

MINUTES

Licensing Sub-Committee (6)

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee (6) held on Thursday 23rd November, 2023, Rooms 18.01 - 18.03 - 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Maggie Carman (Chair), Concia Albert and Jim Glen

- 1. **MEMBERSHIP**
- 1.1 There were no changes to the membership.
- 2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 1. SUNSET STRIP, BASEMENT TO FIRST FLOOR, 30 DEAN STREET, W1D 3SA

LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE No. 6

Thursday 23 November 2023

Councillor Maggie Carman (Chair), Councillor Concia Membership:

Albert and Councillor Jim Glen

Legal Adviser: Michael Feeney Policy Officer: Daisy Gadd

Committee Officer: Jack Robinson-Young Jessica Donovan

Presenting Officer:

Objections: Objections from the Licensing Authority and the Metropolitan Police

Service

Present: Mr Declan Forde, Ms Lana Tricker (LT Law) and Sarah Le Fevre (Counsel) for the Applicant, Karyn Abbott and Leroy Adedeji (City Inspector) for the Licensing Authority and PC Reaz Guerra and James Rankin (Counsel) for the Metropolitan Police Service

1. Application for a Renewal of a Sex Establishment Licence for Sunset Strip, Basement to Fist Floor, 30 Dean Street, London, W1D 3SA under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2009)

The Sub-Committee has determined an application for a Renewal of a Sexual Entertainment Venue Premises Licence made by Sohomead Limited to operate the Premises as a Sexual Entertainment Venue ("SEV") between the hours of Monday to Saturday 09:00 to 01:00 Sunday 09:00 to 23:00

Amendments to application advised at hearing:

None

Submissions:

The Presenting Officer Ms Donovan outlined the application to the Sub-Committee. She advised that this was an application for a Renewal of a Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence in respect of the Premises Sunset Strip Basement to First Floor 30 Dean Street W1D 3SA.

The Sub-Committee considered a request made for an adjournment by the Applicant as a preliminary issue.

Counsel for the Applicant, Sarah Le Fevre, addressed the Sub-Committee and outlined their request for an adjournment in respect of the first item on the agenda, the renewal of the sexual entertainment licence. Ms Le Fevre said that as laid out in the correspondence, applicants need to be given the opportunity to make full representations prior to appearing before the Sub-Committee and this had not been possible due to the timings of papers being served. Ms Le Fevre said that the decision made today by the Sub-Committee would have a great effect on the business and its ability to operate. Ms Le Fevre said that it was clear from Ms Lana Tricker's letter that it was not laying out a case against the material itself, but rather the time that the material had been sent round to all parties. Ms Le Fevre said that in the additional papers the statement from PC Tom Stewart was dated 4th October and speaks to conversations he had in September which were serious issues for the management to deal with. Ms Le Fevre said that PC Stewart was offered CCTV footage on the day, but this was not taken up by PC Stewart. Ms Le Fevre said that the CCTV was no longer recoverable. Ms Le Fevre said there were also statements from the cleaning staff on the number of patrons in the premises which again, cannot now be taken. Ms Le Fevre said there was also a range of other material they wished to gather up and present, to show actions that had been taken to address issues raised including staff training. It was difficult to give weight to statement made by lawyers compared to witness statements from a police officer.

The Sub-Committee asked Ms Le Fevre that when she said she had not had time to produce materials to counter allegations, to capture CCTV and for the context of the condom that had been found, what would she had been able to present to counter these allegations if she had had time. Ms Le Fevre said she would much prefer, given the great impact of the decision, that Mr Declan Forde on behalf of the Applicant present a considered response to these allegations in particular, and that this could help the decision making of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee asked about the evidence in the submissions including several breaches of conditions. Ms Le Fevre said that these crystalised the difficulties that the Applicant was having in rebutting the evidence before the Sub-Committee, and these could potentially inform the decision making. Evidence had been circulated late, and she would want to be able to answer everything holistically, especially with regards to the September inspection from PC Stewart.

The Sub-Committee said they understood the deadlines that were laid down. The Sub-Committee said they understood that the CCTV was now no longer recoverable, which would not change at any hearing in the future. Ms Le Fevre confirmed this was the case.

Ms Karyn Abbott from the Licensing Authority addressed the Sub-Committee and said the Licensing Authority still maintained the application should be heard given the seriousness of the conditions breached.

Mr James Rankin, Counsel for the Metropolitan Police, said that there were two options available for the Applicant. The first option was to say that the enforcement officers were telling mistruths, or secondly that they did happen and that Mr Gavin Venamore, former employee of the Applicant, should be thrown under the bus and there would be a change in management. The Applicant had chosen option b and an adjournment was not necessary. Mr Rankin said PC Stewart's statement is corroborative of PC Steve Muldoon's statement regarding a used condom in the bin. Mr Rankin said this was dated weeks before today's hearing, the 20th of September. Mr Rankin said the tactic of the Applicant today was to pin everything on Mr Venamore and a statement by Mr Forde would not outweigh the public interest in hearing the Application.

Ms Le Fevre said in response it was perfectly feasible for the Applicant to pursue a hybrid of options. Ms Le Fevre said they would not defend the indefensible but where a rebuttal could be made, it should be made fairly and on an even basis. Ms Le Fevre said it was PC Stewart who found the condom, which was then corroborated by PC Muldoon and not the other way round. The Sub-Committee then went into private deliberations to consider the request for an adjournment.

The Sub-Committee returned and gave the following decision:

The Sub-Committee has considered a request for an adjournment from the Applicant to adjourn the hearing in respect of agenda item 1. The Sub-

Committee has decided as per regulation 11 of the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005 that it is not in the public interest to adjourn and that the hearing should go ahead. The Sub-Committee considers that the Applicant has had sufficient time to prepare for the hearing and the cases put forward by the Licensing Authority and the Metropolitan Police. The Applicant will have the opportunity to present its position during the course of the hearing, and the Applicant has known about the concerns of the responsible authorities in relation to breach of conditions for a significant period of time. The Sub-Committee also considers that there is a strong public interest in determining the application expeditiously. The application for an adjournment is therefore refused.

