

From: Jason Parker, Chairman



The charity that supports the RAF family

Newark & District Club
23a London Road
Newark-on-Trent
Nottinghamshire
NG24 1TN

21st September 2022

Ladies & Gentlemen,

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING 2022
THE FUTURE OF RAFA NEWARK & DISTRICT CLUB?

*I appreciate that our calling for a Club Special General Meeting is something of a rarity so I am writing to provide you with the need and rationale for the resolution being tabled. The proposal is to empower the Club Committee to close/dissolve the Club to allow HQ RAFA to dispose of the premises and thereby relieve the Club & Branch of the ongoing and escalating burden of maintaining the building, obviously, not a consideration that has been reached lightly. I need to emphasise from the outset that there is absolutely **no** intention to close the Branch!*

Background.

As you will be aware the RAFA Newark & District Club and Branch have endured some difficult and turbulent times over the past few years that has been injurious to our reputation and indeed we were facing entire closure in early 2021. However, thanks to a small cadre of dedicated members who rallied to raise the necessary Committees to save the day and keep both the Club & Branch going!

Situation

Since then considerable effort has been expended and achieved in trying to rebuild the Club/Branch to a continuing and viable part of the overall Association. Whilst the overall Branch has a membership of headcount of some 277, it has become increasingly clear that the reality is there is only a dedicated core of 20 or so active members many of whom are now of advancing years. Appreciating that still somewhat in the immediate post-COVID era, there is a reluctance for some to venture out and get involved in social events, indeed the Branch 75th Anniversary Celebration Event could only attract 2 members in addition to Committee members attending!

Importantly, as with other like clubs / organisations locally, we are not attracting any new or younger members which does not bode well for the longer sustainability of RAFA in Newark and certainly not in its present guise? As mentioned we are not



alone in this situation similar associations locally with Club premises are struggling to continue and survive and we have already seen the closure of a local RBL Branch, at least two Regimental Associations similarly closing through lack of support in the past year.

The Club's Committee and management team have done extraordinarily well in a relative short period of time in re-establishing the business as an emerging profitable and ongoing commercial concern to support our collective charitable aims. However, this has been achieved in the main by hosting private events such as wedding receptions, birthday parties, funeral wakes, etc., but most importantly through the dedication and concerted efforts of our appointed Club manager and her family. Having said that, it should be recognised that this is also a potential single point of failure with an immediate detrimental impact should 'they' choose to 'walk away' for any reason?

Financial

Also, we have recently received a utilities bill for £8.7k and other unanticipated but essential building maintenance bills totalling some £2k. It is also recognised that there will soon be a requirement for some roof and guttering repairs and despite some recent refurbishment work, we are advised that the building will probably need a complete electrical rewire and re-plumbing in some areas in the medium term potentially costing some £20-30K. Whilst we have met the current expenditure by drawing down some reserves, it is appreciated that this is very much a one off solution and is not sustainable in the longer term (nor perhaps indeed the best use of charitable monies?)

Equally and more importantly it is felt that any future revenue generated could be necessarily diverted to the maintenance of the premises rather than for the primary charitable purpose of our raison d'être.

Potential Solution

Whilst both the Club and Branch committees have been pondering and discussing these issues and potential solutions without much success, we have received a serious approach from a local charity who are keen to form a 'Blue Lamp Club' to serve as a social hub for all Armed Services Veterans and Emergency Services' personnel. has expressed an interest in buying our Club & Branch premises in their entirety and with additional sufficient funding to facilitate the total refurbishment of the premises. If this were to happen, they have already indicated that the Branch would be welcome to continue to meet and 'operate' from the premises.

The Way Ahead?

We have been in discussion with RAFA HQ who are not adverse to disposing of the premises and have commenced negotiations with the Charity. However, the final decision rests with the Club membership who have to vote to close the Club and hand the building back to RAFA HQ. Rather than wait until to all negotiations have been



completed and avoid any potential further or unnecessary delay, we are asking that the membership votes now to empower the Club committee to make the decision once the negotiations are completed.

Clearly, this is not a situation that any of us would have wished to have found ourselves or be placed in, but realistically having spent much time discussing all the possible options moving forward, the disposal of the property came to the fore as undoubtedly the most practical.

Recognising this would mark the end of an era for RAFA Newark & District Branch please be assured that we do believe that without the burden and continuing diversion of maintaining an increasingly expensive property, the Branch itself can begin to properly regain its strength and return to its former success. Collectively, your committee members have the will and determination to succeed. Thus, I have no hesitation in commending the proposal to you.

I look forward to hopefully seeing you at the SGM to be held at the RAFA Newark & District Branch/Club commencing at 1915 hours on Thursday 13th October 2022.

*Jason Parker
Chairman
RAF Newark & District Club*

