



**Guild Membership Report
Management Meeting
Tuesday 8th January 2019**

Cranstons of Penrith, Ullswater Road, Penrith Cumbria CA11 7EH

Present: David Lishman (Chair), John Mettrick, Mark Turnbull, Philip Cranston, Brindon Addy, Steve Robinson, John Davidson, Sue Woodall (Regional Support), Claire Holland (Guild Manager), Douglas Scott (minutes).

DL explained that he had invited guests for their opinions and some blue sky thinking.

Minutes of last Management and Executive meetings were approved.

Review of action points

Application pack sent to Chapmans and CH had visited.

Revised documents to send out to prospective members were tabled.

Key Partners meetings had taken place on visitations by CH.

Letter was sent to unpaid member, now 2018 subscription is paid in full but still has outstanding balance from Smithfield Awards Lunch.

No further response to Belgian butcher regards possible Q Guild membership.

Corporate Members will not be invoiced until after today's meeting but that can be done on Thursday.

Downsizing Smithfield lunch not yet considered.

Website retainer £190 still to be detailed.

ActivDS will liaise through JM.

The cost of producing Past Chairman medals has been circulated to Management Committee. Q Guild pendant die quoted at a cost of £290.00.

Options: 15 off Hall Marked Silver Gilt pendants with ribbons and Past Chairman bars @ £88.25 each or 10 off as above @ £92.80 each.

Feedback was that this did not look like a good way of spending £1200. Agreed by Committee.

Action points from this meeting are underlined below.

TAC

The one member who was temporary suspended due to them not having the required Food Hygiene Rating has intimated that they will not be rejoining.

Reports have been sent to the 34 members who were mystery shopped and audited against Quality Standards before the end of October. All were satisfactory with no feedback from members to the email that included the information.

Guild Membership Report

Before subscription notices go out this month, we have 106 members. We were pleased to note that three new members were successful in applying for membership of the Guild in the last few months. Cherrington Farm Shop in Shrewsbury, The Albion Farm Shop in Delph and John the Butcher in St Albans.

Resignations have been received from Patricks of Camelon, Elite Meat in Harrogate, Thomsons Butchers in Northallerton and Poxons in Wolverhampton. Alex Jack & Son in Stranraer ceased trading in 2018. All these members intimated in 2018 that they would not be renewing membership for 2019. To date, there has been no more resignations, but that may change after the membership renewals are sent out.

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Potential new member enquiries had been received from 17 businesses since September 2018. CH had followed these up with an email or application pack sent via post. Two businesses had become new members, two more were reconsidering in the new year, the others will be followed up by an email or phone call.

Corporate Membership

Including the six Key Partners we have 31 corporate members, including one who only pays us in cheese! Unilever have finally been invoiced for their 2018 membership after receiving a Purchase Order. Unfortunately it appears that working with a multi national company has its issues! There have been no enquiries for Corporate membership, but CH has had interest from British Game Alliance and Angel Refrigeration.

BA pointed out that Hartshead Meats still portraying Q membership. Office to write to Richard Molally at Hartshead Meats.

Finance

Bank balance is at its lowest point since the same time in 2016. If we are not to touch the Tracker Accounts £33,000 we need funds in soon. BA asked for explanation of that the £1300 drop in Tracker Account in February 2017.

Budget figures including actual for November and as close as possible to final figures for December show a possible outcome of a surplus in the hundreds. This prediction is always comes with a warning of adjustments the auditors might make for year end figures.

Subscriptions brought in £109,040 just a couple of hundred below budget. Corporate membership brought in £24,348 which is slightly ahead of expected. Income from Product Evaluation is down £3500. Total income is £12,000 below budget although the budget figure should have been £16,000 less than it was and so income is actually up.

On expenses side there are quite a few variances against budget both up and down. At the end though Cost of Sales are £5000 under budget.

Overheads are £3000 below budget, the greatest variance against budget is General Manager expenses showing a saving of £7000 and Salary & Management costs up £4000.

Smithfield Awards

There were 245 entries, 135 golds, 70 silvers, 40 no awards or not submitted. The judging took place at the City of Glasgow College in October and the presentations will take place at Ironmongers Hall in London on Wednesday 30th January. Presentations will be made by celebrity chef, Matt Tebbutt.

Currently in the process of taking bookings for the Smithfield Awards Lunch. These are slow at the moment but should pick up nearer the time (after a few timely reminders!)

JM requested that judges comments should be more legible.

Guild Manager's Report

CH had met with Key Partners. IFI most satisfied and are offering trips to AVO in Osnabruck and to Newly Weds at Ossett.

Dalziel had offered the Newbury Depot for a South/SW BBQ event, plus tour and lunch.

