

SUMMARY PREMISES LICENCE REVIEW

BEFORE

THE LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE OF MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL ON 11 APRIL 2022

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

APPLICANT

PREMISES LICENCE HOLDER: EMBASSY CLUB LIMITED

RESPONDENT

PREMISES: THE EMBASSY CLUB, MANCHESTER

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [REDACTED]
ON BEHALF OF THE PREMISES LICENCE HOLDER, THE EMBASSY CLUB LIMITED

I, [REDACTED], of The Embassy Club, will say as follows:

1. I am employed as a member of the bar staff at the Embassy Club, Westbourne Grove, Harpurhey, Manchester M9 4XJ ("the Club").
2. I am providing this witness statement on behalf of the premise licence holder, Embassy Club Limited, in relation to the summary review of its premises licence no. 050449, which has been applied for by Greater Manchester Police following an incident at the premises on 11 March 2022.
3. The intention of this statement is to explain my understanding of events leading up to the incident and to explain the steps that the premises is going to take in response to minimise the risk of a similar incident in the future.

Background

4. I have worked at The Embassy Club as a member of bar staff since 2017. I work Mondays (a very short shift, to help tidy up after the weekend and prepare for the week ahead), and two eight hour shifts Friday and Saturday. I also cover additional shifts if required due to staff absence.
5. Ms Deborah Siddall (my mother) has worked at the Club for nearly 20 years. She is a Director of Embassy Club Limited. She is also the DPS at the Club (and has been since November 2018).
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] It can be said that there is a lot of years' experience of the premises within the team.
6. Whilst I do not hold a personal licence, I am fully aware of and understand the provisions and conditions of the premises licence.

7. Prior to working at the Club, I was a Care Support Worker in the NHS for 15 years, working in A&E and ACU wards (as well as other types of wards). I am therefore experienced in working with the public (including in pressured situations) as well as being first aid and other supportive care including defibrillation, for the purposes of working at the premises.

The Embassy Club (“the Club”)

8. The current premises licence was initially granted in 30 August 2005, and subject to variation since then, most notably in 2019.
9. The Club is a detached premises on Westbourne Grove in Harpurhey, Manchester. It was originally a dilapidated snooker hall before it was purchased by Mr Bernard Manning in 1959 (his son, Mr Bernard Manning Jnr, remains the landlord). Due to its history with British comedy in the 1970s and 1980s, the Club is a famous location visited by people from all over the North-West, and the rest of England.
10. The layout of the public area of the premises is simple and has not really changed since its purchase by the Manning family in 1959. To the left of the main entrance is an outside terraced beer garden. This is accessed internally from the bar, which is at the front of the Club. Behind the bar is the function room.
11. Whilst the premises licence permits the sale of alcohol until 2am (with closing at 2.30am), the Club generally operates only until 1am on Friday and Saturdays (earlier, if it is quiet). On Sunday, the premises closes at 11pm (or earlier). On Monday to Wednesday, the Club closes at 11pm (at the latest). On Thursday, the Club closes at around 12 midnight if it is a pool night (otherwise, it will close earlier).
12. The premises employs four permanent staff altogether (including myself, Deborah [REDACTED]).
13. The bar has a jukebox and a DJ playing on Friday and Saturday evenings (there is a small dance floor in front of the DJ area). The Club also has terrestrial TV. We stopped providing Sky Sports a while ago to avoid football-related incidents involving supporters of different teams. The Club has a pool table (players bring their own cues or they keep them at the Club in the back office or behind the bar). There are also some fruit machines.
14. The Club is long-established and is a focal meeting point in the community. The Club is spacious, with plenty of room for people to sit down around tables. It has a casual and welcoming atmosphere. On a daily basis, the Club attracts a broad range of customers, of all ages and backgrounds. Everyone is welcome and we have a large number of regulars (our oldest regular customer is 83 years old).
15. I would describe the Club has a large family unit. By this, I mean that staff and regular customers know each other. If someone comes in who we don't recognise, then I (and other staff) will make a point of saying 'hello' and asking who they are, and where they are from, what brings them to the Club and other small talk. We like to know who we are keeping company with.
16. At the Club, we recognise that the area has its issues and we have had to deal with these in the past at the premises. However, the Club is not a 'trouble hotspot' (particularly in this part of Manchester) and does not have a reputation for violent incidents. It has never been the subject of gun-related crime. Prior to 11 March 2022, it had not been the subject of a knife crime.
17. Door staff are contracted separately by the Club from Taurus Security Group. We have used them for a long time, since Deborah Siddall took over the premises licence. We have a good working relationship with the company and the door-staff it provides. On a Friday and Saturday night, there is a minimum of two SIA registered door-staff employed on the premises from 8pm onwards (until

1am), which is an hour earlier than required by the premises licence (which requires SIA staff from 9pm onwards on these two days).

