

APPENDIX H

Statement from Tracy Grant – Lounge 72 Ltd

Regarding incidents raised by:-Christopher Adshed

Points raised:- To prevent crime and disorder –

We have put very high measures in place from day 1, and increased through learning along the way.

- Drug Misuse prevention
- Search wands x 2
- SIA security staff 6-8 on occasions depending on the event, run by Moulton Security who are a local company and also local business owner in the high street,
- 26 CCTV high tech security cameras which have provided very clear footage to the police on the spot when needed.
- ID scanner at entrance of club
- Pubwatch attendance monthly

16th April 2022 - First incident of significance in the high street after a Saturday night private hire event at the venue, security staff supported the police in defusing the fight that broke out on the high street at the end of the venue alley.

I meet with Gill Akroyd and Christopher Adshed at Stevenage police station to take some advice on what extra measures I could put in place to protect the public, customers venue and staff and control the crowds leaving the venue and entering the high street.

All monthly calendars would be provided to the licensing officer going forward so all are aware of any private booking and the type of booking going forward.

The extra measures I put in place

- Extra security 7-9 SIA staff in place on a private hires
- Extra Barriers to control the surge of people leaving the venue
- Local taxis at the rear of the building to reduce the public at the main taxi rank on the high street.
- Risks assessments for all events going forward
- Strict guidelines stated in contracts of hire.
- Thorough body searches by SIA security that works for the local magistrates' court.
- Ask Angela posters
- Routine meetings with staff and security to discuss issues before the start of each night with weekly management meetings.

1st October – Private hire “Chocolate men brunch” day event.

Only after the event did we know that there was a sexual act performed in the garden area by one lady customer, which no member of staff was aware off until this was posted on social media, there

was a lot of encouragement from the female customers inside towards the artists but at no time was there any sexual acts performed inside the club that myself or my staff were aware of, and if we had seen this it would have been stopped immediately and those involved been asked to leave, there was games and dance battles that the brunch host held and everyone stayed and enjoyed themselves from what we see, the artists did not touch anyone that said they didn't want to be touched and respected people saying "No Thanks".

I was working the bar during the event and did not leave the bar area at all, customers kept the cup they was allocated so they could only refill their own cups and not refill others or friends, one cup one person as we can manage the amount they drink,

I did not see any customers falling about due to drink, it was a very basic Bacardi/juice cocktail made to the legal measures, we always refuse more drink purchases to customers that look like they have had too much alcohol, this is something we all take very serious, we monitor how much drink we sell to customers that attend the bar excessively on a night.

If we do have customers that have had too much alcohol we always exit them from the club and provide taxis for them if they are alone and not with friends.

We foot the bill for any taxis we call to take people home.

****We was issued a statement from the Chocolate men company apologising for their behaviour and informed the artist in question was sacked with immediate effect.**

We had another booked event with them for December 4th 2022 we informed them we had cancelled all events with there company going forward and do not want this type of event back in Stevenage.

The local newspaper had written an article and we asked that the girl involved be kept out of the information due to the possibility of further impact to the girl's life.

We could not control what was spread across social media but we could only provide a statement to say they would not be coming back to our venue and all further bookings had been cancelled as we do not condone this behaviour, this caused us a lot of bad publicity and impacted on our business considerably, but our biggest concern was for the girl in question and her mental health state of being spread all over social media, so we diffused this as best we could to support her stupid 5 mins of a mistake that could cost her a lifetime of damage.

22nd October 2022 – Serious incident – stabbing near the venue

There was boys outside waiting for friends/customers that were leaving the lounge after a night out, the night had been very smooth with no incidents ain the club, on leaving 2 fights broke out in the alley, approx. 30 metres away from the club, with one customer that had been in the venue the others that were outside waiting for friends had not been in the venue.

one of my security intervned with breaking up a fight where a young man had been stabbed another security member was at the door talking with customers that had lost their bag, this left one security man dealing with the fight on his own, the manager Alex called on the radio for extra security to attend which they did, and the police arrived,

2 of our security was attending to the boy that had been stabbed and 3 other security were dispersing the crowds away from the area, 2 other security held customers inside to limit the amount of people in the doorway.

Myself and another staff member took a boy inside that had blood coming from his head to help him as he had something thrown at his head further down the alley, it was all a bit manic until the police arrive and managed to circle the area around the boy who was stabbed, our staff then released the customers down to the high street away from the incident, and statements were taken and CCTV footage viewed by the police and manager and provided on a USB immediately.

