

A MEETING OF THE LICENSING BOARD

WAS HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2013

The Mayor (Councillor Dickson) (ex-officio), Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Hook) (P), Councillors Allen (P), Ms Ballard (P), Beavis (Chairman) (P), Carter CK (P), Mrs Cully (P), Ms Diffey (P), Hazel (P), Jacobs (P), Mrs Morgan (P), Murphy, Scard (P) and Mrs Wright (P).

59. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of the Mayor and Councillor Murphy.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

61. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Board held on 8 January 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

62. DEPUTATION REQUEST

RESOLVED: The Board agreed that under Standing Order 6.3.6, Standing Order 6.3.3 be waived to allow the deputation on Sexual Entertainment Venues to be heard.

63. DEPUTATION

A deputation was received from a representative of the Solent Feminist Network

Caroline Storey advised that she was a resident of Gosport and that Solent Feminist Network was a community group comprising of 300 plus subscribers, women and men from across the Solent area who wanted to make local communities safer for women and promote gender equality.

She advised that they had recently been involved in Portsmouth City Council's public consultation where it had been decided to impose a nil cap over and above the existing clubs. She advised that the network would now like to ask the Board to consider adopting a nil cap policy in Gosport.

The Board was advised that the Policing and Crimes Act 2009 gave local authorities the power to impose a numerical cap on the number of SEV's and it was understood that it was GBC's policy allows up to two within the Borough. She advised that she was asking that the Board to consider revising the policy and set the cap to zero.

The Board were advised that the network believed that lap and pole dancing

runs contrary to gender equality which, under the Equalities Act 2010, GBC had a legal obligation to promote.

These establishments and the activities that take place in them objectify women and turn women's bodies into commodities. The consequences of objectification of women were internationally recognised and quoted:

"The links between objectification, discrimination and violence against women are recognised at the international level by the legally binding United Nations Conventions to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, which has repeatedly called on states - including the British Government - to take action against the objectification of women."

Caroline Storey advised that people lived in a culture where objectification of women is inescapable. That media was saturated with it, from page three to hardcore pornography that was easily accessible online. SEV's are another way in which objectification was normalised and encouraged in the UK today. In fact it has become so normalised that major supermarkets have found it acceptable to sell toys which sexualise young children. Tesco were recently condemned when they sold a product in their toy section which comprised of a pole, a garter and fake money with the tag line "Unleash the sex kitten inside".

She argued that the clubs have a real impact on the women in communities and their level of comfort on their own streets. That she had personally experienced harassment outside these establishments and had heard testimony from numerous women who had experienced the same. They created a no-go zone where women did not feel safe to pass by on their own. The women who live and work in Gosport deserved better than that.

The Board was advised that although street harassment was probably the most common form of violence against women to come out of these clubs, it was far from the only. Domestic violence charity Aurora New Dawn, who work in Portsmouth and the surrounding area, carried out their own campaign in Portsmouth in support of a nil cap. Combined they had over 30 years experience and recognised the link between the objectification of women and violence against women. Over time they had come to see a correlation between these venues, the men who frequent them and domestic violence in the home.

There were also links between human trafficking and lap dancing clubs. The charity Eaves has been running the Poppy Project since 2007. They offer specialist advice and support to women who have been trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and conducted a huge amount of research on the matter. They had found that there had been cases where women had been trafficked into lap and pole dancing clubs.

Caroline Storey advised that she not suggesting that the majority of women working in SEV's have been trafficked but would like the Board to be aware that it does happen and to allow yet more SEV's to open in our area would put yet more women at risk.

She advised that she would like to draw The Board's attention to a response

to PCC's public consultation that was carried out when deciding their policy. A former lap dancer who had worked in all three of Portsmouth SEV's provided testimony that drugs were consumed by customers and staff, that the no touching rules were frequently flouted and that dancers have left with customers with the intention of prostituting themselves. The response claims club management was aware of this and turned a blind eye. She advised that she had copies of the response in full and that incidentally two of the three clubs are owned by a gentleman who also owns two pubs in Gosport where a Wiggle Roadshow, a night of lap and pole dancing had already been held.

There were also issues regarding anti-social behaviour problems that arise from these venues. It had been noted that since Elegance opened in a highly residential area in Southsea there had been problems with illegal parking at night causing obstructions and obscene graffiti that was left for months on the exterior of the building. When Wiggle club applied for retrospective planning permission, the residents of a purpose built block of flats directly opposite put in a residents petition, stating that since the club opened there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour. The noise levels rose with drunk men shouting into the early hours of the morning and men were urinating and vomiting outside their building.

She concluded that if Gosport licenced SEV's in the Borough she believe that similar issues would arise, it would affect the quality of life of the residents, devalue the area and potentially affect new business coming into Gosport.

As it stood today Gosport had no SEV's operating. Solent Feminist Network and herself as a resident urged you to ensure it stays that way.

64. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

PART II

65. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That in relation to the following item the public be excluded from the meeting, as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during this item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and further that in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons set out in the report.

66. GRANT OF A HACKNEY CARRIAGE DRIVER'S LICENCE

Consideration was given to an exempt report of the Community and Customer Services Manager advising the Board of an application for the granting of a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence.

RESOLVED: That the application for a Hackney Carriage Driver's Licence be refused.

The meeting ended at 6.45pm

CHAIRMAN