MINUTES OF TRUE FOOD MEMBERS' MEETING

Held on Wednesday 9th November 2016

Present:

Ann Anley
Bita Newman-Zand
Charlotte Bell
Chris Rimmer
Clive Tipler
Nicola Tipler
Dianne Naden
Francis Jakeman (Chair)
Gabby Watts
Gill Heaven
Helga Bogisch-Francis
Helen Warren
Ian Macro
Janice Hawkins
Jerry Lunn
Judith Petersen
Julia Moore
Katie Moore
Linda Glithro
Linda Spicer
Mark Robson
Martin Stone
Mary Tindall
Michael Bright
Neena Saith
Peter King
Rebecca Hughes
Sarah Timmins de Gregory
Silvia Bragaglia-Pike
Sophia Kelly
Stella Kendall
Steve Dismukes
Susannah Massey
Will Alliston

Apologies:

Alan Pennington
Caroline Suter
Cathy Hughes
Charlotte Hawkins
Diane Earnshaw
Freya Dean
Libby Bollen
Gordon Evans
Hinke Multhaupt
Hilary Jakeman
Janet Digby
Jessica Hottinger
Kay Oakley

1) **Welcome by Chair**

2) **All attendees broke into groups of 3 to share how each of us became involved with True Food.**

3) **Francis detailed the current situation.**
   Assets at the bank have dropped to £18K. This and our stock are our only assets. Our business plan requires us to know the conditions which would need us to trigger the dissolution of our business. We need assets of at least £10K to avoid this situation. We owe the council £5K for the current year.
   We need takings of £10K each week to cover our costs. The last time we took £10K in a week was back in May this year. The average takings so far this year is £9K per week.
   All food outlets have struggled recently, with customers either not spending as much or not shopping so often; subsequently the supermarkets have raised their game, putting extra pressure on us.

There is a serious danger that by employing excellent staff we leave responsibility for running the business to them. They are there to advise and help us, not do the job for us!

4) Questions of information (not comment at this stage)

Q, What is the value of our stock?
A. £19,700 at the last stock-take. Steve said that 'electronic point-of-sale' is coming which will give an up-to-date figure.
Q. Should we compare ourselves with supermarkets or a local corner shop?
A. Nicola stated that it is possible to purchase enough products to avoid using a supermarket.

5) So what can we do?

Agreed that we need to recognise and play to our strengths as a friendly place which stocks over 1,000 items. Perhaps we should view our shop as the priority first choice for our regular shopping, and the supermarket as second choice.

a) Identify strategies and actions we can take to increase sales:
When we hit financial problems at home we immediately think of things we can manage without. At home, it is much easier to reduce our expenditure than increase our income. In business the opposite is true. With rent, wages and utilities making up 95% of our costs, trying to cut back on other things makes virtually no difference to costs, but can seriously undermine our effectiveness. Income, on the other hand is relatively easy to increase. We simply need to sell more! Even reducing the discount rate would make little difference as 70% of our business is to customers without a discount card.

b) Identify strategies and actions we can take to increase the number of members helping as volunteers:
To function effectively we need 73 hours of volunteer help per week. We achieved this week once in January. Since then the figure has dropped to 32.

6) Three proposals to:
a) Francis encouraged members to send the electronic newsletter on to friends and relations.

b) Deliver TFC leaflets in streets around the shop on Sundays.
This is to be the local area. Francis suggested meeting on Sunday afternoons and co-ordinate leaflet drop as a group activity.

c) Recruit ambassadors to local schools, churches and community groups.
Sarah Timmins de Gregory volunteered to be an ambassador for a group of 5 people based in Emmer Green. There is the primary school, pre-school, the church, Highdown, and Doctors' Surgery that they could approach.

7) All attendees then broke into groups of 3, with clipboard for each group, for people to share ideas and propose actions they are willing to follow up.
(These Ideas and Proposals are below)

6) **Opportunity for members to talk informally to committee and staff and volunteer to help in specific ways, namely**
   a) **Working in the shop**
   b) **Promotion through events, social media and leaflet distribution**
   c) **Practical help such as DIY, Cleaning, Collections, Deliveries**
   d) **IT/Admin**
   e) **Leafleting on Sundays**
   f) **Becoming an ambassador to local groups.**

<u>Ideas and Offers of Help</u>

PETER KING, MICHAEL BRIGHT, JULIE

We are in the wrong place – move.

Retail guru / consultant analysis

Low cost advertising, e.g. – shop windows (see noticeboard),
and the Round&About magazine

Online promotion
- social media
- free coffee
- feel good factor

Utilities check – water (April) able to choose service charge
Change lighting to LEDs

SOPHIA, GABBY, KATIE

Appeal of leaflet & Affordability

Katie Recipes from schools to use T/F ingredients
Let people (schools) know the variety of items shop sells
Leaflets into school bags
Vouchers for children
Could placard be put somewhere more noticeable
Giving the message to common interest groups who maybe haven't heard of the shop – all
Push the brand more?

