

Notes from 'The Exeter' meeting, 15th September 2024

Present:

Andrew Saunders (AS), Rhy Roberts (RR), Andrew Foster (AF), Caroline Bracewell (CB), Andy Grzesinski (AG), Sue Hyde (SH), Mary Ette (ME), Rachel Edwards (RE), Ken Foxford (KF), Di Foxford (DF), Jerry Parkinson (JP), Sabrina Compton (SC), Ross Compton (RC), Sue Roberts (SR), Fiona Truswell (FT), John Truswell (JT), Noel Tancock (NT), Sally Tancock (ST), Helen Ratcliffe (HR – note-taking), Bry Uglow (BU)

Introduction

The notes from the meeting held on 6th September were agreed and will be made available on 'The Exeter' tab on the TCLT website. All future agendas, notes and papers will also be posted there.

1 Nomination to have 'The Exeter' designated as an ACV (Asset of Community Value)

AS updated the meeting on progress to date:

- A few helpful comments have been made re the draft application
- Although several testimonials have been shared with JW, they have tended to be from newer arrivals in the village and so any stories etc from longer-established locals would still be welcome **(ACTION: ALL)**

AF confirmed that the Board of TCLT had formally agreed to the ACV being submitted in its name.

AS welcomed RR to the meeting and noted that he will be able to comment on the application, if required, within MDDC.

2 Keeping the pub open

SC/SR/ST reported that they had met several times and updated the meeting on progress to date:

- Four work streams have been identified: Bar (SR to lead), Kitchen (SC to lead), Infrastructure (ST to lead) and Finance (NT and RC to lead)
- There is a need to designate a premises supervisor for licensing purposes – as JW already has a personal licence, she would be an ideal candidate for this role **(ACTION: AS)**
- There is a need to find a bookkeeper – the current Memorial Hall Treasurer might be open to helping with this **(ACTION: AS)**
- There is a need to open/designate a bank account – after some discussion it was agreed that it should be a separate account (rather than using the TCLT account) and that the use of an already existing but dormant business account should be investigated **(ACTION: NT/AF)**
- There is a need to establish the basis under which we would be operating – Ltd company? Sole trader? Non-profit entity? Social enterprise? – and that the services of an accountant would be helpful in this respect (Matt and Rick currently pay monthly for an accountant); does anyone know an accountant in the village who would be willing to help? **(ACTION SH/ME)**
- NT had met with Matt to establish current outgoings, which amount to approximately £2.5k per month, excluding rent, wages and stock

- NT had also established that there were likely to be deals to be done in relation to equipment which could stay (except for one freezer) and the remaining stock
- It was noted that most of the stock (except the real ales) is supplied by Tolchards and that Matt is intending to start giving notice to all their suppliers from Friday 20th September
- It was noted that CT had circulated some information about the TUPE situation and it was agreed that, given the very tight financial situation and need to keep costs as low as possible, we would need to rely on volunteers rather than staff to keep the pub running in this interregnum

AF reported that he had had a brief conversation with Jasper Ware:

- he and Anna would like to see a proposal from us on what we believe we could do/would need to keep the pub open (one option might be to cover operating costs, but not all overheads eg rent)
- It was agreed that the notes from this meeting should be used as a basis for this proposal and that we really need a decision by Friday 20th September to be able to proceed

ST reported that we need volunteers both for the period of time when the pub is shut (ie from 4th November) for set-up/training and also then on a rota basis once it is up and running – it was suggested that the pub should operate from Wednesday to Sunday:

Logistics – set-up:

- There was some discussion about how long the pub would need to be dark for the changeover period – the original proposal was to have a ‘soft’ opening on Thursday 14th November, but an alternative view was that we should aim to open at 5pm on Friday 8th November to minimise the length of time the pub is shut and take advantage of the fact that Fridays are usually busy
- During the changeover period, there would need to be familiarisation, cleaning, set-up and training, as well as some minor works
- NT will investigate whether it might be possible to achieve some of this during the period 27th October to 3rd November (ie when Matt and Rick are doing their final clear/clean) **(ACTION: NT)**
If not, it will be necessary quickly to identify the tasks which need to be carried out and prioritise them so that as many as possible can be achieved during w/c 4th November and then on subsequent Mondays/Tuesdays
- Please let ST know if you are willing to help during this changeover period - it was noted that Bryan Harrison has indicated that he would be willing to help with small maintenance jobs **(ACTION: ALL)**

