

Duke of Marlborough Report to Somersham PC AGM May 2024

The Duke of Marlborough was recently taken over by a Tenant. While it remains a Community Pub owned by the Shareholders, the Tenant is now responsible for all day-to-day matters; staffing, menu, opening times, utilities, events etc.

The Management Committee decided last June that going to a Tenancy was the only way to keep the pub open, as we had been unable to become profitable under our original operating model and were continually nearly running out of cash. We had still not recovered to our pre-Covid turnover and were hit hard by the rise in electricity costs. The Tenancy model is fairly common among Community Pubs after the first few years. What was needed was a new injection of cash and enthusiasm, and a fresh approach. Many of the Committee had been involved for more than 7 years and it was beginning to take its toll.

We advertised the Tenancy last July via Everard Cole. There was a lot of initial interest, several viewings but ultimately only one firm offer from Mr David Pratt, a local businessman, who lives in Somersham. The Tenancy started at the beginning of December. The initial Contract is for 5 years, although there is a break clause by either side after two and a half. The rent is fixed for the first 3 years and thereafter is subject to an upward-only rent review with a possible profit-sharing agreement. We continue to need some income to service various loans. The Tenant has taken over most of the Staff and still uses volunteers. The transition was remarkably smooth and has now been running for 5 months.

A slimmed down Management Committee of 5 remains, and is ultimately responsible to the Shareholders, but has no involvement in the day-to-day operation of the pub.

Finances aside, it has been a reasonably successful year for the pub. The August Beer Festival went pretty well, although we were not blessed with the fine weather of previous years. Music events continue to be very popular, and the monthly quizzes are always sold out. Little has outwardly changed so far, but there are apparently changes in the pipeline.

We would like to thank the Parish Council (and MSDC, among others)) for their financial and moral support over the years, without which the pub may well have gone under.

David Thorne

Management Committee Chair, Somersham Community Pub