

Witness Statement

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27. 2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

URN: [] [] [] []

Statement of: [REDACTED]

Age if under 18 (if over insert "over 18"): O/18 Occupation: Police officer

This statement (consisting of5..... Pages(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: _____ Date: 24/03/2022

I am PS 322 [REDACTED] and currently hold the position of the neighbourhood sergeant for the St Neots geographical area in Cambridgeshire which is a post I have held for just over 2 years.

I have been asked to provide this statement by one of the licensing officers for Cambridgeshire police in regards to a licensed premises within my neighbourhood geographical area situated specifically in the middle of St. Neots. The premise in question is the Corner House, 54 Market Square, St Neots PE19 2AA. The Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) I know to be a male by the name of Omar. and as far as I am aware he is the Premises Designated License Holder as well, but I have not confirmed this first hand to date.

St Neots is a large town in Cambridgeshire that is trying to establish a market square that has a continental feel to it and therefore has been adapted to be predominately a pedestrianised central area. It is a market town that is very well presented with numerous coffee shops, pubs and eating establishments based around the central square. The square itself is somewhat unique compared to some market towns with a number of residential properties above the shops that face down on to the market square itself making it a highly populated area both during daylight hours as well as during the hours of our night time economy.

I would describe the corner house as one of our more well established licensed premises that is small in size compared to some of the other locations in the town but one that has a disproportionately high amount of crime and disorder considering the amount of space it takes up.

Since I have been in post there have been 18 investigations raised for alleged offences ranging from thefts to high level violence type offences at the location of the corner house. There have been a number of GBH offences and what were believed to be violent disorders at the time of reporting along with lower level ABH assaults and common assaults taking place at the location but it has also been subject to offences such as aggravated burglaries.

The Corner House is centrally located as it is situated facing both on to the high street and the market square itself so easily accessible and is very well known around the town. Prior to my arrival as the sergeant for the area I did not know about the licensed premises but during my handover the corner house was highlighted to me as one of

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the pubs that I had to be aware of due to the clientele that frequented the location and associated problems as a result.

When I arrived in St Neots to take up my post in February 2020 it did not take long for me to become aware first hand of the problems associated with the corner house. The first time I had to deal with an incident there was when there was a GBH carried out at the location in the same month I started (CC-14022020-0555) involving one of our known nominals who had assaulted a member of the public during an altercation at the location. This involved the victim losing consciousness as well as receiving a broken jaw and as a result was a significant assault causing serious harm. It was described as a bar fight and at the time Omar only had one doorstaff on that did not appear to deal with the situation at all. I now know that that only having one doorman on duty at that time, and day was a breach of one of the licence conditions.

As a result of being made aware of the location from my initial handover and from my introduction to the location through the above GBH incident my initial impressions of the corner house was one of concern that firstly this location was not run particularly professionally, it appeared the manager did not have full control over the activities and level of intoxication occurring within the premises and that it was attracting the wrong type of clientele without the necessary levels of security to manage it. For a small pub in the middle of a heavily populated area there appeared to be a lack of accountability being placed upon people to behave themselves whilst in the location by the DPS.

Shortly after this incident occurred the pandemic of covid hit and the location was closed for a significant amount of time preventing any further problems. So although 18 offences have been recorded I think this masks the problems present at the location and I feel the incident numbers would be significantly higher if normal trading had been taking place.


When the corner house was reopened for business with covid restrictions placed upon it, it did not take long before problems started again with one of the most significant happening on the 2nd AUGUST 2020 (CC-02082020-0014) this was essentially a violent disorder but ended up being recorded as separate assaults. The incident was significant enough in size that the local news and radio channel was contacting Cambridgeshire police enquiring about details and how we would address it. Prior to this there had been other incidents involving our local traveller community at the location and although they were the instigators for the disorder on this occasion the corner house holds some responsibility around managing these people's entry. It was established that some present were banned from the location but were still gaining access and being served alcohol even with security on the door. This again shows a lack of management and control over the location from a DPS perspective as they should be enforcing the bans to prevent further disorder.

CC-02082020-0014 was essentially a large scale violent disorder which was instigated by alcohol fuelled persons from within the corner house. This incident ended up being recorded by a resident that lives on the market square as it spilled out into the street and was shared on social media where it received over 900 comments and several hundred interactions of a negative nature. The incident involved high levels of intoxication from persons that had

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been frequenting the corner house which to me shows a severe lack of management again in addressing the excessive drinking levels taking place within the corner house putting profit from sales over the effective and professional management of the location. Following these assaults there was also a large amount of litter of drinking vessels from the location left and tables turned upside down in a violent manner again by persons that had been in the corner house just prior. These are not minor fights, and many of them are resulting in victims being knocked out and hospitalised. Additionally, it gives the impression of lawlessness in the town that is negatively impacting upon the image of the town itself but also negatively on police confidence by members of the local community when it should be something that is being addressed by sensible management of clients within the corner house and sensible management of alcohol consumption rather than just trying to maximise profits. On this occasion a section 34 dispersal area was put in place to address the alcohol fuelled violence which again is a serious step for the police to undertake as it restricts the movements of people which in a liberal society such as what we live in should not normally be required.

