

Our committee arranged a meeting on 15th October for all objectors to our license application to come along and discuss any concerns they may have so that we could put their minds at rest.

The meeting started at 6.30 with 2 neighbours present and Cllr Jane Dowson. We discussed the hours we were applying for and explained that we were not applying for a 2am finish but had agreed with the police that an 11.30 finish for the sale of alcohol would be acceptable to them. This appeared to be acceptable to the neighbours and they left the meeting.

Cllr Dowson has on occasion visited our Community Centre, but I explained again that the Association of Ukrainians have owned the building since 1965 and we exist to develop, promote and support the interests of the Ukrainian Community in the UK and to preserve Ukrainian traditions and culture.

The people who attend our centre are mainly families, many of whom are ladies with children whose husbands have stayed behind in Ukraine to fight. We are a Community centre and the function of the premises will not change.

We run a Supplementary school for the children, an English speaking club and a choir and we are the main meeting point in Leeds for Ukrainians to meet and be Ukrainian...we are a small part of Ukraine. Our centre is run entirely by our volunteers.

We are also a centre where other communities can come and feel at home. Currently the Lithuanian community and a Zimbabwean Church group use our Centre regularly.

Running alongside this we also have a registered charity working from our centre Leeds Ukrainian Community Association that fundraises to help the displaced people living in the Leeds area as well as sending humanitarian aid back to Ukraine.

The reason for applying for a license is to allow us some flexibility. The situation in Ukraine is fast moving and sometimes meetings have to be arranged at short notice. The license would enable us to at least offer a drink when people come in. It has been suggested that we work on TEN notices, but we would be limited to 15 per year which just would not be enough plus they have to be applied for 15 days before the event and quite often we don't have that much notice. We are a Ukrainian community centre and are looking to serve the needs of our community.

Our Designated Premises Supervisor has worked for a Housing Association for 20 years and has helped in a pub near home and is conscious of the needs of our neighbours. All our litter is picked up and placed in our bins, in fact we suffer the same problem as others where rubbish is regularly thrown over the fence into our garden.

We have never had any instances of drunken or antisocial behaviour or any drug taking involving anybody in our Community Centre.

I appreciate there are instances of antisocial behaviour as has been described but can assure you that these have not involved anybody who has previously been drinking in our Community Centre.

We understand the concerns of our neighbours but we are committed to keeping our neighbours interests at the forefront of our minds. We would encourage open dialogue with those who live close to us and would invite anybody interested to come along and visit us.