

Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Licensing (Hearings) Sub-Committee
20th April 2016 at 12.30pm



Members Present:-

Councillors Davies, Telford, Windows (Chair).

Officers in Attendance:-

Pauline Powell – Legal Adviso, Abigail Holman – Licensing Policy Advisor,
Louise deCordova – Democratic Services.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

These were made.

2. Apologies for Absence

None received.

3. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

6. Public Forum

None received.

7. Urgent Business.

The Sub-Committee's Licensing Policy Advisor asked the Sub-Committee to consider whether they were minded to accept two late objections received the previous day, and in doing so to hear from the applicant in this regard.

The applicant's legal representative did not object.

The Sub-Committee noted the application had been properly made but were minded to accept the late objections. These were duly made available to the Sub-Committee and to the applicant.



The Sub-Committee's Legal Advisor stated that objectors had no statutory right to be heard but the Sub-Committee had discretion on this matter and had previously allowed this. The Sub-Committee agreed to hear from the two objectors who were present (identified as No.2 and No.4).

Objector No.2 addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of Bristol Womens Voice and Objector No.4 addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of Bristol Fawcett.

8. Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 Application For The Renewal of a Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence made by Reedbed Ltd in respect of premises trading as Central Chambers, 9-11 St. Stephens Street, Bristol, BS1 1EE. (agenda item no.5)

The Sub-Committee noted that there had been no objections received from the Police.

It was reported that the Sub-Committee had visited the site that morning and had questions for the applicant arising from that visit. These were made as follows:-

- What activities take place in the raised area;
- Use of the entrance
- Use of the fire exit
- Code to staff area, and CCTV
- Query regarding door supervisors
- It was confirmed that the ladder above the bar area was previously used as access to a DJ booth, but this was no longer in use by the establishment.
- Derelict office access and control
- Security process for breaches of establishment rules
- Fire exit use in the location of the door railings
- It was confirmed that there was no knowledge of the ownership or use of the blue building adjacent to the establishment, and accessed via a door to the left of the entrance

The Chair asked the applicant's legal representative to address the Sub-Committee and the following points arose:-

- The application was made in identical terms last year's application;
- This was the operators fourth time before a Licencing Sub-Committee having had 3 previous consecutive licences granted.
- Regulatory Objections – no objections had been received from the Police, Environmental Health, Licensing Authority, Residential or Business neighbours, or tourism or regeneration organisations which spoke to the longstanding suitability of the operation of the business and the operator in the current location, trading without regulatory concern.
- Wider Objections – It was understood and lap-dancing clubs were not universally agreed with and that Fawcett was a national organisation against lap dancing.
- The club had been licenced under previous regimes since 2001 and adapted to the various legislative regimes that followed. Licenced capacity was 150 but this was not used, as once the premises started to feel full, further customers would be turned away. There had been no change in location or change in the family owner-manager-operator. The Hale family. The



premises manager Carrie Hale was a qualified security professional and worked at the premises full-time, responsible for daily operation, supervision and security surveillance.

- Business Description – there was no signage outside the premises. Hours of operation 9pm-6am with, last entrance licenced at 4am. The club usually wound down by 5am. Patrons were greeted by security staff and the rules explained at the door. I.e. No touching, mobile phones switched off and private dances would incur a separate payment. If a patron looked under 21 then ID was checked. 25% or more custom was from female patrons who did not pay an entrance fee. Alcohol was purposely not cheap and the intoxication level was low. Dancing in the main area was topless but not fully nude. Customers were not pressured into taking a private dance but there were two options payment. £20 for a dance or chips which could be purchased in advance by card. Customer was required to sit with their back against the wall and hands by their sides. The dance would involve a fully nude strip tease for either 3 minutes or for the length of 1 track.
- Compliance – Role of the manager to observe the private dance area via CCTV to ensure that rules were complied with. In addition regular checks were made by staff and security professionals. Police and Licensing could check CCTV for the past 30 days at any time.
- Ejections – any breach of rules would involve a stepped process where the dancer would advise the patron of the rules. If rules not complied with then security called and customer asked to leave the premises.
- Fire Exits – near railings staff enter through the fire exit door prior to opening.
- Derelict Office access and control – Belongs to landlord and no access to the operator, understood previously used as a storage office.
- Hearsay harassment of dancers – stated that the hearsay was untrue, evidenced by no corroboratory evidence being received by police or regulatory authorities. Smokers outside the premises were very few.
- Statistics – the 2009/2010 statistics are not supported by police
- Suitability – applicant highly compliant, rules prominent on walls of club, no suggestion of breaches to character, layout and condition of premises.
- Location – no objections from any statutory body, or from anyone living nearby, no suggestion the premises was exerting a negative effect on its environment i.e. no logo, external imagery, or wording of a sexual nature, and low level of intoxication of patrons.
- In conclusion, the licence could be renewed on the same terms as the previous renewal.

The Sub-Committee sought clarification regarding the following:

- There was a low ejection rate due to non-compliance circa 1 patron per week.
- Patrons would generally stay for a maximum of 1-2 hours
- Male dancers would not generally work in the evenings but were often booked for hen parties and hen activities such as for life drawing or 'butler-in-the-buff' styled events. Applicant confirmed that there was a healthy hen party trade of between 2 and 7 events per week which were advertised on the website.
- All dancers were self-employed, and many had other employment. It was possible for a dancer to receive no income if trade was slow on any one night but this was unlikely.
- Clarified that dancers would normally arrive with a basic disclosure check or sign a declaration of no convictions before being permitted to perform as a dancer. To date this had not resulted in any dancers being found to have had undeclared convictions. The licensing policy advisor clarified with the applicant that any dancer found to have made a false statement would not be



permitted to continue to trade. The Legal Advisor clarified that the operator had discretion in deciding how to meet Condition H of the schedule for regulations prescribing standard conditions applicable to licences for Sexual Entertainment Venues i.e. 'no person shall be employed or shall perform at the premises who has unspent convictions'.

- For safety reasons dancers would be escorted to their own cars or book taxis at the end of their shifts.
- It was unknown and not likely to be known, whether the establishment was in the vicinity of a women's refuge facility. The legal advisor confirmed that type of facility would generally remain unknown by its nature. The applicant confirmed that no complaint had been received from such an establishment.

There were no further questions, and all parties withdrew for the Sub-Committee to deliberate.

Resolved:- that the renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Licence for Central Chambers be granted for 12 months from the expiry of the last licence and be subject to the original conditions of the licence.

The meeting finished at 2.40pm.

CHAIR _____