Verstegen, Dalziel, Lucas and Scobies saw value in being associated with Q Guild but were disappointed with product of the month. BA felt that POTM did the Guild more harm than good. DL read out a members comment in similar vein. PC felt that it was really difficult to come up with products to suit all members.

WR Wright felt that being a key partner had not worked for them as they thought it would and would revert to corporate member in 2019.

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JM asked what else could be done with Key Partners in terms of workshops. JM pointed out that the Guild needed unique tastes bespoke to them. CH said that other packages could be worked up, such as sponsorship packages. To be discussed later in the agenda.

Guildsman and Consumer Magazines went out in October. Discussion suggested customers were increasingly averse to printed materials.

Since moving hosting the Q Guild website and BOS are now much easier for CH and DS to edit. Investment has been made and ongoing costs should be low. Images, news and dates will be updated regularly.

Other Visits by CH to Corporate Members or new contacts:

- Paragon - want to get more involved and be seen as the 'go to place' for Hygiene Products and Services
- Attended Sausage Week Launch/Awards
- Attended CofC judging & BSOTY Awards
- Meeting with Henrietta Green - **British Charcuterie Live** - re event judging and Guild support
- **Bite Network** - re Social Media Training in North East and West, will travel further if reqd.
- **Angel Refrigeration** - keen to support members with expert advice on Charcuterie refrigeration on the back of the Charcuterie Live events
- **Members;** Dennis of Bexley, Lidgates & Brindon Addy's, plus 2 new members - Albion and J T Butchers

International Trip

Slavakto/Amsterdam Trip and Butchers Visits - 2 day tour saw 8 members visit the Slavakto Butchery Trade Show in Utrecht, followed by a tour of Keurslager butchers shops in Gouda and Rotterdam. Very useful to see how international butchers are facing the same issues UK butchers are with busy consumers and changing lifestyles.

PR

Full report attached - in summary coverage has increased on last year
8.8m reach from 142 press articles, which saw an increase of a third on last year. The biggest achievers were Smithfield Awards (2.66m) and BBQ Awards (2.17m)
Trends - Falling print sales; Difficult to make money with online news; 24hrs news, reliance on SM; Fewer staff means less news being reported and less photographers; Insta rising in place of Twitter

BBQ heats will be arranged but with National final in Perth on 12 May : This was subsequently cancelled in a later agenda point.

Regional Meetings Update

Still low attendance even though a greater effort had been put into the organisation. Either or both CH and SW attended the following:

- NEast - Dalziel Newcastle Factory Tour & Nov Xmas Meal at Thirsk
- NW - Hartwood Hall, Festive Food discussion and demo
- Midlands - Packington Farm tour and meeting
- South - Walters Turkeys tour and Vicars Game farm shop visit
- SW - Taste of Game Cookery Demo, Exeter - postponed
- Wales - meeting - postponed

Events/Meetings for 2019

A very good and interesting list of possible events for 2019 has been compiled, with a view to get schedule of events booked for 2019.

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SW felt frustrated by the lack of support for events. She asked what did the members want out of a meeting? SW can organise all sorts of content but the difficult bit is getting members to turn up and questioned what they really wanted to learn or see from a meeting.

SW felt regional trips to other areas might get support. Observed there was a distinct north south divide in successful well attended meetings. The idea of less meetings but better ones was supported. Q Guild trip to Holland in November had been good but would have been better had more attended.

After lunch a full and frank discussion ensued about;

Plans / activities for 2019

DL expressed concerns that membership numbers are slowly sliding with more negative feedback than in the past.

Are we offering enough value for money?

Do we offer too much that is costly?

Are we trying to keep too many people happy?

Do corporate members get enough out of the Guild?

Are some members not worthy of being in the Guild?

Are there butchers who should be members but are not and why not?

Should we make it elitist and smaller?

Is it just the economy that is making everyone evaluate their membership?

DL had two key questions that he wanted discussed around the table.

Q1. What would have to change to deliver value to the members?

What would it change to?

The first comments suggested the Q Guild is for ideas, a talking shop and a recognition of quality. We need to address the apathy in the membership who are quick to criticise and slow to contribute. We have to accept that national recognition by marketing and PR will always take too big an investment to achieve national recognition.

Inspections ensured that members operated to a higher standard. Staff feared the inspection and took pride from passing. Inspections have been ceased but there are still complaints about the Q Guild and its current Audits.

BA felt that we needed to change. Wondered if Q Guild should be a business club. Can we force members to attend meetings?

JD agreed Guild needs to change. He felt that it has been changing over all the recent years. Answers that members are looking for are now more available online. Agreed that the Business Club concept could be supported.

JM explained all member organisations are struggling e.g. NACB now part of AIMS. All subscription decisions are now based on a cost v benefit analysis.