The Chair then informed those present that all three items before the Sub-Committee would be heard together. There were no objections to this course of action.

Ms Le Fevre outlined the applications to the Sub-Committee. Ms Le Fevre said she understood, given the comments in 2020, why their request for an adjournment had been denied. Ms Le Fevre said she had no instructions to defend the indefensible. Ms Le Fevre said that Members knew from the papers that the property was due to undergo a significant investment in 2024. Ms Le Fevre said that Members would want to hear how they had taken steps towards addressing issues that had been raised, some of which had already been taken by the Applicant company. Ms Le Fevre said it was the intention that the current premises licence holder pass on this licence to a new operator. Ms Le Fevre said that the first observation in the papers before Members was in February and that the manager at the time was no longer in place. Ms Le Fevre said it was shortly after this that Mr Forde's mother passed away, and during a period of between 6 to 8 weeks he was unfortunately out of action. During this time, Ms Le Fevre said a general manager was employed to replace the previous manager and helped address the temporary absence of Mr Forde.

Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Gavin Venamore was employed during this time and was seen as a reputable figure given he had previously worked for Westminster City Council. Ms Le Fevre said that her client came to understand that there were problems with how Mr Venamore was training staff and general performance. Ms Le Fevre said that the first step that had to be undertaken was the removal of Mr Venamore, which has been actioned. Ms Le Fevre said that the staff were in the process of being overhauled and were being offered additional training. Ms Le Fevre then turned to the CCTV and the extent of its coverage. Ms Le Fevre said the CCTV is now in its third iteration, with each iteration seemingly more complex than the previous. Ms Le Fevre said that although it is not before Members, CCTV was provided to Metropolitan Police officers at the time. Ms Le Fevre said that the reconfiguration of the premises will remove the private booths and every instance of the prohibited touching was contained in there and there alone. With regards to the variation applications, Ms Le Fevre said that nobody except the Licensing Authority had raised an objection. The variation applications had followed pre-application consultation with Environmental Health who confirmed no difficulties with the proposals. There was no change

to the staircases, fire escape or the terrace used for smoking, showing there is no other space available for sexual entertainment. However, should the Sub-Committee decided to Condition this, Ms Le Fevre said that it would be accepted. Ms Le Fevre said that Environmental Health had the view that the variations could have been dealt with as minor variations given they did not concern variations in capacity.

The Sub-Committee asked when Mr Venamore was let go. Mr Forde said he was let go just over a week ago, after being employed after the February visits.

The Sub-Committee asked about the CCTV and the upgrades that had been made. Mr Forde said there was a system he was familiar with, but this became faulty. A second system was then put in place which was difficult to use, and some cameras were not functioning. Mr Forde said Westminster City Council had said the clarity of the images was not of an adequate quality and that to address this, the system was upgraded again.

The Sub-Committee asked whether in 2019 during a previous renewal application, similar issues to those in this hearing were raised. The Sub-Committee said that it would seem not much had changed. In reply to this, Mr Forde said there had been no issues or complaints raised during this time. Mr Forde accepted that there were breaches during the 2019 period but in more recent times no issues had been raised. Mr Forde said that during the February visit of this year, he was not present, and the manager was let go. As Mr Forde had personal issues, Mr Venamore was brought in to ensure they were compliant.

Mr Forde said that in relation to obstructive behaviour he had not been working on the evening in question and that he had two inspectors talking on either side of him and he had raised his voice just to try to get one person to speak at a time.

Mr Forde said that now the bar staff and himself would manage the CCTV as well as their security staff. Mr Forde confirmed he was the DPS, and Ms Tricker confirmed that the variation applications would not affect the first floor smoking terrace.

Ms Karyn Abbott from the Licensing Authority addressed the Sub-Committee and said the Licensing Authority still maintained their objection as they do not feel the operator is fit and proper to have a sexual entertainment venue licence. Ms Abbott said that the experience of Mr Forde was worrying, as he should know how to run a sexual entertainment venue properly. Ms Abbott said that it is their opinion this renewal should be refused.

Mr Leroy Adedeji, City Inspector at Westminster City Council, addressed the Sub-Committee saying that they found that Conditions 10, 11 and 12 were all breached during their inspection. Mr Adedeji said that in September, a complaint was received concerning the behaviour of staff with several breaches of staff recorded with no attempt by other staff to stop these. Mr Adedeji said that he was told "a little touching was allowed" which was in

direct breach of Conditions. Mr Adedeji asked for CCTV to be downloaded and the rules for performers to be adhered to at the premises. CCTV was presented to Mr Adedeji and when asked where the procedure for performers was, he was told this was not immediately available. Mr Adedeji summarised the visits made by City Inspectors as set out in the Agenda papers.

The Sub-Committee asked Mr Forde about the claim that people had been told "some" touching was allowed. Mr Forde said that he had been told by Westminster City Council that there was touching and then there was sexual touching. Mr Forde said it was his fault for misunderstanding the difference. The Sub-Committee asked Mr Adedeji if he felt as though the cameras were covering the appropriate places and he said on his visit that they were, and he was able to rewind the CCTV to view previous footage.

The Sub-Committee asked where the breaches of touching had been taking place, Mr Adedeji said these were within the private booths. The Sub-Committee said if these booths were removed, as planned, would the Licensing Authority be satisfied with the application. Ms Abbott said this was not enough as there were previous instances of Conditions being breach outside of the touching.

The Sub-Committee asked what the private room on the first floor would be used for. Ms Lana Tricker informed Members that this would be for VIP's and could be booked for a private event although this was not the aim of the space. Following a discussion on conditions concerning the capacity of the smoking terrace and preventing any striptease or nudity on the first floor, Ms Abbott confirmed that the Licensing Authority's concerns in relation to the Premises Licence variation application had been addressed.

