



Elections and Regulatory Services

Civic Hall
Leeds LS1 1UR

Our Ref: A80/CB/LIC/PREM/04360/002

Your Ref:

Contact: Carmel Brennand

Tel:



Date: 19 January 2021

Entertainment Licensing
Leeds City Council
Civic Hall
Leeds
LS1 1UR

Dear Sirs/Madam,

**REVIEW APPLICATION UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003
PREMISES: TAAG, UNIT 2B, ST GEORGE HOUSE, GREAT GEORGE
STREET, LEEDS, LS1 3DL**

Please accept this formal representation by an officer on behalf of the Licensing Authority. As a Senior Liaison & Enforcement Officer with Leeds City Council's Entertainment Licensing Section, my duties include investigating complaints for licensed/unlicensed premises contrary to the Licensing Act 2003.

Prior to May 2019 Unit 2B traded as Colby's Coffee House. In June 2019 an application was received from Taag Chain Limited for a new Premises Licence for a food led café & tapas restaurant with the retail sale of alcohol 1200 to 2300 everyday, closing at 2330. Premises Licence PREM/04360 was granted with effect from 10 July 2019 with Thomas Leyshon specified as the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS).

On the 1st August 2019 this section received the following complaint:-

Complainant who is 22 years old went to Taag with her little sister who is 18. They went to the premise around 3:00pm and stayed until 3:30pm. At this time there was no security or door staff to ID them, when they were ID'd in other premises close by.

She wants to raise her concerns/complaint that while in the establishment there were around 4/5 people (at different tables) who looked as they were very young. Underage in fact.

She would like someone to look into this and see if it is reasonable for them and other younger people to be let into a premise without being asked to identify themselves to be of legal age.

The complaint was allocated to my colleague Mr Michael Waters. He attended at the premises on the 5th August to hand deliver a warning letter addressed to the DPS. The warning letter reminded the DPS of the specific condition 24 on the licence which states 'The premises will adopt a 'Challenge 25' policy. This means that if a customer purchasing alcohol appears to be



under the age of 25, they will be asked for proof of their age, to prove that they are 18 years or older.

Mr Waters met the manager Neda Slouklouie, gave her the letter and discussed the complaint. Ms Slouklouie denied the allegation that checks were not being done.

On the 4th July 2020 licensed premises were allowed to reopen with restrictions.

I was working with colleagues from several council departments in the city centre conducting reassurance and advisory visits to hospitality venues.

At 2050 hrs Samantha Longfellow-Peniket and I were returning to the Civic Hall and walked across the road from the rear of the Town Hall towards Taag, Unit 2b, Great George Street, LS1 3DL. We could see that it was very busy inside the bar and we could hear the music from outside. We noted the young male stood to the right of the entrance door and asked if he was working as doorstaff to which he replied that he was. Advised him that he should be displaying his SIA badge. Marc Hosie, who I believe to be the person in charge came out to speak to us. We explained that we were in the city checking that venues were operating in line with the government regulations. On mentioning that it looked busy inside, Marc stated that everyone was socially distanced and that all the customers had pre booked. He was advised to ask the DJ to turn the music down as if we could hear it outside it was definitely too loud inside. We explained that if people were having to shout over loud music, there was an increased risk of aerial transmission of the disease. We also raised concern over a number of young females dancing in the lobby area just in front of the bar. Marc said they weren't dancing but posing for photographs. We reiterated that this was against government regulations in that customers should be seated. During our conversation the door staff's boss Dan Cheney arrived. He was also conducting checks around the city centre, mainly on his staff. We reminded him that his door staff should be displaying their badges so that visible to the public especially as whilst we were talking, the doorman had buttoned his coat up so that it wasn't on view again.

On the 17th July 2020 an application was received to replace Thomas Leyshon with Azam Omidvari, Mr Taaghobi's mother, as the DPS. The new licence PREM/04360/002 was issued with effect from 11th August 2020.

On Sunday 27th September 2020 my daughter's friends sent her videos from Taag and another city centre premises who were now offering their Sunday bottomless brunches as 'party time'. I watched the videos which showed customers up and dancing to very loud music, not wearing any face coverings. When I asked my daughter if she could send me the videos, she could not as they disappear after 24 hours.

Due to the number of issues at the premises with repeated advice from agencies and police visits and a Direction Order being served, a meeting was arranged with Mr Taaghobi and his solicitor for 2 pm on Wednesday 28th October 2020.

I attended at the premises in company with PC Cath Arkle as the city centre Licensing Officer and Ruth Turner, the Team Manager at Environmental Health. Also in attendance were Ed Smith, Mr Taaghobi's Solicitor, Jess Mann, the new manager, Alan Bradley, a Health & Safety advisor. Mr Arian Taaghohi joined the meeting by video/zoom. PC Arkle suggested she would start with issues from West Yorkshire Police, then to go to Ruth and then Ed. PC Arkle started with the reopening on the 4th July when officers had to speak to staff on site and again on 11th July when PS Kirwan attended. There were 5 more complaints about bottomless brunches, then a party on the 7th October where PS Kirwan attended a student event where the shutter was closed. There were 50 odd people inside, very loud music and the organiser had been arrested for Drunk & Disorderly. PC Arkle continued that on the 9th October there had been a serious incident elsewhere in the city but the people involved had met at Taag earlier. When CID took

hard drive, the imaging officer said it looked brand new. PC Arkle asked where the original hard drive was stating that it was a major issue if the cctv has not been working since 4th July.