Sophia Articles in health/wellbeing columns in local press
Highlight the price comparison – on website and give it to those doing publicity
Sell gifts all year round

Gabby Volunteer hours – Thursdays – 1.5 hours 11.00 to 12.30
Ask shoppers to put stuff on Facebook, and tweet

LINDA GLITHRO, CHARLOTTE BELL, JERRY LUNN

Linda Glithro
Discount portioned to hours: 3 hrs per month – 5%
6 hrs per month – 10%
9 hrs per month – 15%
Simply increasing hours required would lose some volunteers.

I am a governor at The Heights Primary who have a parent email system. I could ask if a note could go out to the whole parent body (linda@glithro.com)
Charlotte Bell
Article in 'disjointed ramblings' in the Caversham 'Round&About' free monthly magazine. **Articles are free.**

Jerry
Tie into the health benefit angle with the local health centre/surgery
In parallel with pushing/forwarding the newsletter, agree to post the link on our personal social media pages

CHRIS RIMMER, ANN ANLEY, GILL HEAVEN

Leafleting outside school – Gill will help to co-ordinate

Leaflets to schools to give children

Round&About magazine & Caversham Bridge magazine adverts

Consider raising prices

Discount:
5 hours/month for discount

Signs in shop asking for volunteers to help

Don't compete on commodities, concentrate on specialisms

Wasted bread (under-weight) - just sell at a small discount
(make clear actual weight)

Investigate opening earlier some days?
Change closing date to Monday ?

JANICE, NEENA, SARAH

<u>Subject: Discount</u>

Nicola (who left earlier)
Increase discount threshold to working 3 hours every 2 weeks.

Neena seconds that

Janice would be happy to go back to less discount. Could there be a flexible discount based on how many hours there are.

Sarah – make requirement for all members to do 1 hour every month.
Ask every person who buys in the shop if they have a discount card. We need to encourage more shoppers to volunteer.

Advertising in Caversham Bridge magazine – Neena will look at this

Use RVA to ask for volunteers - Sarah willing to do this but needs sign off.
Internships for youths

Sarah & Neena – have 2 or 3 versions of flyers for distribution

SUSANNAH, MARK, FRANCIS

Discount for 3 hours every 2 weeks

Members must volunteer a minimum (not to do with discount)

Some items too expensive and our mark-up on them isn't great either.
Prices of staples or a meal (one Chicken) need to be more competitive.
Spanish Honey (large) is £14.99. Are suppliers taking the mick?
Customers were surprised by price of small home-made brownies at the counter.

How to increase turnover

Vouchers as presents.
Cheaper range of snacks for children
Two for one offers on snacks for children
Sliding membership fee (min £5)
Advertise in Sonning Common newsletter
Advert donators
Should we identify a niche-type customer and target them with our advertising or just go for everyone?
Re-design leaflet on recycled paper with first volunteer offer and a discount for first visit.

MARY T, STELLA, BITA, JUDITH

Women's Institutes – for a talk about True Food with samples – could charge £40-£50 for evening or afternoon.

U3A - (??minute taker)

Recipe of the week/month – all ingredients on table, easy to prepare and cook.

Highdown School – encourage students to come here for work experience.

Advertise in Round&About

LINDA SPICER, SILVIA BRAGAGLIA-PIKE, MARTIN

Linda S
Contact like-minded social, e.g. my allotment group -
Leaflets and speaking to friends in my village has been useless!
How many customers know we use helpers? If they knew, would they help or tell friends? Perhaps a notice or badge on our aprons to promote conversation.
I don't want higher Discount until we thrive

Silvia
Focus on this area, people not aware we are not an ordinary shop.
Ask previous members what would interest them to re-join
Grading of helpers hours ref discount is good idea.
As nutritionist, does not like to see so many children's unhealthy snacks.

Martin
Concentrate on schools, community groups.
Local REPAIR cafe – do leaflet drop, sample biscuits,
LETS (Exchange Trading System) would be interested
REPAIR at Jacksons Corner – have a stand or speaker
Website – abbreviate for new people to see our range of products
Emphasis on good healthy food

<u>Ideas Sent in By Absentees</u>

Gift vouchers for Christmas
A sliding scale for helper discounts
Cutting out helper discounts altogether for a while to get us back on track.
Small increase in prices
Encourage members to regard TFC as their primary shopping venue.
Invite donations
Introduce a sliding scale for membership e.g. from £5 to £50 according to what individual members decide.
Opening at 8.30am to pick up school trade one morning a week
Adverts in local church magazines.