

## NATC Official Statement – Closing of the ARC Bar

New Alresford Town Council recently closed its Bar at the Alrebury Park Recreation Centre (ARC).

The Alresford Recreation Centre remains open and at the centre of sporting life in Alresford. Historically NATC have put enormous focus on the sporting activities at this venue, and over the past decade and more, have matched this with substantial investment. Over the past two years, the Council has undertaken a review of its, core objectives, income, expenditure and operating procedures; aided by its new Internal and External Auditors.

As part of this process, the Council considered the income stream generated by the ARC bar, its place in the community, and how this operation conformed to Local Government policy. The Council examined in depth all aspects of the ARC bar operation, and considered the most effective ways in which the business could be supported. The Council also tried to find solutions to the issues raised by the Auditors. These issues relate to procedural difficulties which occur when you have an active business, wishing to make instant decisions, whilst being part of a regulated public body that is required to fully follow due process.

The Bar operation, managed by NATC, has been monitored at Monthly Full Town Council meetings since the Council took over running the Bar some years ago. The ongoing financial viability and risk of running this Bar to the Council and therefore the residents of Alresford has gradually been increasing over the past 2-3 years. This risk has become clearer through a phase of improved Accounting practices partially advised by BDO, the Council's External Auditors.

To more closely manage and monitor the Bar and its operations, NATC set up a dedicated ARC Bar committee to work with the Bar Manager.

As you are aware in November of last year the Council decided that it could not reconcile the differences between the role of an independent business and the core role of the Council, working as a public body. It was decided that the business of the ARC bar would be offered for lease. This was agreed by Full Council as a route to manage and limit risk to the tax payers of Alresford. The Council embarked on a full marketing campaign and invited expressions of interest. Unfortunately, following examination of the offers, and indeed one party's decision to withdraw from discussions, the Council were unable to pursue this option.

It was therefore, with considerable regret and the unanimous agreement of Full Council that the decision was made to close the Bar with immediate effect. This decision was not taken lightly as people's jobs were involved. The decision was based on the continuing and rising financial risk to NATC and therefore the New Alresford tax payer. The remainder of the Alresford Recreation Centre remains open and accessible as before.