

MOOR ALLERTON SPORTS AND SOCIAL CENTRE Reg Charity No 523757

Application No: PREM/04254/001

We shall show that our current licensed activities are conducted responsibly, and that this will continue.

Also that we are aware of the Licensing Authority's expectations of us when it comes to the four licensing objectives. We will show that we have taken active steps to promote these; steps which are appropriate to the nature of our organization, and to the neighbourhood in which it operates.

Background

MASSC is a charity which provides sport and social clubs, and facilities for the benefit of the local community. Our locality is ethnically diverse and the Centre is used by many different ethnic groups. We estimate that about fifty percent of our licensed hirings are to ethnic minority groups.

First to use the current site was Moor Allerton Men's Club, formed in 1898. A meeting in 1919 was the start of the Centre as we know it. Although our current Club Premises license is dated 2014, it pre-dates 2003. We have no records for a hundred years ago, but we surmise the Centre was first licensed in 1919/early 1920s.

MASSC currently has 4 affiliated clubs: bridge, table tennis, bowls, and snooker. The bar is used by club members. In addition, rooms are let out on a regular basis to organisations such as U3A, and for community activities such as Irish and Israeli dancing, indoor bowls, educational classes.

It is also let out for functions such as children's birthday parties, christenings, wedding receptions and meetings.

Premises License

We are seeking to upgrade our licence as the hall and other rooms are being used more often, for events both requiring and those not requiring use of the bar. Evening weekend bookings are predicted to total approximately 100 next year, with an anticipated 25 of these requesting bar facilities - numbers which are expected to remain constant, there being only 104 weekend nights in a year. These events provide additional income to the charity and also provide a venue for local community events.

In addition; and this is expected to be the only significant increase in footfall; we hope to increase use of the lounge + bar area, especially by the U3A. On 3 weekday nights groups of 15-20 people can then meet for quizzes and to play table games between, say, 5pm and 9pm.

It is important to note that the premises are detached, set within their own grounds, and with ample private car parking (recently upgraded and enlarged). They are set well back from any road or shops, or indeed other outlets selling alcohol.

In addition, we have this year recruited a paid Centre Manager who manages our bookings, staff, and the Centre itself in a firm and responsible manner (eg no teenager/20s parties). In addition, also this year, we have employed a new caretaker with a new Contract of Employment. His duties include being present throughout, and the supervision of, all events at the Centre.

Under the Licensing Act 2003 there are 4 licensing objectives:

1. **The prevention of crime and disorder:** we have CCTV cameras both inside and outside the premises and we consider this an excellent deterrent. We have received no recent complaints whatsoever. Approximately 20 months ago there was one unruly incident, and we have profusely apologized to our neighbours for this. We have since then changed our hirings policy, and we no longer accept bookings for teenage or twenties parties. In addition, we have vastly improved our supervision of events at the Centre.
2. **The protection of public safety:** there have been no issues to date. The club is extremely well used and there are many elderly visitors. We take health and safety issues seriously. We have appropriate insurance and seek advice from our insurers on safety issues. We have, for example, a policy of gritting during icy spells. We have an appropriate fire safety policy. We have a caretaker who lives adjacent to our premises who deals with waste disposal (such as glass bottles). We have first aid kits and trained first aiders; the caretaker is one of these. We have limits on the maximum users of the premises, and there is good external lighting for those leaving the premises.
3. **The prevention of public nuisance:** our charity is there to serve the community and we obviously do not wish to be a nuisance to our neighbours who are a part of that community. Our building is detached, and in its own grounds, with its own car park. It is set apart from neighbouring properties.

Our hours of opening are 9.00 – 23.30.

In actual fact, the bar stops serving at 22.45, with a half hour allowed for clearing up and drinking up, and music is turned off at 23.00. We will continue this policy. Hirers, along with anyone else, are required to leave by 23.15. We have requested in our License Application a finish time of 23.00, close of Centre 23.30, simply to allow a small amount of leeway. We intend to continue with our policy of a 22.45 cut-off time. This means that the premises will at all times be vacated by at the very latest 23.30, and generally earlier.

It is a Condition of Hire (ie included in the Hire Contract) that users ensure that “the noise level is not such as to cause inconvenience for the occupiers of nearby houses and property”. Windows are rarely open. During most of the year, not only are the windows kept closed, but also the blinds remain drawn, during events. Fire doors are kept closed (though not bolted!). Our Contract of Hire states that these are to remain closed to prevent disturbance to our neighbours, and that ceiling fans are available which can be turned on if required.