Logistics – operation:

- RC circulated a draft spreadsheet to help identify who is willing to volunteer for what and when – it was agreed that an additional column should be added to indicate general offers rather than commitment **(ACTION: RC)**
- It was also agreed that the spreadsheet should be circulated as widely as possible among this group and family/friends as, if there is not enough interest in volunteering, the project will not succeed **(ACTION: RC/ALL)**

- It was noted that responsibilities for rotas will be as follows: Bar (including training) – SR, Kitchen – SC, Cleaning – ST
- SR reported that she will be updating her level 2 food safety qualification this week, which should be enough to enable the kitchen to operate, at least initially
- There was some discussion about the need for a management committee; it was agreed that the current co-ordinating group, reporting back to the wider group, should continue but that, once we start trading, there will be a need for a small decision-making group (preferably comprising an odd number of members) to be formed

The group thanked SC, SR, ST, NT and RC for all the excellent progress they have made.

3 Short Term Funding

It was agreed that we should seek to establish a fighting fund of ~£10k before we start trading:

- Grants may be available, but they can take a while to apply for
- We can ask for donations from people in the village
- We can investigate Gofundme for crowd funding opportunities (although they do take quite a hefty margin)
- There may also be small amounts available from the Leonard Trust, Thorfest and Focus
(ACTION: NT)

Ideally, we need assent from Anna before going too far down any of these routes.

4 Communications and Community Questionnaire

It was agreed that awareness within the village and beyond is key, and that it is not yet widespread. However, it is again difficult to be too specific until we know if the project is to go ahead. It was noted that the short-term communications strategy is entirely different to what is needed longer-term and so, for the short-term, it was agreed that:

- There is an urgent need for a poster/flyer to be designed and disseminated
- This should focus on a simple message
 - ✓ The Exeter is due to close on 26th October
 - ✓ There is a group working to try to keep the lights on and the fire burning
 - ✓ There is the potential for this to develop into a Community Hub rather than just a pub in the future
 - ✓ You can help shape that future by getting involved
 - ✓ Both volunteers and donations are needed
 - ✓ Please show your support in whatever way possible
 - ✓ Contact details
- The poster/flyer should be distributed door-to-door and used on lampposts, noticeboards, Focus, Facebook, Devon Live and with any Thorverton ex-pats known to us

ST agreed to liaise with GB to get this ready for when there is a decision from Anna
(ACTION: ST/GB)

JT/AS reported that they had met with the 'save the pub' rep from CAMRA, who advised that there are many different models of how community pubs can be run and agreed to provide contact details for some which may be of interest to us locally. He also advised that the Plunkett Foundation is key in whatever we do try to do.

5 Community Hub Concept

CB reported that she had visited the Silverton Room-4-U to investigate further opportunities – eg Memory Café, IT support for the non-IT-savvy, Knit and Natter, Stitch and Bitch, treatment room for nails/feet. It was also noted that some things, eg lending books, would be very quick and easy to set up and may attract grants/books from local Libraries and that anything to do with wellbeing was likely to be more attractive to funders because of the added-value to communities.

It was agreed that CB/HR would research both short and long-term aspirations and use these to feed into GB's Community Questionnaire **(ACTION: CB/HR)**

6 Long Term Funding

7 Business Plan and Detailed Funding Submission

It was agreed to put these items on hold as they only become relevant if we are able to keep the pub running short term.

ACTIONS:

The key priorities are:

- Proposal to Jasper Ware/Anna
- Setting up a bank account
- Communications in the village and beyond
- Generating a fighting fund
- ACV application

In order to achieve these:

- **HR** to prepare notes
- **RC** to update Gantt chart and spreadsheet
- **NT/AF** to investigate setting up a bank account
- **GB/ST** to prepare flyer/poster
- **JW** to finalise ACV application

Again, as it is important, and in some cases urgent, that we get to work on a lot of the above as soon as possible, please could volunteers sign up and spread the word as widely as possible in the village. **(ACTION: ALL)**

Date of next meeting: Sunday 22nd September at 6pm in The Exeter