Following on from this we have had incidents where individuals have been reported intimidating staff whilst the DPS was not present. This included threats being made to staff of being bottled if they reported the situation or tried to get the individual out of the location and also documents the individual helping themselves to pints of larger from the beer taps.

On the 5th September 2020 which was only a month after the large scale disorder mentioned above at the corner house had occurred there was another large scale disorder reported to Cambridgeshire police which took up considerable resources trying to address it and involved a large amount of victims being assaulted outside of the corner house again. This was initially reported by the councils CCTV operators and was treated as a street fight as there was never a report given to police by the corner house. However following enquiries and having reviewed the CCTV it was clear that it had started within the corner house and again was deemed to be a violent disorder initially with lots of fights and banned persons present carrying out assaults. Omar had not phoned the police about this incident or sought help from the police in regards to banned persons being present. There has been no call to police about the fight even though it was significant in size and involved a large amount of people as it spilled in and out of the location. CCTV was clear at the time and again documented the security that were present doing very little to control the situation. Once again the DPS failed to recognise the hostilities from within the location increasing and failed to address the problem of excessive drinking to the point of violence taking place. This incident again involved people requiring medical treatment which again meant that on a busy Saturday night the police and ambulance crews were required to address a problem that could have been avoided and meant that significant resources were pulled away from other pressing matters to deal with drunken violent behaviour with very little accountability given to the fact the corner house had supplied this alcohol and not prevented tensions from rising at an early stage.

Within a very short space of time it was beginning to be recognised that the corner house was becoming the epicentre for violent alcohol fuelled crime and disorder for St Neots during the night time economy period with very little efforts from Omar, or the security at the location to address the situation through enforcement of upholding

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bans and preventing sales to person who were known to them for causing issues or violent behaviour as it was clear these individuals were regular customers from the regularity of the problems occurring.

The issues surrounding the corner house started to be highlighted as a problem following this second large scale fight in quick succession and the licensing team were engaged with more closely from a neighbourhood perspective to see if engagement could be undertaken with Omar to address the issues. As a result a visit was undertaken from my understanding and the licensing officers asked Omar about the apparent lack of control over customers in the outside area on the Market Square, suggestions and an action plan regarding better management was suggested at this stage. This resulted in reducing the capacity in the outside area, and making it seated table service only, so that it was much easier to ensure social distancing and control numbers.

It was clear that from a management perspective there was a clear requirement for greater control to manage customers but at this stage Omar appeared willing to work with licensing to address these problems from the feedback provided to me.

Up until later on in that year it appeared to be working and although we had calls to the location violence did reduce. This may be due to the covid restrictions again or the police having some of the more problematic persons imprisoned for a while, or the fact the DPS recognised he was under the spotlight to show that he was capable of managing the location however there was a reduced period of need for police to attend the location at this point. We have since then and towards the end of 2021 seen an increase in violence related issues at the corner house again however. During the period where it was quieter checks had been completed at the location and there were a number of concerning issues surrounding Omar's compliance with the covid regulations at the time. It was established that his incident recording book was clearly not being used to document incidents properly or indeed at all at times, the CCTV was regularly out of action and the covid track and trace register was not being completed properly.

Although minor in nature they all point to a management style at the location that was lacking in focus, understanding of what was required, professionalism, capability and suitability for a location with so many problems being recorded against it.

Towards the end of the 2021 year more GBH high level violent offences were recorded with the offence location being the corner house once again. One of these consisted of a group fight of four males against 2 other males and the other more worrying one consisted of a male being assaulted by door staff at the location where they have thrown the male out of the front door and he has subsequently hit his head on a vehicle that was parked outside the front. One of the door staff has then proceeded to continue his assault on the male by punching him before the male has been taken away and subsequently collapsed resulting in medical treatment and hospitalisation being required. From the ensuing investigation it is believed that the doorman in question was not a licensed SIA holder. Though Omar was employing him, he only knew him as [REDACTED] (Omar did not know the male's surname). This was something that was addressed earlier in the year to ensure more professionalism of the staff Omar employed. In the previous meeting with police licensing officers Omar had agreed to use accredited firms for his SIA door staff but shortly after agreeing this he had reverted back to using his own hired staff it appears.

The doorman that assaulted the member of the public on this occasion was eventually charged with the following offences:

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- 1. Criminal Damage to Motor vehicle (Less than £500)
- 2. Assault by beating
- 3. Engaged in licensable conduct without a licence (Section 3(1) Private Security & Industries Act 2001

All of which recognises and highlights the questionable actions of Omar as the license holder as to the staff he is employing and what checks he is carrying out to ensure they are suitable given the volatility of the location itself and the lack of professionalism already on show.

There is no doubt in my mind that alcohol fuelled crime and disorder will continue to occur if the location is not addressed and the licensing is not addressed. An extra strain will be put on services to deal with this from both a public perception perspective and that of the requirements of the emergency services in general. Unfortunately, I can only envisage the corner house remaining a problem for us until the DPS and license holder is removed from post and replaced with someone of a more forceful nature that can control and address the problems currently present at the location.

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