea would be good. NS says that this could be organised independent of the MC, and suggests that MK would be happy to publicise it in his monthly newsletter. Marilyn asks if the group proposed could use the function room. It was agreed that they could.
- 6.8 JD picks up Stuart’s earlier request about bread collection volunteers and about volunteers in general. There has been no response to our recent appeal for more volunteers, though many of the flyers publicising the monthly prize draw for volunteers have not yet been circulated. AW says that we have 10 names for bread volunteers. Stuart would appreciate it if those who do not want to continue with this would let him know, likewise anyone who might be interested in joining the team.
- 6.9 AW picks the name from the tin for the first monthly prize draw. Judith Roche is the lucky volunteer to win the voucher for £50 worth of food and drink at the Oak. The names of all those who have volunteered during the month are entered for the draw.
- 6.10 Heather Venn asks why there is such a low attendance at this meeting. MK suggests that in any organisation only a minority of members will attend meetings. John Attwood thinks more people tend to come when there are problems to be discussed [though in fact there were only 3 more people last year]. Susan thinks that Marilyn’s idea for a discussion group might lead to wider engagement generally. Emma thinks that the preoccupation with the (undoubtedly essential) business side of the enterprise does not inspire people. Olivia says that things were looking very bleak when there was the prospect of no shop or pub in the village, and that the success of HDTV is amazing and should be celebrated. Kathryn Astin says that this is a village of two parts: the people who use the shop are mostly not the people here. We need to involve a wider cross-section of the community. John Attwood agrees. Emma likewise suggests that there is scope for tapping into other village organisations and generating more interest in HDTV.
- 6.11 Susan Crabbe points out that there was no poster in the shop publicising this meeting. MB suggests an open meeting for general discussion. Olivia remembers the Tippings’ board facing the end of Willey Rd that was always an eye-catcher for meeting notices etc. JD undertakes to replace this nearby. Kathryn asks about our use of Facebook. We do post on Facebook but not everyone uses it or is interested.

6.12 Susan Crabbe asks whether there could be a presentation to explain the Phase 3 proposal. NS agrees that this would be a good idea once we know whether our grant application has been successful. It is agreed that a public discussion would be a valuable exercise.

Meeting closes at 8:21 pm

No date is set for the next MC meeting since two members of the new MC are not present.