

Witness Statement

Statement of Tim Robson

Age if under 18: Over 18

Occupation: Licensing Consultant and Trainer

This statement (consisting of: [4] pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

1. My Name is Tim Robson and I am currently self-employed as a licensing consultant and teacher of licensing legislation to the approved standard of the Award in Personal Licence Holder's. I make this statement in my capacity as a Licensing Consultant for TJR Licensing and former Police Officer.
2. Briefly, my experience as a Police Officer involved in the latter 14 years of my career working as a Licensing Sergeant within Durham police area. In the last four years of my career I worked within the Durham Alcohol Harm Reduction Unit which was a specialist unit divided into prevention, enforcement, treatment and education. My role was primarily Licensing Sergeant dealing with Prevention and Enforcement, and my role extended within the unit to target organised crime groups, problem premises and deal with vulnerability and child and sexual exploitation. I have worked closely on operations with the Border Agency targeting immigration breaches in licensed premises. I therefore have a detailed knowledge of both lower level breaches in the licensing objectives but more importantly the more serious breaches that occur such as those mentioned above and serious violence.
3. I was involved in several high-profile Reviews and Summary Reviews and commented on hundreds of licensing applications. I received a Chief Constables commendation for instigating in excess of 20 reviews on licenced premises in one year, where I identified serious undermining of the objectives and ensured that the problem premises was brought to the attention of the licensing committee.
4. I was one of eight specialist officers appointed in England and Wales as a representative of the National Police Chiefs council (formally ACPO), and I worked with the alcohol sub group based in the Home Office. Since retiring in December 2015 I have, worked as a Licensing Consultant. I continue to deliver training and conduct premises risk assessments and I report on my findings. I also am a Training Coordinator with the Institute of Licensing, Northern Section and the North East representative for Pubwatch.

5. As a result of instructions received from Mr Matt Foster of Mincoffs Solicitors I attended Chaplains Bar, 17 to 21 Front Street, Consett. My intention was to carry out an assessment of the venue and its operating style against the objectives. I attended the venue at 11.30pm on Saturday 29th September 2018 where I carried out an hour's observation of the venue from outside of the premises. I saw no incidents that would cause me any concern. Following this I met Mr Frank Kearney the operator of the venue and his son Andrew Kearney.
6. I conducted a detailed inspection and Risk assessment on the current operation of the premises for any notable undermining of the licensing objectives. The venue was busy at this time. The customers in the venue were from varying age groups. The customers were of good conduct and were clearly enjoying the environment. I saw no incidents of drunkenness or disorder.
7. The venue has a main double door leading out to the front street leading into an acoustic lobby. Inside this lobby to the right is situated a high quality PatronScan identity scanner. This device will scan driving licences and passports and identify and record fake identification. It will also take a picture of the individual presenting the identification. This venue opened at 10pm and at the time of my inspection 17 patrons had been scanned by this scanner. To support this checking process above the door there is a CCTV camera recording facial images of patrons entering the venue. A sign stated that random bag searches were in process. There was a body scanner wand in the foyer.
8. The venue had 4 door staff (post midnight) operating at this time, two on the main entrance male and female, one at the DJ stand and one roaming. Operating a 1/100 ratio the venue the premises has 2 doorstaff arriving at 10am at the opening and a further supervisor arriving at 11pm. Should the venue become busy then a further door supervisor will arrive either when required or at midnight. I have no issues with the number or placement of the door staff at this venue.
9. Numerous posters were clearly displayed indicating Challenge 25, Dead drunk, Please Leave Quietly and that the premises operated a zero tolerance to drugs and regular toilet checks in progress. A large Durham Constabulary nitelife poster was attached to the door. Appropriate no smoking signs were displayed. The summary part B of the licence was displayed above the bar.
10. Upon entering the venue to the right there is a lounge bar area with a bar. This area is a "chill out" area and does not have a dance floor.

11. Upon entering to the left is the main bar and raised dance floor area. There is a separate small door allowing access for customers to get to the front smoking area. I saw no signs of drunkenness or disorder.
12. To the rear left of the dance area is the male and female toilets. Both were well kept and a male toilet attendant was in the male toilets. A CCTV camera was also correctly placed in the male toilets. A female toilet attendant worked every other week. The toilets themselves were designed to prevent the use of cisterns for the taking of controlled drugs.
13. All fire extinguishers and exits were in order and fully functional. The main fire exit was placed in the rear of the dance area bar and to the right of this is a First Aid room to allow any unwell customers a separate area with which they can be seated, and treatment given if required.
14. The venue operates a Challenge 25 and I witnessed bar staff challenging customers under this age and has a 320 capacity.
15. The venue has a 14 camera CCTV system recording continuously. The cameras are all well placed and fit for purpose. The time stamp on the recordings was accurate for evidential purposes. The system was password protected and in good working order.
16. Mr Kearney presented to me the policy manual for the venue. This structured document was well designed and contained all of the relevant information expected of such a document. In particular it explained the make up of the organisation, the roles and responsibilities, a drugs and weapons policy statement, fire, first aid safety and security and complaints procedure. This document also included how the management, staff and the venue will prevent the undermining of the four licensing objectives with each objective being addressed separately. The venue has a well-structured GDPR policy document which is current and up to date.
17. I note that the venue has between the 7th May 2018 and 9th September 2018 operated 11 separate Temporary Event Notice applications. Each notice extended the hours from 3am to 4.30am. It is noted that there were no objections to any of the notices by the responsible authorities on any of the objectives. No incidents have been reported by the authorities of any undermining of the objectives during the 11 occurrences of the notices. Therefore I must assume that there was no undermining of the objectives. No concerns were raised on any of the 11 applications regarding the surrounding transportation infrastructure therefore I must assume that it was satisfactory. Should there have been any concerns of disorder within the venue or as an impact on the residential streets surrounding the venue then I would have anticipated that the notices would have been issued with a counter notice or that

those incidents would have been produced as evidence to demonstrate undermining of any one or more of the objectives.

18. I inspected the refusals register and it was up to date and complete. I recommended to Mr Kearney that he implemented a challenge sheet which is a grid of numbers which are crossed off as each member of staff makes a challenge and this demonstrates that the challenges are being made showing best practice.

Summary and Recommendations

19. In conducting this assessment, I have considered my observations the policy manual and the numerous recent applications for temporary event notices of which there has been no issues or objections. I am satisfied that this premises, if the committee is minded to allow the extended hours to the licence will continue to operate in a safe, socially responsible and overall legal manner.
20. I respectfully submit this document for the information and attention of the licensing committee.

Signed.....

Dated 2nd October 2018