We have checked our records, which show that on only one occasion, ever, have our neighbours complained to us about noise escaping from our premises. This was during an event this summer, when due to the heat, doors were left open. We have apologised.

The temperature in the hall that day was in the high thirties/40s. If Leeds were again to experience such unusually hot weather, it is possible that the doors would again have to be opened as a safety measure. However, we consider this unlikely to happen.

We have had a noise limiter for approximately 15 years. The most recent one was purchased in February this year. It is a Condition of Hiring that this is not interfered with in any way.

Another Condition of Hiring is for “considerat(ion) of our neighbours when using the car park, particularly when leaving”. We have several prominent notices inside, on the walls near our exit

doors, clearly asking guests to leave quietly. Particular reference is made to raised voices and to slamming car doors. We have recently commissioned a similarly worded sandwich-board type notice for placement outside in our porch area, where it will be highly visible without causing an obstruction. We also ask the organizers of events to remind their guests to please be quiet when leaving.

One concern raised by an objector is that of glass bottles littering the area on Stonegate Road near where this joins the Centre approach road (opposite the Fire Station). These bottles cannot have originated from us; we sell little bottled beer, almost all is draught; drinks are consumed on the premises, which are a long way, approximately 500 metres, away from Stonegate Road. Most importantly, any bottled drinks are served poured into glasses.

We received some complaints from our neighbours that the lighting for our new car parking area, installed obviously for the safety of its users, was too bright and/or unfortunately angled, so that too much light entered their properties. MASSC took these concerns very seriously. Neighbours' comments were collated, and the electrician was recalled to make adjustments. When there were still complaints, the MASSC Secretary at that time then made a (chaperoned) visit to a neighbour's bedroom, and again liaised with the electrician. Since then we have received no further correspondence about this issue.

We think all of this shows our extreme and genuine willingness to work with our neighbours, and to listen to and resolve all complaints.

4. The protection of children from harm: we no longer allow teenage parties; we have strict policies about who can use our facilities and under no circumstances will children come into contact with any inappropriate material.

Our premises are a set long way back, and are not visible, from the road, in what is a generally prosperous residential area/suburb. Young people are unlikely to visit on a casual basis, and most users of our Centre are very obviously over 25. Nevertheless, we operate a Challenge 25 scheme. Our barmen are trained to request the appropriate ID from anyone appearing under 25, and not to serve them, or to serve anyone buying alcoholic drink for them, if this is not produced. Under no circumstances will under aged drinking be allowed.

Objections

We believe that MASSC activity has had very little "past demonstrable adverse impact.....on local residents or businesses" and that MASSC has, in addition, "agreed and put into effect....appropriate measures..... to mitigate that adverse impact." We have taken appropriate measures whenever issues have arisen, and shown that we are respectful, considerate, and responsive neighbours.

Many of the representations raise points which are dealt with by our note of clarification already circulated - we are not attempting to extend our hours of operation. Nor are we planning significantly increased footfall. We do not believe there has ever been damage caused to neighbouring property; we certainly have no record of such a complaint ever being made to us. We have sincerely apologized for the one unruly party, in Spring 2017, and there have been no further complaints of unruly behaviour. MASSC has put robust measures in place to avoid similar incidents in the future (paid Centre Manager and new caretaker contract). The enlarged car park has completely resolved previous traffic issues. We have worked with our neighbours to reach a solution to the car park lighting.

Some of the objectors themselves relate how MASSC has indeed worked with them to resolve these issues (Doreen and Peter Moore, Stephen Clarkson, car park lighting), and others mention that there have been very few things to complain about over a long period of time. One objector, Dr A J Houghton-Moss, talks about “occasional” noise over a period of 35 years. Another, David Hughes, says “upto now there has not been a problem”. Some representations raise concerns about the future, and about house prices. These do not seem to us justified, given the small amount of “past demonstrable adverse impact”, and the appropriate measures MASSC has in any case put into effect.

We will continue to be responsive to any new issues, should these arise.

Conclusion

MASSC is an important resource for the local, ethnically diverse, community. It is efficiently run by volunteers. As well as offering facilities for sports and recreation, it makes its premises available to local people, at a reasonable price, for a wide range of community and cultural events; it makes a contribution to “community involvement and an increasing sense of common identity”, and its licensed activities are a part of this. We realize that a balance has to be struck between the rights of local residents, and MASSC and its users. We feel that our Application, with the corrected hours for which we have asked, and all the supporting information we have provided, strikes that balance.

We have an excellent record, and the measures we have adopted recently will enable us to continue and improve upon this. There is no reason to believe that we will not continue to act responsibly should we be successful in our Application.