Mr Taaghobi joined the meeting and stated that everything had been ok on the 4th July; 2 female officers had attended, had been inside and were happy with everything. I interrupted and said that I was one of the officers and we did not go inside. We had crossed the road as we could hear the music from there. It was very busy inside and we had spoken to Marc Hosier outside and told him to tell the DJ to turn the music down and to stop the girls dancing. The doorstaff did not have his badge on display. I was not happy at all.

Mr Taaghobi went on to say that the Council had rung. Ruth Turner explained that Zoe Carter, a Senior Technical Officer, had phoned and visited on the 2nd October and found music too loud. Mr Taaghobi has been spoken to on a number of occasions regarding loud music, social distancing but still continue to get complaints. Ruth said, 'Zoe & Carl spoke to you on the 2nd and then there is an incident on the 7th.

When Mr Taaghobi replied that he had sacked those managers, Ruth Turner said, 'It is your business, therefore your responsibility. I'm not confident in Mr Taaghobi. From the 4th July the Government has said you must have a risk assessment. I am concerned that you do not understand'.

Mr Ed Smith, Mr Taaghobi's solicitor advised that have conducted a review and as a result Mr Taaghobi has employed Alan Bradley to do a risk assessment on the business and a specific COVID risk assessment. We then had a discussion on the DJ table & speakers, where they were and removing other tables to ensure the correct social distancing. We then moved on to the cctv. Mr Smith said that cctv had not been recording, but it was now. PC Arkle said she was not impressed that they have been open since 4th July with no cctv.

I asked if I could look at the cctv. Mr Taaghobi stated he didn't know how to operate but will get the engineer to teach him and then he will teach Jess. I said this was not good enough and asked Mr Taaghobi if he could call the engineer now to attend whilst we were there so that I could confirm it was working. Whilst he went to ring the engineer Jess showed me the written authorisation signed by Azam Omidvari for the sale of alcohol. I noted there were no proof of age posters. Mr Taaghobi advised that the cctv engineer wouldn't be able to attend this afternoon.

Jess and I went to look at the cctv which was in the ceiling void above the kitchen. We had to go up loft ladders and Jess had to lie over a metal cooking tray shelf to operate the mouse. It was clear the system was password protected so Jess rang engineer for the password but he couldn't supply it. I noted there were 12 cameras but the system was an hour out. I advised that the location of the cctv monitor was not ideal or safe for both staff and officers who may need access to it and suggested the monitor in the store cupboard at side of bar may be more suitable than where it is. The solicitor Mr Smith acknowledged my concerns and confirmed the bar would not open unless the cctv was working. Also that he will get the Risk Assessments to us on Thursday; if he can persuade Cath and Ruth not to take further action.

We had a discussion on the venue opening at the weekend. I went through the premises licence and asked to see the Door Staff Register and Incident Register. There were no incidents recorded at all which is very unusual. I then looked at the Door Staff Register. The last time a member of door staff had signed in the register was the 3rd October. There was however loose leaf sheets in the file where door staff had recorded times on duty; presumably for pay. I explained that the Door Staff Register was not compliant. The Register should be a bound book not loose leaf. Every shift the member of door staff should sign in with the date, time starting on duty, their signature and SIA badge number and not until they are finishing their shift, the sign off time. I advised that both registers should be available on site and saved for a 12 month period.

I asked when they were last open. When the solicitor said last weekend I was not happy and made it quite clear that if they had been open yesterday I would be issuing a Section 19 Closure Notice in respect of the breaches of conditions relating to the cctv and the registers. Mr Smith gave Jess the Part A of the Premises Licence. I told her if she is in charge she needs to sit down and read all the conditions on Part A as in order to sell alcohol, all the conditions need to be complied with. I explained that if there is a breach of 1 or more of the conditions then potentially she would be committing offences under Section 136 of the Licensing Act and if found guilty at court could be an unlimited fine and/or 6 months imprisonment; that's how serious it is. I told her that if she is going on a personal licence course, she will be a step ahead with all the information I was giving her. I completed the inspection sheet with a codicil that the issues had to be rectified by 30th October. Mr Smith looked over it before giving it to Jess to sign. I gave them my business card and told them I wanted a screenshot of the cctv working before the weekend.

On Friday 30th October Mr Smith supplied us with the business risk assessment and the COVID 19 specific risk assessment. He also emailed me a screenshot of the cctv showing 1329 hrs on the 17th October which had been requested so the venue could open.

I do not have any confidence in Mr Taaghobi operating this venue nor in his instructions to his staff in their duties and responsibilities under legislation. It is clear that Premises Licence conditions have not been complied with since opening.

Mr Taaghobi knew that there had been numerous police visits to his premises due to serious incidents. There had been engagement with him and his staff from several responsible authorities, one of whom served an enforcement notice. His solicitor Mr Smith is dealing with this and a meeting is requested by agencies on site and still there are issues. The cctv is not working and important paperwork is not in order. This shows either Mr Taaghobi's complete lackadaisical approach to running a licensed premises or complete disrespect/disregard to the responsible authorities and the law.

In view of the issues referred to, and the failure of Mr Taaghobi to operate responsibly under the Licensing Act in upholding the licensing objectives; the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety and the prevention of public nuisance as well as his blatant disregard of the government's Covid 19 restrictions I would respectfully ask that the Committee determine to revoke the Premises Licence held by him.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Carmel Brennand
Senior Liaison & Enforcement Officer
Entertainment Licensing