Mr James Rankin, Counsel for the Sub-Committee then addressed the Sub-Committee. Mr Rankin's submissions related only to agenda item 1, the renewal application, and not agenda items 2 or 3, as the Metropolitan Police had not objected to the variation applications. Mr Rankin said that it was clear that Mr Gavin Venamore had been thrown under the bus, with a new operator and new DPS to be put in place, who are both unknown to Members present. Mr Rankin said that 5 breaches were noted by Officers from the Metropolitan Police that attended on their visit. Mr Rankin said all breaches were serious. even with regards to the menu as this allows customers to know how much they will be paying. Mr Rankin said that when Mr Adedeji viewed the footage, this was not during the time frame requested and PC Muldoon had asked for a different time frame to be sent. Mr Rankin said that when this footage was sent by Mr Venamore, the pictures were unable to be viewed and Mr Rankin suggested this was deliberate on the part of Mr Venamore. Mr Rankin said that the difference between touching and sexual touching was clear and could not realistically be confused; it was obvious that Mr Forde still did not understand the conditions on the licence. Mr Rankin then read from the Sub-Committee decision in 2019 that stated if issues that had been previously raised to the previous Sub-Committee continued, then it would be "unlikely" that the licence would be renewed in the future. Mr Rankin said that the objection from the Metropolitan Police showed the applicant is unsuitable to hold a sexual entertainment venue licence.

The Sub-Committee asked if the breaches regarding touching all took place in the booths, and the Metropolitan Police confirmed this. The Sub-Committee asked if the removal of these alleviated the concerns they had and in reply, Mr Rankin said this would reduce some of their concerns regarding touching but the operator was still the same and all other breaches that took place outside the booths were as relevant as the ones that took place in the booths. Mr Rankin added in response to a question that the Applicant may have been a fit and proper person in previous years when the Metropolitan Police had not objected but this could change.

Mr Forde said he was repeating to staff what Mr Venamore had told him, which he said he understands now is wrong but at the time he was ill advised. The Sub-Committee asked Mr Forde whom he thought was responsible for understanding the Conditions on the licence. Mr Forde said he thought a former City Inspector would know the rules, but it was for him to understand. Mr Forde reiterated again he was ill advised.

The Sub-Committee asked about the welfare of the performers, and Mr Forde informed Members that there are regular welfare calls and security to ensure their safety. Mr Forde said that all employment checks are done and stored behind the bar area with necessary documentation. Mr Forde said there were between 10-15 performers on any single night totalling roughly around 30 overall.

The Sub-Committee asked Mr Adedeji if it was their opinion that this premises looked after their performers and Mr Adedeji agreed that they did. Mr Adedeji replied that there is a lady present who ensures the performers are safe and ensures their welfare during performances.

Ms Abbott from the Licensing Authority in summing up addressed the Sub-Committee saying that due to the nature of the business, they will have been one of the final businesses to reopen after the Covid pandemic. Therefore, although there have been no issues raised since 2019, the vast majority of this period the premises was closed, from roughly March 2020 to July 2021. Ms Abbott said that is it still the opinion of the Licensing Authority that this is an operator who is not fit to hold a licence, and this licence should not be renewed.

Mr Rankin, as Counsel for the Metropolitan Police, had nothing to add in his summing up.

Ms Le Fevre on behalf of the Applicant said the lease has already expired, so will be forced to be passed on. Ms Le Fevre said she cannot name the new proposed operator for confidentiality reasons but that they are experienced in this field. Ms Le Fevre said that the concerns raised by the Licensing Authority had now been met in relation to the variation applications through the agreement of conditions, and she said that this showed the positive work that had been done to address the breaches. Ms Le Fevre said that the variation and licence applications should be determined separately.

Ms Le Fevre then turned to the renewal saying that it was not fair to say there had been continual non-compliance. Ms Le Fevre said there were periods of time where there were no complaints, issues or breaches reported. Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Adedeji had said the issue with the CCTV now was not the CCTV itself but simply the staff training to use it and Ms Le Fevre reiterated that Mr Adedeji had said the welfare of the performers is taken seriously. Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Venamore has gone, the current staff are being trained to a higher standard and Mr Forde has signalled his desire to step back from the venue.

Decision:

The Sub-Committee having carefully considered the matter and the evidence on its individual merits decided to grant the renewal of the Applicant's SEV Licence. In its determination of the matter the Sub-Committee considered all relevant factors namely the locality of the venue and its surrounding premises such as schools and places of worship.

The Sub-Committee noted that the number of sexual entertainment venues permitted within the Council's Sexual Entertainment Venues Statement of Licensing Policy ("the SEV Policy") had not been exceeded.

The Sub-Committee had regard to the two objections at Appendix D of the Report. The objections submitted concerned whether the applicant was unsuitable to hold a licence 'for any other reason' (as per paragraph 12(3)(a) of Schedule 3 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982). The Sub-Committee noted that the accuracy of the evidence of breach of conditions produced by the Licensing Authority and the Metropolitan Police Service was not contested by the Applicant, and the Sub-Committee took these breaches of conditions seriously, particularly the breaches concerning the 'no touching' rule and the failure to provide CCTV when requested. The Licensing Authority and the Metropolitan Police Service had acted entirely appropriately by objecting to the Application and ensuring that it was subject to the scrutiny of the Sub-Committee.

Although the Sub-Committee gave serious consideration as to whether the Application should be refused on the basis that repeated non-compliance demonstrated that the Applicant was unsuitable to hold an SEV licence, the Sub-Committee ultimately concluded that the Applicant fell just short of being unsuitable and that the measures proposed by the Applicant would ensure successful management in future. The Sub-Committee's main reasons were as follows.