MT said that the opportunity to be a Guild member needs to be available to those new to the industry. Felt the networking side was very important to those newcomers. Also attested to by conversations CH had with the recent new members.

PC said Guild should be recognised as a source of ideas, for networking and quality. Ideas need to help businesses. Our marketing has set ourselves up to be shot down (mainly aimed at PoTM). PR needs to be on a local level (by the member?) to benefit the member:

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The meeting agreed with the suggestion to channel funds into meetings and networking, maintain the Q Guild brand as a badge of quality and use as an endorsement.

So to summarise an answer to DLs question it was agreed that there needs to be a reasonably radical change. Play more to the Guild's strengths.

Q2. What should be the main changes?

Options

1. Stay as we are, get rid of cost of PR and printed materials. Improve the offer and hold fees the same. Hold business meetings in locations as networking events. Retain Smithfield Awards and BBQ Awards on alternate years.
2. Work more closely with the two trade associations with admin done in the Federations.
3. Become a Business Club for networking as Elite Butchers. No structure.

Agreed that attendance at meetings should be paramount.

Questioned wisdom of maintaining regions especially where they did not work. MT suggested keeping regions that are working and hold good national meetings where regions are not working.

Business Club only scenario.

David Smith's group is a buying group of around 20 predominantly south based butchers. Holds meeting with speakers and organises trips abroad. Membership is by invitation, possibly made up of businesses that are the larger purchasers.

The Business Club suggested is based on Elite Butchers in Northern Ireland.

Elite butchers meet monthly. Max of 16 allowed, no competitors (proximity). 12 members currently. Must be of benefit to the group to be invited into membership. Fees are £350 per annum and these cover venue and secretarial services. They use their buying power to benefit members.

Meeting agreed that networking is essential to encourage new Q Guild members.

Option 2 would give access to a larger pool of membership. Could cut admin costs and get better recognition.

PC felt a refocus of where we are now is the way forward.

Emphasis on communication and networking. Keep regional meetings wherever they are working. The meetings need to be somewhere that you learn something.

More resource perhaps on communication and greater contact. Q Guild has to become an organisation that progressive butchers want to be part of. Offer less but better.

The quality of meetings could be enhanced by corporate members demonstrations. Open Networking meetings rather than regional meetings.

Consider holding Exec meetings at the same venue as an Open Networking Meeting. PC pointed out that the meeting suggestions tabled by SW and CH were a very good template. Events will generate their own positive noise on social media.

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SR suggested retain standards, networking is for knowledge so should we implement attendance requirements, members should prove that they make quality products by entering and hopefully winning awards.

SW felt that six good open meetings have to be staged before stricter attendance rules can be implemented. MT agreed that "we have to put on a show first".

PC suggested we evolve this year towards the concepts discussed. BA said we still do the meetings but structure them using Regional Support.

SW stressed we still need to sell the Guild to the retail butchery sector.

Marketing is sharing but not necessarily printed leaflets and POTM. There was a feeling that digital materials could be useful as long as it did not create the negativity currently generated by POTM.

We need to do a selling job on the membership, reducing fee was mooted but not popular. Emphasis needs put on informing members that there will be meaningful meetings all over the country. A calendar needs to be constructed and is an action point for CH and SW.

Agreed membership fees should remain the same but an "exciting times ahead" letter needs to be composed to accompany the subscription invoices. Offer has to be good quality meetings, networking opportunities, product demonstrations strengthened by Executive meetings moving around the country. Executive members attendance at these open meetings would assist and build the networking ethos.

Letter needs to be sent to the Key Partners thanking them for their support and explaining the new way forward. Agreed to retain corporate membership fees at current rate.

Budget implications to be projected and circulated to Management Committee ASAP. This would include retaining £5k for ad hoc marketing, retaining Guildsman and Hot Off the Block.

Smithfield Awards and National BBQ Championship to be every two years.

The next Smithfield Awards will be in January 2019

A national BBQ event would not be held until April / May 2020.

Next Smithfield Awards in January 2021.

It was felt as there was no support from the membership for a business conference that it would be put on ice in the meantime. Budget to be used to enhance the open meetings.

JM to investigate a Q Guild BBQ section at the National Craft Butchers.

Also a BBQ section could be included in the Smithfield Awards.

Next Executive / AGM meeting be held on 20th February at Dean Court Hotel York at 1:30pm to be followed by an open meeting in the evening hosted by the North East.

National open meetings to include venues in London and Edinburgh.

Edinburgh open meeting to be held on Tuesday 4th June 2019.

DL thanked everyone for their contributions to the discussion and their attendance. Also thanks to Cranstons for hosting the group and providing lunch.

Meeting closed at 3.59pm

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