

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Report

Subject : Rent Reductions - Stratford Sub-Castle Improvement Period Report
Committee : Events, Markets and Grants Sub-Committee
Date : 29 January 2024
Author : Sarah Gregson, Communities Manager

1. Report Summary:

- 1.1. This report gives an overview of actions taken against the Stratford Road Social Club improvement period agreed with this subcommittee in April 2023.
- 1.2. This report also contains an overview of the club's current status and the outcomes of a review meeting conducted in Dec 2023 with the Stratford Road Social Club Committee in the form of a set of proposed actions to secure the future of the club.
- 1.3. Councillors are asked to review and discuss these proposals for a new approach to the future sustainability of the Stratford Road Social Club as agreed with the club's committee and to vote one or more of the recommendations through, as a future course of action, with any amendments as proposed by subcommittee members.

2. Background:

- 2.1. The Rent Reductions Policy Was Reviewed in early 2022 and a new version approved by Community Service Committee on 7/07/2022.
- 2.2. Changes to the Policy included the ability of the grants subcommittee to impose a 3-to-6-month improvement plan for rent reduction organisations who were not able to deliver against their aims and objectives for community impact and benefit, s per the Rent Reductions Policy.
- 2.3. In April 2023 the subcommittee agreed to impose a 6-month improvement period based on an action plan devised by the Vice Chair, the Communities Manger and the Social Club's Subcommittee. The plan was implemented from May to October 2023.

3. Stratford Road Social Club Improvement Period Plan – including actions:

- 3.1. Stratford Road Social Club Chair and one committee member have engaged well with SCC Councillors and Officers throughout this process, and they have worked on this report in collaboration with the SCC Communities Manager. They acknowledge that whilst some progress has been made on the improvement plan that progress has been slow and that it has been insufficient to secure the future of the club for the following reasons
 - 3.1.1.1. Whilst committee numbers were increased, buy in from committee members had been limited and actions have been taken only by the chair and one member of the committee.
 - 3.1.1.2. Running costs, in particular energy bills have continued to rise during this period
 - 3.1.1.3. The committee does not contain a committed member with the skills or capacity to lead on marketing and social media. As a result marketing and external communications have been extremely limited

Area of Improvement	Planned actions	Actions already undertaken
Membership numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop a campaign to raise local membership numbers through the means outlined below under other areas of improvement. 	Membership in December 2023 had not increased and stands at 150
Develop relationship with campsite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with Cllr Bolwell to arrange a meeting with the site management. To explore the possibility of an access gate to the club from the campsite with SCC and campsite representatives. 	Meeting with the campsite was undertaken on the 19 th of May with support from Cllr Bolwell and Environmental Services Manager – Marc Read. Little progress was made and there has been little communication from site management since despite several attempts by the committee
Local Awareness & Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photographs of the Social Club for social media and website presence Press release raising awareness of falling use and excellent facilities by Mid-June 2023 Provide Cllr Wells with literature on upcoming events and hire facilities for door-to-door communications by 1st July Write a case study for SCC Website by 1st August 2023 Add activities to Experience Salisbury and regularly update. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photographs were taken and are held by the club and the SCC Communities Manager. They are yet to be used for promotion. Press release and case study draft was shared with the committee marketing lead in June 2023. No action was taken. Club activities are not currently posted to Experience Salisbury
Committee Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarah Gregson to work for the Committee Member with responsibility for marketing and Communications on Press releases and local advertising and communications opportunities by end June 2023 Cllr Bolwell to work with the Chair on defining and developing the roles of committee members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts were made to engage the marketing lead, but no progress was made. Cllr Bolwell has met with the committee on a number of occasions and a successful link forged with Cllr Wells who has assisted the club in promoting hires of the club via his newsletter. Engagement from the committee beyond the chair and one other member was limited but they have engaged positively in forming this report
Increased Hires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Join the Wiltshire Village Hall scheme by mid-June 2023 Approach Salisbury Sports and Activities Forum with information about facilities Approach Salisbury Arts Scene to share info of space hire for artists classes, with reference to pre-covid successful hires for this purpose. Improve visual presence of facilities on local websites e.g. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The club have not joined the Wiltshire village hall scheme. The availability of the club for hire has been shared with the Sports and Activities Forum but no new hires have yet been generated. The approach to Salisbury Arts Scene has not been initiated by the SCC Communities manager because other items listed here have not yet been achieved. New Hire 2023/24– Vault Darts

	Our Community Matters, Experience Salisbury etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hire 2023/24 – Poker League to include tournaments. • New Hire – Vault Darts Tournaments
Event review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore working with partners to run new events to attract new people to use and become aware of the club. • Partners to be approached. SCC Communities, WC Resident Engagement, Spurgeons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winter clothing event with SCC Communities agreed for October 2023
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet with Cllr Bolwell and Communities Manager before the 1st July 2023 • Cllr Bolwell to work alongside the committee for this 6-month period in support of the plan above. • A plan update will come to Events, Markets and Grants Subcommittee, 17 July 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This and several follow up meetings with Cllr Bolwell have occurred and engagement from the Chair and another member of the committee has been positive. • A review meeting with Cllr Bolwell and the SCC Communities Manager took place on the 19th of December 2023 and the remainder of this report has been generated as a result.

