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Reference:
Date: 22 August 2017

Dear All

LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - FRIDAY, 25TH AUGUST, 2017

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at this Friday's, 25th August, 2017 meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee, the following submission that was unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item 3

- (A) Determination of an application for variation of a premises licence - Zee Bar, High Street, Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1XL (Pages 1 - 4) – response from the premises licence holder.

Kind regards,

Nick Peeters
Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
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Simon Azimi
The Zee Bar
46-50, High Street
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1XF

22 August 2017

The Licensing Officer
Town Hall,
Royal Tunbridge Wells,
Kent, TN1 1RS

Dear Sir

Response to Representations

I am shocked at the allegations made in letters of representation sent to the Council. I am also concerned that the nature of our application has been misunderstood. I would like to say at the outset that if any of our patrons were found misbehaving as described in the letters of representation they would be barred forthwith.

Clarification of our application

Our premises are licenced to provide regulated entertainment including recorded music and late-night refreshment until 3.00am Thursday into Friday morning. Customers have requested the option to purchase alcohol which is currently licensed for sale until 1.00am through to closing time. It is that activity, and that activity only that we wish to extend. I wish to stress that there is no application to extend the operational hours of the premises on a Thursday night.

Our licence permits us to provide recorded music until 03.00 Thursday into Friday, so that aspect of our application is superfluous. I formally withdraw that part of the application.

Other premises whose customers could cause problems complained of

There are a number of premises around The Zee Bar. I am deeply concerned that residents have failed to draw the attention of the committee to these premises and have wrongly attributed the behaviour of all customers leaving premises in the area solely to the acts of the customers of the Zee Bar.

Working with local residents

Until this application was made I have received no complaints about the customer behaviour or the type of incident referred to in the letters of objection. Our telephone number for complaints is on our website. If we did we would investigate forthwith and bar any customer of ours behaving inappropriately.

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Two issues have been raised with us since I took over the running of the premises in 2015. One relating to smokers smoking in the High Street and the other noise from music. We put in a special smoking area which, a confined area that is closed off at the side of the premises and does not front onto the High Street. Other premises in the area do have smokers who smoke in the High Street and can cause noise.

We have put in triple glazed glass within the building and three sets of double doors to provide a complete soundproof system from the club to the smoking area. This route is properly monitored and contrary to some suggestions, the fire door remains closed at all times.

We reacted to these issues because we knew about them and have been positively addressed. If we were aware that our customers were causing the problems referred to, we would have no hesitation in barring them from attending our premises in the future. I am encouraged by the evidence of Tania Lomarkin who confirms that "staff at The Zee Bar are very proactive and do manage the noise from customers leaving as much as possible".

Our procedures to encourage a quiet and orderly dispersal

We engage up to nine SIA door staff, far more than are required by our licence conditions. 30 minutes before closing time the volume of music is reduced to background level and lights are raised. We generally find that from 1.30am onwards there is a gradual dispersal of customers. We follow the condition on our licence instructing customers not to cross the road to Grantley Court but if a customer lives in that area we cannot stop them walking that way. Customers generally clear the area within 15 minutes of closing time. The large majority of our customers proceed up towards the taxi rank area. We have a preferred taxi firm whom the customers can call from our premises and arrange to meet at the taxi rank. No vehicles are allowed to park in front of our premises, if they did so they would be moved on by security staff.

Alleged breach of condition

I am deeply concerned that unwittingly it is suggested that we are in breach of a condition on our licence. I wish to make it quite clear that no customer is sold alcohol in a bottled drink. All bottled drinks are decanted.

Our DJ from time to time brings in his own drinks. Two pictures have been produced of him drinking his own bottled drink and another customer drinking water out of a plastic bottle. The DJ performs behind a booth. If he does not bring his own alcohol then we supply him alcohol in a polycarbonate glass. Going forward to avoid any confusion, we have taken the view that he should not be allowed to bring in any alcohol drink of his own and we will always supply him alcohol in a polycarbonate glass.

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Conclusion

It is clear to us that local residents have mistaken the rationale behind this application. They do not appreciate that we are allowed to remain open and to provide licensable activities until 3.00am Thursday into Friday morning. They have wrongly attributed the acts of all customers in the area to the customers of The Zee Bar.

I wish to confirm that it is my wish to work with the local residents, not against them. I note that they are upset and concerned.

I would be grateful if you could arrange for this letter to be placed before the Licensing Committee prior to the hearing on Friday. I will expand on the above points at the hearing on Friday.

Yours sincerely



Simon Azimi

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