

Agenda Item 6

From: North South <

Sent: 08 April 2022 13:42

To: Amy Dumitrescu <Amy.Dumitrescu@merton.gov.uk>; Licensing <Licensing@merton.gov.uk>;

Caroline Sharkey <Caroline.Sharkey@merton.gov.uk>; Anthony Hawkes

<Anthony.Hawkes@merton.gov.uk>; Richard.O.J.Compton; Avril.O'Brien; flintbishop;

Subject: Re: Hearing Papers - The Vale, Lilian Road

Dear Amy and Whom Ever it may concern,

Thank you for your invite to the licensing hearing for The Vale, SW16 5HN next week.

Please note, I will not be attending the hearing, nor will any representative of North & South Leisure, this is at the express request of Star Pubs & Bars. This is because we have agreed a transfer of the Premises Licence back to Star Pub and Bars and we are negotiating the end of our tenancy at this site. However, I do wish to submit and record to the hearing the following;

First and foremost, these are horrible incidents and we wholly condemn the actions of the culprit(s) and, in the second incident, the subsequent violence that ensued.

- There has been suggestion that the issues at the pub are the responsibility of North & South Leisure Ltd, we contest this in the strongest possible terms and if required, without prejudice, are prepared to defend our broader reputation on the back of this matter
- That said, we do understand the best solution for the Vale ongoing is for a complete change and a fresh start, hence our reason for being prepared to surrender our tenancy
- I was the DPS at these premises at the express request, in 2019, of PC Russ Stevens, the previous Police Licensing Officer. Russ requested this as he knew my business partners and I to be responsible pub operators.
- All DPS authorisation forms for the sale of alcohol in my absence and the Licensing obligations were trained to the site Publicans, and their staff.
- We would also like to reassure the hearing that we accept there are learnings for our business and we have already undertaken a review to help prevent any future issues in our business. Namely; we have undertaken Conflict Management Training using National Pub Watch support tools, we already operate the 'Ask for Angela' campaign and have refreshed training on this, we already operate a Challenge 25 policy, we have refreshed and re-trained the Licensing Obligations and advised Publicans to call the Police for support at the earliest opportunity if there is any risk of the obligations not being upheld.

Regarding the recent incidents at The Vale;

- There's a suggestion in this report that I stated that I couldn't download the CCTV footage as I "had another meeting to go to", this is incorrect and implies that I was dismissive of the seriousness of the incident, I simply stated I didn't have the means to download the footage (as I did not have a USB stick with me), but that I could obtain one, the officers present then arranged for a CCTV operative to be present anyway, who incidentally was there within 15 minutes, so the need for me to download the footage was no longer required. The 'other' meeting I had to attend was for the Ukrainian Humanitarian crisis!
- I refer to Annex G Page 31 of the hearing Documents, this the awful image of the injuries to There are a few matters here that I would like to point out specifically. 1. [REDACTED] was badly assaulted in his efforts to up-hold Licencing objectives two and three, Public Safety and the prevention of a public nuisance, the customers in the pub that night weren't just "arm wrestling" as captured in this report, they were being a public nuisance and [REDACTED] efforts to

challenge their behaviour led to him being punched in the face. 2. This image was provided to the Police by me! in my efforts to bring about a prosecution of the culprit and my request that suitable follow up actions be undertaken by the Police, including a meeting and increased patrols. The Police failed to respond or acknowledge my requests

- I strongly believe that if the Police had responded appropriately and proportionally to the incident in December this second incident in March could have been avoided

In defence of our wider business and our Individual Directors;

- Regarding this site specifically, I would like to state that despite these recent incidents, local residents have defended our time and efforts at the pub. Mr [REDACTED] a resident of Lilian Road for 45 years, a member of the Residents Association and also [REDACTED] states "I have never known the pub to be kept so clean and so well run during your tenure in all the years living locally and frequenting the pub. This incident is due ". Other members of the Residents Association have thanked me for taking the time to speak with them since the latest incident occurred
- We have had no other incidents of violence or even mild disturbance at any of our other sites since inception in May 2017. We wholly understand the direct correlation between trouble free/ incident free sites and our sustainability, this is our livelihood and we operate all sites as responsibly as possible.
- We are listed in the Good Pub Guide and the Good Beer Guide at two of our remaining 6 sites, we are 'Horsham in Bloom', 'Pembury in Bloom' and 'Tunbridge Wells in Bloom' Champions, we have Won CAMRA Awards, been 'Outstanding Contribution' Publican Awards finalists (partly in response to our Community Support during Covid-19 and our direct support to the nurses and staff at Pembury Hospital). During the Covid crisis one of our Directors, [REDACTED], re-joined the Metropolitan Police, based out of Croydon as a Detective Sergeant to assist with the crisis (both Covid and Staff crisis) and I undertook over 150 hours of voluntary work at Covid Vaccination Centres and I'm still listed with the Royal Voluntary Service as a 'Good Neighbours' Volunteer. Our business has raised over £30,000 for Charity since 2019, including over £10k for the Poppy Appeal and, just in the last month, over £8k for the Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis (directly delivering 2 van loads of aid to Lublin in Poland just last week) Furthermore, we are members of the BII, UK Hospitality, the Licensees Association, and are invited guests of the UK's All Parliamentary Beer Group
- This is to say we are good people and responsible business operators, the culprits of this awful violence are the bad guys here, not us!

The Future of the Vale;

- We have agreed to step aside, despite the challenges we have faced with the Vale we do believe that Star Pubs and Bars can take the pub to a new, trouble free chapter. I have personally seen dozens of examples where Star Pubs & Bars investment, recruitment and training plans have taken previously difficult sites to be well run, well supported pubs that add to the area in which they operate (unfortunately we don't have the investment capabilities or recruitment and training budgets of Star Pubs, hence another reason for us stepping aside)

There are learnings for all of us in this, but my last plea to the panel is please do not allow two abhorrent individuals to tarnish the decent hard-working law abiding majority, be that our business, ourselves personally, or the decent patrons that have and will support a pub where the Vale is located.

Thank you in advance for allowing me to address the hearing remotely.

Regards,

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