We have always provided CCTV footage immediately when asked and worked with the police in identifying and banning customers that are highlighted.

***We were informed this was a retaliation revenge attack due to a previous incident in Hitchin some time ago.

Incident 17th November – Female punched by male friend. – advised female to report male to police for the attack.

2 couples inside the venue and one male punched a female within the group of 4 – we removed him quickly and supported the female in question, advised her and partner (who we calmed down) to report the incident to the police and visit the A&E dept at lister as she seemed to have a broken jaw
ACTION Taken:- the male has been banned and logged on pub watch, we provided CCTV to the police regarding this incident as this male was very aggressive when we approached him, he had no remorse for punching a female so called friend.

Action taken:- since the stabbing event.

Reflection of this incident we pulled an urgent meeting together with all staff and security, to discuss what and how we managed this and what we could learn from it,

We increased our security and installed a further – See below

- 5 extra = 31 high tech CCTV cameras,
- Body Cams on security
- Increased security staff.
- stab proof vests for security,
- stab proof gloves,
- 2 extra high tech wands,
- 8 new radios with torches and panic buttons,
- High vis vests for all security staff to support the safety for our staff and customers.
- Full crowd barriers all the way down the alley so no public can loiter outside and wait for friends near the venue.

We liaised with the police over this incident as this was a first very serious one of this type near our venue and asked for their advice and informed them of the NEW higher security measure we had put in place immediately, the police and licencing officer seemed happy we had stepped up all security measure, maybe a little late but this type of incident was a learning curve for us all, you can

never predict what type of incident would occur but going forward we would hopefully reduce all the risks to staff and public.

*The following weekend around 02:30 we highlighted to the police on the Friday night 2 boys had come to the door who were friends of the by that had been stabbed they were wearing hoods and hands in their pockets- my manager Alex highlighted them to the police on the high street to keep an eye on them so they didn't go to another venue and cause any issues, I was informed they were arrested due to having knives on one of them and being part of a gang from the knife attack the week before.

Closure notice

Police issued a closure notice for 24 hrs at around 11:15 on Saturday 29th October at my home of 24 Forest Row, Stevenage, Herts SG2 8BY

I was very surprised and taken back due to working with the licence officer and police investigating the stabbing all week, with all the new high tech security and measures I had installed and implemented all week to the last communication being around 16:45 to the licencing officer the day before and that no discussion had been had regarding a possible closure issue, "no explanation as to why",

I asked if this was due to the stabbing – the officer who issued this to me said it was either due to with another incident in the high street at another venue – (Pub called Drapers) or another issue that had happened the night before at my venue- I replied nothing happened at my venue it was a smooth night, no police had asked me for anything off the CCTV to back this statement up, I asked what this had to do with me he could not answer the question.

*Police put Posters all over my premises which caused huge gossips for us as a business.

I could not respond as I was unaware what and why this was issued, we posted on social media that we was closed due to unforeseen circumstances as this was one of our biggest nights of the year Halloween, artists DJs had been booked in June for this night, acts and all Halloween decorations had been purchased and hired for this night, which cost me around 7K in costs not including rates and running costs of the premises, totalling around 10K with wages included as it was too late in the day to deploy staff to other venues for work, so they had to be paid.

Sunday 30th October 2022 Police called me and met me to give me a cancelation of the notice order at around 14:00, again I asked if this was over the stabbing they informed me it was not and that it was regarding an incident at Draper pub

I emailed the licencing officer to ask why this had been issued and what I needed to do as It stated I needed to attend the court on Monday morning at 09:30 I had no communication with the closure details all weekend after various emails to the police and licencing officer,

I asked the 2 police officers again do I still have to attend court – they replied yes 09:30 Monday Stevenage magistrates –this statement was recorded on their bodycams.

*Posters on my premises were not removed due to the cancelation.

Myself, My son Danny and my manager Alex attended the magistrates court in Stevenage on Monday morning at 09:00 to be asked why we was there, court room 1 & 2 had no details of the Lounge 72 on their lists we left at 11:30.

I was informed to intend the council to speak to the licence officer,

Which we did around 11;30 the council licencing officer had no details and was not aware of the closure order or the court hearing.

I left a message for my premises licence officer Julie Dwan to contact me as soon as she could– no contact was made.

I sent an email to the Police licence officer Gill Akroyd and Chruistopher adshed – Gill replied later that day Monday 31st October to say she was unaware of the closure notice, no response was provided by Christopher Adshed.