First, the most serious issued identified by the Licensing Authority and the Metropolitan Police Service were associated with Mr Venamore acting as manager of the Premises, and Mr Venamore was the main culprit for rude and obstructive behaviour. The Applicant had addressed this by sacking Mr Venamore and ensuring that he would not be involved in management going forwards. This action could have and should have been taken sooner, but the Applicant's actions had shown that it was willing and able to learn from its mistakes.

Second, the Licensing Authority and the Metropolitan Police Service confirmed that the touching that had been observed had been in the private dancing booths. The SEV Licence as varied would not have any private dancing booths, and this would make it much easier for the Applicant to ensure compliance with the no touching rule. The removal of the private dancing booths would also make it easier for there to be CCTV coverage of the entire Premises.

Third, the Licensing Authority agreed that the Premises took good care of performers and that they were well looked after. Mr Adedeji also referred to an employee being present on the Premises who looked after Performers' welfare and had been witnessed enforcing the 'no touching' rule. This factor weighed heavily in the Premises' favour.

Fourth, although the Applicant had been warned for similar breaches of conditions in the decision dated 13 February 2020 the Sub-Committee noted that four renewals had been granted since then without any concerns about similar breaches of conditions being raised. The Premises would not have been operating as a strip club for a substantial period during this period (approximately 18 months), yet the Sub-Committee considered that this history still demonstrated a significant period of compliance.

Overall, the Sub-Committee concluded that the evidence did not demonstrate that the Applicant was unfit or incapable of running the Premises in accordance with the conditions imposed. The Sub-Committee wishes to emphasise that this was a close decision and that it gave serious consideration to refusing the application.

The Sub-Committee in its determination of the matter had regard to all the oral submissions made at the hearing and to all the written documentation that had been submitted.

The Sub-Committee, therefore, granted the Renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Premises Licence subject to the Standard Conditions applicable to licences for sex establishments in Westminster as prescribed by the Council pursuant to Paragraph 13 of Schedule 3 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and the additional conditions imposed on the Premises Licence as specified below.

Standard Conditions

- Whilst Relevant Entertainment is taking place no person under the age of 18 shall be on the licensed premises and a clear notice to that effect shall be displayed at the entrance in a prominent position so that it can be easily read by persons entering the premises.
- 2. Whenever persons under the age of 18 are admitted to the premises there will be no promotional or other material on display within the premises which depicts nudity or partial nudity.

- 3. The licence or a clear copy shall be prominently displayed at all times so as to be readily and easily seen by all persons using the premises.
- 4. No provision of relevant entertainment, or material depicting nudity or relevant entertainment, shall be visible from outside the premises.
- 5. Menus and drinks price lists shall be clearly displayed at the front entrance of the club, reception area, tables and bar at such a position and size as to be easily read by customers. This price list shall show all consumable items and any minimum tariff including charges and fees applicable to Performers.
- 6. Except with the consent of the Licensing Authority, no advertisements of any kind (including placard, poster, sticker, flyer, picture, letter, sign or other mark) shall be inscribed or affixed at the premises, on the surface of the highway or on any building, structure, works, street furniture, tree or any other property or be distributed in the street to the public that advertises or promotes the relevant entertainment at the premises.
- 7. The licence holder or other person concerned in the conduct or management of the premises shall not seek to obtain custom by means of personal solicitation or touting, nor enter into any agreement with a third party to do so.
- 8. Adequate toilets, washing and changing facilities for use by the Performers shall be provided.
- 9. Either the licence holder or a named responsible person shall be present throughout the time the Relevant Entertainment takes place.
- 10. The premises will install and maintain a comprehensive CCTV system as per the minimum requirements of a Westminster Police Licensing Team that ensures all areas of the licensed premises are monitored including all entry and exit points will be covered enabling frontal identification of every person entering any light condition. All cameras shall continually record whilst the premises is open for licensable activities and during all times when customers remain on the premises. All recordings shall be stored for a minimum period of 31 days with date and time stamping. Recordings shall be made available immediately upon the request of Police or authorised officer throughout the preceding 31 day period together with facilities for viewing
- 11. A staff member from the premises who is conversant with the operation of the CCTV system shall be on the premises at all times when the premises is open to the public and this staff member should be able to show Police recent data and footage with the absolute minimum of delay of the request.
- 12. An incident log shall be kept at the premises, and made available on request to the Licensing Authority or the Police, which will record the

- following: (a) all crimes reported to the venue; (b) all ejections of patrons; (c) any complaints received; (d) any incidents of disorder; (e) seizures of drugs or offensive weapons; (f) any faults in the CCTV system or searching equipment or scanning equipment; (g) any refusal of the sale of alcohol; (h) any visit by a relevant authority or emergency service; (i) any breach of licence conditions reported by a Performer
- 13. The licence holder shall produce a Code of Conduct setting out rules and obligations between the licence holder and performers whilst performing. All Performers shall sign the Code of Conduct in their proper name acknowledging that they have read, understood and are prepared to abide by the said Code of Conduct, and a copy so signed shall be retained by the licence holder and shall be readily available for inspection by the Police and/or authorised persons upon reasonable request.
- 14. Individual records shall be kept at the premises of the real names, stage names and addresses of all Performers working at the premises. The record will include either a copy of their birth certificate, current passport, EU driving licence or national identity card and shall be made immediately available for inspection by the Police and/or the Licensing Authority upon request.
- 15. Details of all work permits and/or immigration status relating to persons working at the premises shall be retained by the licence holder and be readily available for inspection by the Licensing Authority, a Police Officer or Immigration Officer.
- 16. Relevant entertainment shall be given only by performers and the audience shall not be permitted to participate in the relevant entertainment.
- 17. There shall be no physical contact between Performers whilst performing.
- 18. Performers will not request or give out any telephone number, address or any other contact information from or to any customer. Any such information given by a customer shall be surrendered to the premises manager as soon as is practicable.
- 19. Relevant Entertainment shall take place only in the designated areas approved by the Licensing Authority as shown on the licence plan. Arrangements for access to the dressing room shall be maintained at all times whilst Relevant Entertainment is taking place and immediately thereafter.
- 20. Customers must remain fully clothed at all times. The Performer must not remove any of the customer's clothing at any time.
- 21. Where relevant entertainment is provided in booths, or other areas of the premises where private performances are provided, the booth or