18. Due to the layout of the premises, the door staff at the main entrance can monitor the terraced beer garden as well as see who is arriving and leaving that area through the bar entrance.

Incident Friday 11 March 2022

19. This Club was quiet this evening even though it was a Friday. There were around 20 people at the Club. It has been this quiet since Christmas.
20. As it was a Friday night, there were two door staff 'on the door' at the time of the incident. There was also the usual DJ entertainment.
21. At around 9.30pm, two lads came into the pub. They were about in their mid / late twenties. One was wearing tracksuit bottoms and a t-shirt. He was better presented than the second lad, who was wearing similar clothes, but also had a flimsy jacket. The clothes (t-shirts and bottoms) were tight fitted, and you could see in their pockets. At this time, they had been allowed in by the door staff.
22. As it was a quiet evening at the premises, the behaviour of lads stood out - more than it would have done if they were, for example, in a loud city centre bar. The two lads were comparatively loud and what I would call "a bit lairy". However, were not being violent or aggressive - more annoying than anything else.
23. I asked the door-staff to keep an eye on the two lads, I said they were being 'loud and lairy'. The door-staff, said they would.
24. They got some drinks at the bar (I refused to serve them the full order they had requested, as I thought it was excessive) then went outside through the back door into the beer garden. After I did not see or hear from them after that for about five minutes, I thought they had gone and left the premises through the side-gate which brings you back onto the main road.
25. A little while later I was serving at the bar when I was asked to go to the front door. I had been asked to go to the door by a third lad, who had been in the bar earlier. He said that the door-staf weren't letting the two lads in. I agreed to come out to the door.
26. When I got there, there was a bit of crowd. The two door-staff were there with the two lads from earlier on, and the third lad who had called me outside from the bar. There was a fourth lad as well nearby. The third and fourth lads were not regulars to the Club although I have seen them before, and I believe they had been in the bar earlier that evening. The first two lads had left the Club and were now trying to get back in and had been stopped by the door-staff.
27. At the time, it did not feel like there was a serious problem. The door-staff had stopped them, and they were a bit surprised (they 'didn't get it') that they weren't being allowed in, given that they had been in before that evening. They were trying to talk over the door-staff to try and get in.
28. At this point, from my perspective, there were a group of lads who wanted to come back into the Club. Two of the lads had been in the bar earlier without any problem that I was aware of, and one of them had been let back in to speak with me. The other two 'lairy' lads had also been let into the bar earlier. They hadn't been aggressive or violent, to my knowledge, but were annoying and needed to calm down. They were now with two lads who had not been any trouble earlier. If the two loud lads had come back to the front door on their own, then - at that time - I would have thought differently and said "sorry, not tonight lads".

29. I had to make a decision quickly. I don't remember the door-staff giving a reason for not letting them in, however, I assumed it was because of their behaviour. The conversation at the door was brief. I said something like "you need to calm down, you can't be lairy, nobody else is being like this". The two lads said "alright, alright". I said to the door-staff that if they were happy with the lads coming in, then I'm happy. They said that if I was happy, then they were happy with that. I was happy so long as they calmed down.
30. After the lads went in, I was still stood at the front door talking to third and fourth lad for a short while, and the door-staff afterwards. I asked the door-staff to keep an eye on the two lads who had been stopped at the door.
31. I walked back into the Club to carry on serving. By this time, the first two lads (from earlier on in the evening) had already walked past me and the door staff and straight into the terraced beer garden.
32. The incident in the terraced beer garden took place very quickly after that.
33. I did not see the incident that took place in the beer garden but I became aware that something had happened when I saw the customers from outside come in (the door staff got everyone inside and locked the doors) and one customer came in with bleeding wounds to his finger and wrist.
34. I asked the DJ to turn the music off. Whilst I called an ambulance, my partner (who is a care support worker) tended to the customer's wounds and bandaged them up. The police were also summoned by the ambulance due to a suspected knife crime.
35. The ambulance and police arrived soon after the call was made.
36. I saw the person with the injury to his cheek, however, I overheard him say to the police that he did not want to speak with them. The wound did not appear to be a deep wound. I did not have much interaction with him. I had been calling the police / ambulance, as well as Deborah Siddall then when they services arrived, I stepped back and let them get on with their jobs.
37. When the police arrived, they asked to see the CCTV footage at the premises. They also said that the Club could remain open. However, as it was midnight and I had sent everyone home, the Club was closed.
38. The Club re-opened again on Saturday 12 March 2022 and remained operating under its licence until the interim steps hearing on 18 March 2022, which determined to suspend the premises licence and proceed to a summary review.