4. Stratford Road Social Club current status:

- 4.1. As a result of the review meeting on the 19th of December the rest of this report has been generated in collaboration with the Chair and one other member of the committee with a view to engaging this committee in a dialogue about the future of the club.
- 4.2. Membership is expected to slightly decrease in Jan 2024 due to some deaths in core membership.
- 4.3. Hires have increased and the club have invested in equipment for a darts league leading to regular hires, increased use of the bar facilities and the recent inclusion of tournament events in their regular programme.
- 4.4. The relationship with Mencap and The Onwards Club continues and grows with the club providing meeting space for both of these organisations supporting people in the community with ongoing health conditions and disabilities.
- 4.5. The club has initiated a discussion with the darts league regarding the creation of a Saturday youth academy, in response to local interest and to capitalise on the recent success of 16-year-old Luke Littler. This demonstrates the committee's ability to think more strategically.
- 4.6. A significant part of the club's income comes from wakes for the local community with. Whilst this reflects the importance of the club to residents, the opportunity to promote the facility as a venue of this and similar events has not been capitalised upon by the committee's own admission.
- 4.7. The Committee has undertaken a consultation with members on what events and activities they would like to see at the club leading to a successful New Year's event with a significantly increased attendance and income, with several events planned for 2024.
- 4.8. The Committee are undertaking a review of hire costs and plan to increase hire costs in the coming months. A facilities hire fee for tea/coffee and kitchen equipment alongside room hire has already been implemented.

- 4.9. The club have recently engaged positively with support from the SCC Communities Manager and a flyer promoting the benefits of membership and asking the community to 'support your local club' has been created ready for distribution this month.
- 4.10. The Communities Manager notes that the club are delivering activity that supports 2 Community Priorities – Bringing Communities Together (Though more could be done in this area)

5. Financial Status of the club

- 5.1. The club's financial situation is now critical with just £745 left in the club's account.
- 5.2. This will be increased when membership renews in January 2024.
- 5.3. The investment in darts equipment has now been equalled by income generated and club expect to make money on this activity stream going forward.
- 5.4. The committee acknowledges that a bad quarter could lead to the closure of the club and have come to the table to discuss a range of options for saving the facility as a club and community space for the members who value it.
- 5.5. The current chair's hire of the basement of the club for business purposes, at £100/week, currently forms a significant part of the club's income, however the committee acknowledge and agree that if an alternative hire, at a higher commercial rate can be found this would significantly sure up the club's financial situation. The committee remain open to this course of action.

6. Proposals

- 6.1. The Committee, with guidance from Cllr Bolwell as representative of this subcommittee, and the SCC Communities Manager, believe that the value of the club to the community remains, however a significant rethink of how the club generates income is needed immediately and must be accompanied by a media campaign in support of the agreed actions.
- 6.2. The Communities Manager believes that there is now a significant risk to Salisbury City Council that if the club fails, the council will be left to take on the costs of this large building. However
- 6.3. The following proposals have been generated and the Social Club's Committee welcome any discussion with this subcommittee on these and other routes forward:

Proposal 1

- SCC supports the club to generate a press release and flyer campaign (Appendix 1) to the effect that the social club is in danger and needs 'saving'. The focus of this press release will be on how a low-cost membership can secure the club for the community, the benefits of club membership, the features of the club as a venue for hire and any of the proposals below as relevant and agreed. This is permitted by clause 21 of the lease - "Sharing Occupation". (Appendix 2 – pg. 20)

Proposal 2

- That the club actively seeks to sublet the basement to an alternative business at a higher rental rate than is currently in place. This will require detailed agreements to be in place, agreed by Salisbury City Council as Landlord, related to clause 20 of the lease. (Appendix 2 -pg. 18 – 20)

Proposal 3

- SCC supports the club to seek a charity/CIC or voluntary sector organisation who may wish to share the main club facilities with the social club on a long-term basis e.g., 2 to 3 days per week. This is permitted by clause 21 of the lease - "Sharing Occupation". (Appendix 2 – pg. 20)

Proposal 4

- That the club committee undertake a review of their pool room usage and seeks costings to assess the feasibility of adapting the room as a meeting and office space available for hire to increase revenue

Proposal 5

- That SCC and the Club make an approach to the campsite with a formal proposal to share the club and its facilities and if successful undertakes a governance review to create a structure in support of this arrangement. This will require legal investigation with reference to the terms of the lease (Appendix 2)

7. Recommendations

- 7.1. It is recommended that the subcommittee grants the Stratford Social Club a further 6 months' rent reduction from April 2024 with ongoing support from SCC to be reviewed in full at Events, Markets and Grants Subcommittee on the 8th of October 2024.
- 7.2. It is recommended that, if the first recommendation is agreed, the subcommittee discuss the proposals outlined above and votes on each in turn, noting that it is possible to pursue all of the above as a comprehensive plan of action.

8. Wards Affected: All Wards

9. Background papers:

- 9.1. Appendix 1 – New Membership Campaign Flyer
- 9.2. Appendix 2 – Stratford Road Social Club Lease

10. Implications:

- 10.1. **Financial:** Risk of SCC taking on this club at short notice, with incumbent costs, should be noted.
- 10.2. **Legal:** None in relation to this report.
- 10.3. **Personnel:** None in relation to this report
- 10.4. **Environmental Impact:** None in relation to this report
- 10.5. **Equalities Impact Statement:** Equality and inclusion policies requested from all applicants.