- area shall not have a door or other similar closure, the area shall be constantly monitored by CCTV, and access to the booth or other area shall be adequately supervised. There shall be door staff on duty near the booths at all times when they are in use.
- 22. Whenever Relevant Entertainment is being provided there shall be no physical contact between Performers and customers or between customers and Performers except for the exchanging of money or tokens at the beginning or conclusion of the performance and only for the purpose of that performance. Clearly legible notices to this effect shall clearly be displayed in each private booth and in any performance area.
- 23. Performers must redress fully immediately after each performance.

Additional conditions

- 24. An SIA trained licensed doorman shall be based in the basement at all times when relevant entertainment is taking place.
- 25. The maximum number of customers accommodated in the area [private dance area] at any one time shall be 4 persons excluding staff, dancers, or hostesses.
- 26. In the private dance area entertainment may be provided solely by fully nude dancers to customers seated at tables in the approved part of the premises. No audience participation shall be permitted.
- 27. The maximum number of persons accommodated within the premises at any one time (including staff) shall not exceed 65 persons.
- 28. All emergency doors shall be maintained effectively self closing and not held open other than by an approved device.
- 29. The edges of the treads of steps and stairways shall be maintained so as to be conspicuous.
- 30. Curtains and hanging shall be arranged so as not to obstruct emergency signs.
- 31. The approved arrangements at the premises, including means of escape provisions, emergency warning equipment, the electrical installation and mechanical equipment, shall at all material times be maintained in good condition and full working order.
- 32. The means of escape provided for the premises shall be maintained unobstructed, free of trip hazards, be immediately available and clearly identified in accordance with the plans provided.
- 33. All exit doors shall be available at all material times without the use of a key, code, card or similar means.

- 34. Any special effects or mechanical installations shall be arranged and stored so as to minimise any risk to the safety of those using the premises. The following special effects will only be used on 10 days prior notice being given to the Licensing Authority where consent has not previously been given.
 - i. pyrotechnics including fire works
 - ii. firearms
 - iii. lasers
 - iv. explosives and highly flammable substances
 - v. real flame
 - vi. strobe lighting
- 35. No noise shall emanate from the premises nor vibration be transmitted through the structure of the premises which gives rise to a nuisance.
- 36. No relevant entertainment shall be provided at the premises until such time that the premises have been inspected by the Licensing Authority and Environmental Health.
- 37. Relevant entertainment shall only be provided in the basement.

The Licensing Sub-Committee 23 November 2023

2. SUNSET STRIP, BASEMENT TO FIRST FLOOR, 30 DEAN STREET, W1D 3SA

LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE No. 6

Thursday 23 November 2023

Membership: Councillor Maggie Carman (Chair), Councillor Concia

Albert and Councillor Jim Glen

Legal Adviser: Michael Feeney Policy Officer: Daisy Gadd

Committee Officer: Jack Robinson-Young Presenting Officer: Jessica Donovan

Objections: Objection from the Licensing Authority

Present: Mr Declan Forde, Ms Lana Tricker (LT Law) and Sarah Le Fevre (Counsel) for the Applicant, Karyn Abbott and Leroy Adedeji (City Inspector) for the Licensing Authority and PC Reaz Guerra and James Rankin (Counsel) for the Metropolitan Police Service

1.	Application for Variation of a Sex Establishment Licence for Sunset Strip, Basement to Fist Floor, 30 Dean Street, London, W1D 3SA under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 (as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2009)
	The Sub-Committee has determined an application for Variation of a Sexual Entertainment Venue Premises Licence made by Sohomead Limited.
	Amendments to application advised at hearing:
	None
	Submissions:
	The Presenting Officer Ms Donovan outlined the application to the Sub-Committee. She advised that this was an application for a Variation of a Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence in respect of the Premises Sunset Strip Basement to First Floor 30 Dean Street W1D 3SA.
	At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair informed those present that all three items before the Sub-Committee would be heard together. There were no objections to this course of action.

Ms Le Fevre outlined the applications to the Sub-Committee. Ms Le Fevre said she understood, given the comments in 2020, why their request for an adjournment had been denied. Ms Le Fevre said she had no instructions to defend the indefensible. Ms Le Fevre said that Members knew from the papers that the property was due to undergo a significant investment in 2024. Ms Le Fevre said that Members would want to hear how they had taken steps towards addressing issues that had been raised, some of which had already been taken by the Applicant company. Ms Le Fevre said it was the intention that the current premises licence holder pass on this licence to a new operator. Ms Le Fevre said that the first observation in the papers before Members was in February and that the manager at the time was no longer in place. Ms Le Fevre said it was shortly after this that Mr Forde's mother passed away, and during a period of between 6 to 8 weeks he was unfortunately out of action. During this time, Ms Le Fevre said a general manager was employed to replace the previous manager and helped address the temporary absence of Mr Forde.

Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Gavin Venamore was employed during this time and was seen as a reputable figure given he had previously worked for Westminster City Council. Ms Le Fevre said that her client came to understand that there were problems with how Mr Venamore was training staff and general performance. Ms Le Fevre said that the first step that had to be undertaken was the removal of Mr Venamore, which has been actioned. Ms Le Fevre said that the staff were in the process of being overhauled and were being offered additional training. Ms Le Fevre then turned to the CCTV and the extent of its coverage. Ms Le Fevre said the CCTV is now in its third iteration, with each iteration seemingly more complex than the previous. Ms Le Fevre said that although it is not before Members, CCTV was provided to Metropolitan Police officers at the time. Ms Le Fevre said that the reconfiguration of the premises will remove the private booths and every instance of the prohibited touching was contained in there and there alone. With regards to the variation applications, Ms Le Fevre said that nobody except the Licensing Authority had raised an objection. The variation applications had followed pre-application consultation with Environmental Health who confirmed no difficulties with the proposals. There was no change to the staircases, fire escape or the terrace used for smoking, showing there is no other space available for sexual entertainment. However, should the Sub-Committee decided to Condition this, Ms Le Fevre said that it would be accepted. Ms Le Fevre said that Environmental Health had the view that the variations could have been dealt with as minor variations given they did not concern variations in capacity.

