



04/10/2017
Entertainment Licensing
Civic Hall
Leeds LS1 1UR

Dear Sir/Madam

Objection to:
Application No: SX/SEV/00013/17/01
Premises: Librete 10 York Place Leeds LS1 2DS
Date of Hearing: 28th November 2017

Support After Rape & Sexual Violence Leeds (SARSVL) supports women and girls who have been affected by sexual violence at any time in their lives, promoting their needs and working towards the elimination of sexual violence.

SARSVL is an 'interested party' in the terms of the Licensing Act

1. We serve women and girls throughout Leeds, including those who live and are involved in businesses in the vicinity, with services available to women working in such establishments.

“Every woman in our society feels the fear of rape - no woman is allowed to ignore it.....The threat of violence is a total intrusion into women's personal space and transforms a routine and/or potential pleasurable activity (for example, a walk or journey).....into a potentially upsetting, disturbing and often threatening experience.”
Rape Crisis England & Wales

SARSVL believes that Leeds City Council (LCC) missed an opportunity when it introduced its policy to limit such clubs in the city centre to four. It should have adopted a Zero Tolerance of Sex Establishments policy but in the absence of this SARSVL does not believe that LCC should license these sex establishments as it is incompatible with the Equality Act 2010, Violence Against Women Strategy and Child Friendly Leeds policy.

The council itself has stated that “SEVs are not in accordance with a culturally rich and diverse city.”

We are here to help you
Company Number 7202588
Registered Charity Number 1139555

SARSVL is proud to be a member of Rape Crisis (England and Wales)



LOTTERY FUNDED



Rape Crisis
Professionally Approved

The Equalities Act 2010 states that

“A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need toeliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.”

Research has shown that wherever lap-dance and strip clubs appear, women's quality of life deteriorates as a result, with increased reports of rape (Eden, 2003). These establishments licence the objectification of women so for LCC to licence them is against the duty they have to implement equalities legislation. Licensing such clubs suggests LCC condones the sexual objectification of women for money going on inside them. This actively damages women and girls living and working around lap-dancing clubs.

Such establishments contribute to the sexual objectification of women and raise concern about the welfare of women working in the clubs, the impact on the environment around the clubs; how women feel about walking around these areas and what happens to them when they do and to the general mainstreaming of the commercial sex industry.

While lap-dancing and the illusion of sexual availability become mainstreamed, rape conviction rates are falling, street harassment and casual attacks are rising and 26% of people believe that an inappropriately dressed woman is 'asking for it' (Amnesty/ICM, 2005). The numbers of reported rapes around lap dancing clubs is three times the national average (Eden, 2003).

This club is located in the centre of the city in the legal district close to lawyers premises used by women including SARSVL clients. It is also close to amenities such as restaurants hotels and cinemas, routinely used by families and near shopping centres and on main thoroughfares. We believe this is a wholly inappropriate place for sex establishments. It undermines the city's stated aim of being "fair, open and welcoming" (Vision for Leeds 2011-2030).

At SARSVL we deal with the reality of the effect the sexual objectification of women and increased harassment and attack of them around these premises. Women in public areas become unwilling symbols of the illusion of sexual availability and are often the physical recipients of male harassment or rape. In the meantime young boys growing up in the area are taught that this is an acceptable way to treat women, and young women learn that this is the way they will be treated.

Advertising for these establishments, including signage and frontages of premises and leaflet distribution in the area, create an intimidating atmosphere and a real threat to the safety of women.

Leeds is a city centre characterised by the close proximity of residential to commercial establishments; in fact it prides itself on this feature. For example, much student accommodation is located in the city centre. This increases the vulnerability of women walking around areas where a number of sex establishments are in operation.

Leeds is a diverse city with a variety of cultures and faiths, representing around 11% of the city. Women from a range of communities are intimidated by the proximity of such clubs and are less likely or willing to travel around the city at night when confronted by the operation of and advertising for sex establishments.

Therefore, LCC should not licence this club for the reasons stated above.

In addition we note that one of Liberte's conditions of licence is that there should be "no physical contact between dancer and customer". Liberte's website advertises: "spend intimate moments with the lady of your choice". As male customers would only be seeking physical (not emotional) gratification from female dancers, we question how the "intimate moments" Liberte offers would not involve physical contact.

As a business we assume that Liberte primarily wish to satisfy their customers to maximise their income via said customers. The impression given by the aforementioned aspect of Liberte's advertising is that women are available for physical contact. We assume that male customers will also get this impression, and therefore male customers will routinely expect that an exchange of money will result in physical contact with female dancers.

This further lends to our argument of women being symbols of the illusion of sexual availability, and as they are symbols women are reduced to simply being sexual objects (thus reinforcing this illusion). As such, male customers will only relate to them as such, putting female dancers and local women at increased risk of sexual harassment and rape.

Liberte's advertising also shows a picture of a woman with no underwear on whose hand is touching what looks like a penis. This branding suggests to would-be customers that the conditions of the licence are to be broken, and that female dancers are available for sexual touching – whether this is wanted by the female dancer or otherwise.

Even if this aspect of the image in question is not actually of a penis, any ambiguous image of similar proportions would generally be assumed to be a penis (or representing a penis) given that the advertisement is viewed in relation to a lap-dancing club, where the majority of customers are male and workers are female. This further reinforces Liberte's advertising as being in direct conflict with their condition of licence that there be "no physical contact between dancer and customer".

We are here for you

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