The provision of CCTV to the police

39. As soon as the police arrived at the premises, they asked to see the CCTV for that evening.
40. I was able to rewind the CCTV cameras, but it wasn't clear how to extract the images from the CCTV as it would not register the USB stick when it was inserted. Nevertheless, the police took photographs of the imagery on their 'phones.
41. The police returned on Tuesday 15 March 2022 to collect a downloaded copy of the footage they required from the CCTV, I tried to transfer the CCTV footage to the USB again, but I was unable to do so. As a result, I asked the Club's technician to come to the Club to see why the USB stick would not work. I was advised then that the USB slots drops a bit when in use, therefore you need to apply downward pressure to the USB stick. Before then, the issue with the USB stick was unknown. The technician left full instructions on how to extract images before he left. These were passed to the police when they returned to the premises on Wednesday 16 March 2022.

42. On Wednesday morning, 16 March 2022, I followed the technician's instructions on how to use the USB stick to extract images. The police came back that day for the CCTV footage but, for some reason - human error - I selected one camera to upload on to the USB stick instead of all of the cameras.
43. On Thursday 17 March 2022, the police attended the premises with their own technician and laptop. The technician was told to apply pressure to the USB stick and then selected all of the cameras. The technician and police were told the password so they were able to proceed to access the system and footage themselves.
44. We have assisted the police on different occasions by providing CCTV footage. However, there were plainly difficulties accessing the footage following this incident that meant it was not provided in its entirety and in the required format at the time initially requested by the police. The CCTV footage was subsequently provided in full as outlined above.
45. I have provided this explanation to reassure both the Committee and the GMP that the difficulties accessing the CCTV were not intentional and were due to a mechanical issue and human error at that time.
46. I also hope both the Committee and the police are reassured that the difficulties experienced have since been fully addressed.
47. I can confirm that we have also asked the CCTV technician to assist with obtaining additional CCTV capacity that will provide greater coverage of the premises and better clarity for outside images. This request is on hold whilst the premises licence is suspended and until the summary review process has concluded.

Upholding the licensing objectives

48. In August 2019, the Club's premises licence was updated to remove conditions that were either outdated or redundant and replace them with a comprehensive and clear set of conditions that were appropriate for the operation of the premises.
49. The Club also brought in an independent licensing trainer ([REDACTED]) to review the revised licence with the staff. The training was successful and we got very positive feedback from [REDACTED] noted the challenges of where the premises operates and the strength of our operation. He also noted that the team (including myself) been in the place for a long time, that we know their customer base extremely well and have earned their respect.
50. We have continued to do our best, including working and co-operating with the police including providing CCTV evidence even where incidents do not involve our premises directly but our footage may be of assistance. The Club and its staff (including myself) take our obligation to uphold the licensing objectives seriously. The safety of the staff and customers at The Club are also of paramount concern. The incident was a shock as it is not reflective of the premises or its customers.
51. I have reflected on the incident that took place on 11 March 2022. I have also discussed it with the premises licence holder (Mrs Deborah Siddall, Director of Embassy Club Limited). We fully recognise that a knife incident is serious, and we have considered the steps that can be taken to minimise the risk of this type of incident from happening again. Useful discussions have also taken place with the police about how best to go forward from here.
52. In the light of the incident on 11 March 2022, the following steps will be taken:

52.1. I shall identify and undertake courses that provide the following training:

52.1.1. Personal licence course (such as Level 2 BIIAB Award)

52.1.2. Conflict / dispute resolution (in relation to customers causing or having the potential to cause conflict at the premises)

52.1.3. SIA training course (to learn more about decision making by door-staff)

52.2. The premises will engage the services of a licensing consultant ([REDACTED]) to provide additional staff training in relation conflict with customers (including scenarios involving door staff).

52.3. The premises licence will also be amended to include conditions regarding the following:

52.3.1. I will complete the personal licensing training course before I resume any managerial duties at the Club. In the meantime, I shall still be able to work as a general member of bar staff but subject to managerial oversight by Ms Debbie Siddall (DPS and premises licence holder).

52.3.2. A requirement that at least one member of door-staff must wear a bodycam when door-staff are required by the terms of the premises licence. This will help minimise the future risk of disputed accounts of events involving door-staff and will also encourage customers to behave in a more acceptable manner (knowing that they are being filmed at close range).

52.3.3. A knife-wand (hand-held metal detector) to be employed by door-staff when deemed necessary having conducted a risk-assessment in relation to any given customer.

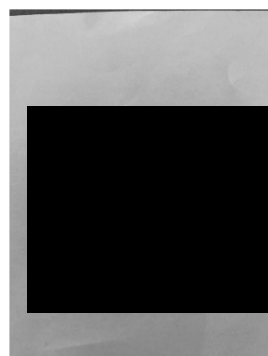
53. At the time of writing this statement, the wording of the conditions is being discussed with GMP.

54. It is hoped that the Club will attend the summary review hearing with an approach that has been agreed with the GMP for the Committee to review in considering its determination.

Name:

Signature:

Date



30 March 2022