The Sub-Committee asked when Mr Venamore was let go. Mr Forde said he was let go just over a week ago, after being employed after the February visits.

The Sub-Committee asked about the CCTV and the upgrades that had been made. Mr Forde said there was a system he was familiar with, but this became faulty. A second system was then put in place which was difficult to use, and some cameras were not functioning. Mr Forde said Westminster City Council had said the clarity of the images was not of an adequate quality and

that to address this, the system was upgraded again.

The Sub-Committee asked whether in 2019 during a previous renewal application, similar issues to those in this hearing were raised. The Sub-Committee said that it would seem not much had changed. In reply to this, Mr Forde said there had been no issues or complaints raised during this time. Mr Forde accepted that there were breaches during the 2019 period but in more recent times no issues had been raised. Mr Forde said that during the February visit of this year, he was not present, and the manager was let go. As Mr Forde had personal issues, Mr Venamore was brought in to ensure they were compliant.

Mr Forde said that in relation to obstructive behaviour he had not been working on the evening in question and that he had two inspectors talking on either side of him and he had raised his voice just to try to get one person to speak at a time.

Mr Forde said that now the bar staff and himself would manage the CCTV as well as their security staff. Mr Forde confirmed he was the DPS, and Ms Tricker confirmed that the variation applications would not affect the first floor smoking terrace.

Ms Karyn Abbott from the Licensing Authority addressed the Sub-Committee and said the Licensing Authority still maintained their objection as they do not feel the operator is fit and proper to have a sexual entertainment venue licence. Ms Abbott said that the experience of Mr Forde was worrying, as he should know how to run a sexual entertainment venue properly. Ms Abbott said that it is their opinion this renewal should be refused.

Mr Leroy Adedeji, City Inspector at Westminster City Council, addressed the Sub-Committee saying that they found that Conditions 10, 11 and 12 were all breached during their inspection. Mr Adedeji said that in September, a complaint was received concerning the behaviour of staff with several breaches of staff recorded with no attempt by other staff to stop these. Mr Adedeji said that he was told "a little touching was allowed" which was in direct breach of Conditions. Mr Adedeji asked for CCTV to be downloaded and the rules for performers to be adhered to at the premises. CCTV was presented to Mr Adedeji and when asked where the procedure for performers was, he was told this was not immediately available. Mr Adedeji summarised the visits made by City Inspectors as set out in the Agenda papers.

The Sub-Committee asked Mr Forde about the claim that people had been told "some" touching was allowed. Mr Forde said that he had been told by Westminster City Council that there was touching and then there was sexual touching. Mr Forde said it was his fault for misunderstanding the difference. The Sub-Committee asked Mr Adedeji if he felt as though the cameras were covering the appropriate places and he said on his visit that they were, and he was able to rewind the CCTV to view previous footage.

The Sub-Committee asked where the breaches of touching had been taking place, Mr Adedeji said these were within the private booths. The Sub-Committee said if these booths were removed, as planned, would the Licensing Authority be satisfied with the application. Ms Abbott said this was not enough as there were previous instances of Conditions being breach outside of the touching.

The Sub-Committee asked what the private room on the first floor would be used for. Ms Lana Tricker informed Members that this would be for VIP's and could be booked for a private event although this was not the aim of the space. Following a discussion on conditions concerning the capacity of the smoking terrace and preventing any striptease or nudity on the first floor, Ms Abbott confirmed that the Licensing Authority's concerns in relation to the Premises Licence variation application had been addressed.

Mr James Rankin. Counsel for the Sub-Committee then addressed the Sub-Committee. Mr Rankin's submissions related only to agenda item 1, the renewal application, and not agenda items 2 or 3, as the Metropolitan Police had not objected to the variation applications. Mr Rankin said that it was clear that Mr Gavin Venamore had been thrown under the bus, with a new operator and new DPS to be put in place, who are both unknown to Members present. Mr Rankin said that 5 breaches were noted by Officers from the Metropolitan Police that attended on their visit. Mr Rankin said all breaches were serious, even with regards to the menu as this allows customers to know how much they will be paying. Mr Rankin said that when Mr Adedeji viewed the footage. this was not during the time frame requested and PC Muldoon had asked for a different time frame to be sent. Mr Rankin said that when this footage was sent by Mr Venamore, the pictures were unable to be viewed and Mr Rankin suggested this was deliberate on the part of Mr Venamore. Mr Rankin said that the difference between touching and sexual touching was clear and could not realistically be confused; it was obvious that Mr Forde still did not understand the conditions on the licence. Mr Rankin then read from the Sub-Committee decision in 2019 that stated if issues that had been previously raised to the previous Sub-Committee continued, then it would be "unlikely" that the licence would be renewed in the future. Mr Rankin said that the objection from the Metropolitan Police showed the applicant is unsuitable to hold a sexual entertainment venue licence.

The Sub-Committee asked if the breaches regarding touching all took place in the booths, and the Metropolitan Police confirmed this. The Sub-Committee asked if the removal of these alleviated the concerns they had and in reply, Mr Rankin said this would reduce some of their concerns regarding touching but the operator was still the same and all other breaches that took place outside the booths were as relevant as the ones that took place in the booths. Mr Rankin added in response to a question that the Applicant may have been a fit and proper person in previous years when the Metropolitan Police had not objected but this could change.