An email from the officer Inspector Patrick issuing the closure notice arrived later that day to explain the reasons why they had closed our business for 24 hours,

For the safety and prevention – I completely understand there reasons and would have liked the opportunity to have had a few option for that night

I suggested a conversation or email/text would have been appreciated as I had been working with the police all week to heighten my security levels, I said I could have closed earlier that night which would not have been as much impact as losing 10K and frustrated staff and artists due to no work, or reasoning being up in the air.

His email acknowledged my disappointment in the lack of communication and incorrect direction/information from the officers to attend court.

But I took it as it was about public safety which is first and foremost.

The following week we was met with another officer Mathew to show us a list of boys faces and names for us to be aware of, there were 6 boys listed on the paperwork, I again talked about the fact a conversation could have been in place and I could have closed early the night of Halloween to mitigate some of my costs, he asked if I would close early this night, I explained I would see how the night went as I have to recoup my costs and staff are again booked until close time and this again could have been a discussion before we opened to agree a time of closure not after we had opened, I did actually take it upon myself to help the high street and police and decided to close at 02:00.

We recognised a few faces and agreed to put a foreseeable ban on them into our club and if they attended we would explain the club is under investigation and they could not enter (words of the police as to why not our words as police did not want them to know they was being watched)

We had no attendance form any of the boys on the list on the night of Friday 4th or Saturday 5th November but had been informed by police that they had found them in Cinnabar a local music bar in the high street with knives and one had been arrested and one had cut off his tag,

I emailed the officer who gave us the closure notice to ask what this venue had not been issued with one if someone on the list was actually caught inside with a knife on them!! My venue has never had any customer found with a knife on them and I felt I was being targeted by the police as different rules for different venues,

Drapers fights and police attendance regular – no closure order on them

Cinnabar fights and police attendance regular and knives found on customers inside tags on customers inside and again no closure order issued to them

How is this not harassment to myself and my venue!

-I got no response ...

The following week Friday 11th I was approached by the police outside to provide me with a new list of 15 boys names and faces, I called the head of security over and we noted them and again agreed to ban going forward due to the police saying they are all part of 2 gangs locally and it would prevent issues at our venue, I asked if this list is proved to other venues in the high street as this could push the problem somewhere else and we have all the security measure in place that no one else does.

The police informed me all venues and bars have been given the list.

And again some of these faces had entered Drapers and Cinnabar with knives in possession on them yet got through there security measures.

Noise complaints –

This was highlighted after a few months after opening and we have a staff member that lives across the back to the venue we regularly check with his family if the noise of music can be heard and the measure we put in place straight away were:-

Speakers limited outside in the garden and off at 23:00 doors to the garden are managed from 23:00 and closed with only access to the garden is for smoking/vaping, no further incidents regarding noise have been raised from the venue.

Noise raised by police regarding a group of boys in the rear car park early hours of the morning after the venue had closed around 04:00

Text message to management reading these boys and management drove to the venue at 04)) and asked the boys to leave the car park, they had not been in the venue that night but was just catching up with friends, after a little abuse towards us, we explained the noise travels to the housing estate across the road, they did finally leave without any drama.

*There have been no further noise incidents that have been highlighted to us.

Alcohol Limits: - Serving Drink to Inebriated customers – we take this very seriously and monitor drinks served to customers, any that we feel are to drunk we exit from the club and provide taxis for them at the expense of the club to make sure they are safe to go home and not venerable on the high street.

Items to Note :-

Social media :- I cannot control what customers post I can only mitigate risks going forward and not hold these types of events going forward.

***As a team we also agreed to close the venue at 02:30 going forward for a few months until this incident and these boys have been investigated and we have received further updates from the police.

Door staff have a full rotation of posts within the venue to manage another area and not on the door going forward and further training has been provided to all security staff.

Working together-

Lounge 72 has never had any incidents within the venue of fights/drugs/weapons , we take all this very seriously and anyone highlighted to us for any of these reasons is added to our own ID scanner and banned for life, we have always supported the police that attend each night we are open and have a very good relationship with them all, safety of customers is second nature to me as a senior manager within the NHS knowing patients /customers always come first I would always do everything in my power to keep customer/public/staff safe and implement any advice given to me from other venues or the police.

I always support all other businesses in the high street even when we are not supported back, there is no animosity amongst any of us we all support each other, I have even provided and released my staff to help other bars that are low on staff where I can.

I also let the venue be used for local community groups such as Foster Parents and community church groups for meetings, free to help support the community.

Statement of facts by Tracy Grant Licence holder of Lounge 72 Ltd – 70 High street Stevenage Herts SG1 3EA @ 11.33 on 28th November 2022