Mr Forde said he was repeating to staff what Mr Venamore had told him, which he said he understands now is wrong but at the time he was ill advised. The Sub-Committee asked Mr Forde whom he thought was responsible for

understanding the Conditions on the licence. Mr Forde said he thought a former City Inspector would know the rules, but it was for him to understand. Mr Forde reiterated again he was ill advised.

The Sub-Committee asked about the welfare of the performers, and Mr Forde informed Members that there are regular welfare calls and security to ensure their safety. Mr Forde said that all employment checks are done and stored behind the bar area with necessary documentation. Mr Forde said there were between 10-15 performers on any single night totalling roughly around 30 overall.

The Sub-Committee asked Mr Adedeji if it was their opinion that this premises looked after their performers and Mr Adedeji agreed that they did. Mr Adedeji replied that there is a lady present who ensures the performers are safe and ensures their welfare during performances.

Ms Abbott from the Licensing Authority in summing up addressed the Sub-Committee saying that due to the nature of the business, they will have been one of the final businesses to reopen after the Covid pandemic. Therefore, although there have been no issues raised since 2019, the vast majority of this period the premises was closed, from roughly March 2020 to July 2021. Ms Abbott said that is it still the opinion of the Licensing Authority that this is an operator who is not fit to hold a licence, and this licence should not be renewed.

Mr Rankin, as Counsel for the Metropolitan Police, had nothing to add in his summing up.

Ms Le Fevre on behalf of the Applicant said the lease has already expired, so will be forced to be passed on. Ms Le Fevre said she cannot name the new proposed operator for confidentiality reasons but that they are experienced in this field. Ms Le Fevre said that the concerns raised by the Licensing Authority had now been met in relation to the variation applications through the agreement of conditions, and she said that this showed the positive work that had been done to address the breaches. Ms Le Fevre said that the variation and licence applications should be determined separately.

Ms Le Fevre then turned to the renewal saying that it was not fair to say there had been continual non-compliance. Ms Le Fevre said there were periods of time where there were no complaints, issues or breaches reported. Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Adedeji had said the issue with the CCTV now was not the CCTV itself but simply the staff training to use it and Ms Le Fevre reiterated that Mr Adedeji had said the welfare of the performers is taken seriously. Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Venamore has gone, the current staff are being trained to a higher standard and Mr Forde has signalled his desire to step back from the venue.

Decision:

The Sub-Committee having carefully considered the matter and the evidence on its individual merits decided to grant the variation of the Applicant's SEV Licence. In its determination of the matter the Sub-Committee considered all

relevant factors namely the locality of the venue and its surrounding premises such as schools and places of worship.

The Sub-Committee noted that the number of sexual entertainment venues permitted within the Council's Sexual Entertainment Venues Statement of Licensing Policy ("the SEV Policy") had not been exceeded.

The Sub-Committee had regard to the objection at Appendix D of the Report. The objection submitted concerned the potential use of the first floor. The Licensing Authority confirmed during the course of the hearing, that its concerns had largely been addressed for the variation application, as the Applicant had confirmed that the lounge on the first floor would not be used as a private drinking area and that the terrace would continue to be used in the same way as it was currently. The Applicant during the hearing agreed to conditions on the premises licence limiting the capacity of the terrace and explicitly stating that there would be no striptease or nudity on the ground and first floors.

The Sub-Committee also considered that the proposed changes to the layout of the Premises would be beneficial in that they would remove the private dancing booths and make it much easier for management to comply with the conditions on the SEV Licence (particularly the 'no touching' rule). The changes would also make it much easier for Council officers and police officers to monitor compliance with the SEV Licence conditions.

Given that the Licensing Authority's objections had largely been answered, that Environmental Health had not objected to the Application and that the proposed changes to the layout were considered an improvement, the Sub-Committee decided to grant the Variation of the Sexual Entertainment Premises Licence as applied for by updating the layout plans of the Premises as set out in the application.

The Sub-Committee in its determination of the matter had regard to all the oral submissions made at the hearing and to all the written documentation that had been submitted.

The Licensing Sub-Committee 23 November 2023

3. SUNSET STRIP, BASEMENT TO FIRST FLOOR, 30 DEAN STREET, W1D 3SA

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE NO. 6 ("The Committee")

Thursday 23 November 2023

Membership: Councillor Maggie Carman (Chair), Councillor Concia Albert and

Councillor Jim Glen

Officer Support: Legal Adviser: Michael Feeney

Policy Officer: Daisy Gadd

Committee Officer: Jack Robinson-Young Presenting Officer: Jessica Donovan

Present: Mr Declan Forde, Ms Lana Tricker (LT Law) and Sarah Le Fevre (Counsel) for the Applicant, Karyn Abbott and Leroy Adedeji (City Inspector) for the Licensing Authority

<u>Application for a Premises Licence Variation in respect of Sunset Strip,</u>
<u>Basement to First Floor, 30 Dean Street, London, W1D 3SA</u>

Full Decision

Premises:

Sunset Strip
Basement to First Floor
30 Dean Street
London
W1D 3SA

Applicant

Sohomead Limited

Ward

West End

Cumulative Impact Area

West End

Special Consideration Zone

N/A

Representations Received

Licensing Authority

Issues raised by Objectors

 Insufficient information has been submitted. The Licensing Authority raised concerns about the use of the lounge on the first floor and the use of the terrace.

Policy Considerations

Policies CIP1, HRS1 and SCEV1 apply under the City Council's Statement of Licensing Policy ("SLP").

Submissions by the Parties

The Presenting Officer Ms Donovan outlined the application to the Sub-Committee. She advised that this was an application for a Variation of a Sexual Entertainment Venue Licence in respect of the Premises Sunset Strip Basement to First Floor 30 Dean Street W1D 3SA.

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair informed those present that all three items before the Sub-Committee would be heard together. There were no objections to this course of action.

Ms Le Fevre outlined the applications to the Sub-Committee. Ms Le Fevre said she understood, given the comments in 2020, why their request for an adjournment had been denied. Ms Le Fevre said she had no instructions to defend the indefensible. Ms Le Fevre said that Members knew from the papers that the property was due to undergo a significant investment in 2024. Ms Le Fevre said that Members would want to hear how they had taken steps towards addressing issues that had been raised, some of which had already been taken by the Applicant company. Ms Le Fevre said it was the intention that the current premises licence holder pass on this licence to a new operator. Ms Le Fevre said that the first observation in the papers before Members was in February and that the manager at the time was no longer in place. Ms Le Fevre said it was shortly after this that Mr Forde's mother passed away, and during a period of between 6 to 8 weeks he was unfortunately out of action. During this time, Ms Le Fevre said a general manager was employed to replace the previous manager and helped address the temporary absence of Mr Forde.

Ms Le Fevre said that Mr Gavin Venamore was employed during this time and was seen as a reputable figure given he had previously worked for Westminster City Council. Ms Le Fevre said that her client came to understand that there were problems with how Mr Venamore was training staff and general performance. Ms Le Fevre said that the first step that had to be undertaken was the removal of Mr Venamore, which has been actioned. Ms Le Fevre said that the staff were in the process of being overhauled and were being offered additional training. Ms Le Fevre then turned to the CCTV and the extent of its coverage. Ms Le Fevre said the CCTV is now in its third iteration, with each iteration seemingly more complex than the previous. Ms Le Fevre said that although it is not before Members, CCTV was provided to Metropolitan Police officers at the time. Ms Le Fevre said that the

reconfiguration of the premises will remove the private booths and every instance of the prohibited touching was contained in there and there alone.

With regards to the variation applications, Ms Le Fevre said that nobody except the Licensing Authority had raised an objection. The variation applications had followed pre-application consultation with Environmental Health who confirmed no difficulties with the proposals. There was no change to the staircases, fire escape or the terrace used for smoking, showing there is no other space available for sexual entertainment. However, should the Sub-Committee decided to Condition this, Ms Le Fevre said that it would be accepted. Ms Le Fevre said that Environmental Health had the view that the variations could have been dealt with as minor variations given they did not concern variations in capacity.

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the same and all other breaches that took place outside the booths were as relevant as the ones that took place in the booths. Mr Rankin added in response to a question that the Applicant may have been a fit and proper person in previous years when the Metropolitan Police had not objected but this could change.

Mr Forde said he was repeating to staff what Mr Venamore had told him, which he said he understands now is wrong but at the time he was ill advised. The Sub-Committee asked Mr Forde whom he thought was responsible for understanding the Conditions on the licence. Mr Forde said he thought a former City Inspector would know the rules, but it was for him to understand. Mr Forde reiterated again he was ill advised.

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Reasons and Conclusion

The Sub-Committee has determined an application for Variation of a Premises Licence under the Act. The Sub-Committee realises that it has a duty to consider each application on its individual merits and did so when determining this application. The Sub-Committee had regard not only to the written and oral evidence but also to the Act, the Guidance issued under section 182 of the Act and the City Council's SLP, in particular policies CIP1, HRS1 and SCEV1.

The Licensing Authority confirmed during the course of the hearing that its concerns had largely been addressed in regards to this application, as the Applicant had confirmed that the lounge on the first floor would not be used as a private drinking area and that the terrace would continue to be used in the same way as it was currently. The Applicant during the hearing agreed to conditions limiting the capacity of the terrace and explicitly stating that there would be no striptease or nudity on the ground and first floors.

The Sub-Committee also considered that the proposed changes to the layout of the Premises would be beneficial in that they would remove the private dancing booths and make it much easier for management to comply with the conditions on the SEV Licence (particularly the 'no touching' rule). The changes would also make it much easier for Council officers and police officers to monitor compliance with the SEV Licence conditions.

The Sub-Committee also noted that Environmental Health had not objected to the Application, the removal of condition 18 or the imposition of standard works conditions. The Metropolitan Police also confirmed that there was no objection to the removal of condition 18.

The Sub-Committee therefore considers that the Applicant has demonstrated that the measures it proposes (as secured by conditions) would not add to cumulative impact within the West End Cumulative Impact Zone and would promote the licensing objectives.

Having carefully considered all the committee papers, submissions made by the Applicant and the oral evidence given by all parties during the hearing in its determination of the matter the Committee therefore decided, after taking into account all the individual circumstances of this application and the promotion of the four licensing objectives, to grant the application to vary the Premises Licence (23/01570/LIPT) by:

- i) Varying the plans at annex 4 of the Premises Licence as set out in the application.
- ii) Removing condition 18 of the Premises Licence stating: 'Intoxicating liquor shall not be sold or supplied to persons entering the premises after 11pm other than to persons who have paid a minimum entrance fee of £3 Monday to Thursday or £5 Friday to Saturday'.
- iii) Adding new condition 57 stating: 'No licensable activities shall take place until the premises has been assessed as satisfactory by the Environmental

- Health Consultation Team at which time this condition shall be removed from the Licence by the licensing authority.'
- iv) Adding new condition 58 stating: 'Before the premises open to the public, the plans as deposited shall be checked by the Environmental Health Consultation Team to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the premises constructed. Where the premises layout has changed during the course of construction new plans shall be provided to the Environmental Health Consultation Team and the Licensing Authority.'
- v) Adding new condition 59 stating: 'There shall be no striptease or nudity, and all persons shall be decently attired at all times on the ground and first floors, except when the premises are operating under the authority of a Sexual Entertainment Venue licence.'
- vi) Adding new condition 60 stating: 'The capacity of the first floor terrace shall be limited to a maximum of seven persons, including staff.'

The Licensing Sub-Committee 23 November 2023

The Meeting ended at 2.00 pm