

**Statement of:** Simon Warr

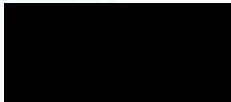
**Age if under 18:** over 18

This statement (consisting of 10 pages) 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 for prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it which I know to be false or do not believe to be true



Date: 31.12.18

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1. My name is Simon Warr and I am the owner of the “Platinum Lace” group of companies.
  
  2. I have been involved in the late-night leisure industry since 1989 when I worked as a door supervisor to supplement my income as a rugby player, and have since performed a variety of roles including running my own security company.
  
  3. My professional career was forged in the motor industry where I had full-time employment with Nissan Motor (GB) Limited (‘Nissan’). I started at Nissan in the Aftersales department as an auditor, progressing to the position of Aftersales manager, followed by Dealer Operations Manager and my final position in Nissan was After-sales Marketing Manager for the whole of the UK operation.
  
  4. During this time, I also owned and ran a security company known as the Elite Security Limited (‘Elite’). The company provided doormen to many venues, licensed and otherwise. It was through providing services to licensed premises that I met Gerald Richardson (‘Gerald’). At the time, Gerald owned and operated a handful of successful independent pubs and clubs and his company was called ‘Richardson’s Inns’. Gerald was the first operator of lap-dancing clubs in the UK, with his first club opening in Park Royal, London in 1995 and carried the trading name ‘For Your Eyes Only’ (‘FYEO’).
  
  5. After leaving Nissan in 2001, I was employed by ‘Spearmint Rhino Companies (Europe) Limited’, and then ‘Spearmint Rhino Ventures (UK) Limited’, during which time I was promoted to European President in order to implement a safety culture, raise operating standards, ensure compliance and to implement a strategy for planned business growth. In 2004, I became a shareholder and director.
  
  6. In 2006, I set up the ‘Lap Dancing Association’ (LDA) and worked closely with Kate Nicolls (the current CEO of UK Hospitality). The purpose of the LDA was to identify and promote best practice throughout the lap dancing industry through its various members, to be influential in



charting the course with regard to the future of the industry and to represent a voice on behalf of the industry.

7. In 2009 I left 'Spearmint Rhino' and set up a brand that is known as 'Platinum Lace' that provides adult entertainment in the form of Lap Dancing clubs. My clubs are located in Brighton, Leicester, Norwich, Glasgow and I own 2 clubs in London's West End: Piccadilly and Leicester Square.

8. It is integral to our brand in all the cities in which we operate that we set out to provide the best customer experience in terms of service and facilities in a well-managed, compliant environment.

9. The management structure of my business is relatively straightforward. I am the majority shareholder and Director of all companies. I have a Finance Director and 4 finance support staff. My Compliance Director is a retired Police Officer and former Licensing Officer for Bournemouth Borough Council.

10. Unlike many smaller clubs, our fiscal procedures are subject to an annual audit and our accounts are submitted to Companies House.

11. Each club has a General Manger and in most cases a support manager and MIT (Manager in Training). Due to its trading capacity, our Piccadilly club has both a General Manager and 6 support managers, including a Dancer Welfare Manager and Floor Manager.

12. It is the role of the Dancer Welfare Manager to ensure all dancers are well cared for and, so far as practicable, any problems are pre-emptively identified. This process operates well in practice and we have a loyal following of dancers at all branches of Platinum Lace.

13. We carry out an induction process for every dancer that normally lasts in excess of 2-hours. A variety of topics are discussed but the club rules/codes of conduct is where most of the time is spent ensuring dancers have understood the rules. All dancers' details are kept in their dedicated file (*copy attached at exhibit SW1: 'contents of Dancer File'*) that is a 'living' document used during the course of their tenure with the club. Each dancer operates under the terms and conditions of a Licensing Contract that is renewed annually. This includes records of interventions, and warnings relating to conduct.

14. Following a meeting with WCC in relation to an alleged incident in October 2016, we record all staff interventions (these are pre-emptive acts to prevent licence breaches) on an 'Intervention Log' relevant to each night. Where an intervention is made (that could be construed as a potential breach of club rules) details are also recorded on the dancer's file. Repeat offenders may be subjected to a fiscal penalty (due to a compliance breach) and their contract with the club may be terminated.



15. I am responsible for the livelihood of in excess of 2,000 people (consisting of staff, dancers, and contractors). During the course of a typical week, we have around 4,500 customers through 6 clubs.

16. I take my licensing responsibilities extremely seriously. I set out to run compliant venues with the assistance of an excellent management and security team. I work in partnership with WCC and operate an open door policy with the authorities and the opportunity for dialogue and scrutiny that brings. I have no interest in stretching or bending the rules. The clubs are my livelihood and I intend to operate harmoniously and permanently in all my locations: that can only be done through an adherence to the highest of standards.

17. Within the immediate proximity of our London clubs there are a few other operators: The Windmill, which is a long-established venue; Sophisticats, which is a relatively small (100 capacity which is their new club in the Soho area) and Stringfellows. To the best of my knowledge, before opening their Soho club Sophisticats applied for a 6am alcohol licence on 15th September 2016. To the best of my knowledge, they were granted their licence on 1st December 2016 but with a 3am terminal hour for alcohol sales.

18. I am aware that Sophisticats applied for a variation to their licence on 22nd December 2016 to extend their Sunday trading hours and to amend a current condition so as to allow regulated entertainment (in the form of lap dancing) to be carried out during the operation of a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). The application was rejected on 6th April 2017.

19. It is very clear that in terms of a competitive analysis, the 3 top clubs within the West End are Platinum Lace, Stringfellows and The Windmill. With the exception of Sophisticats, I have enjoyed a harmonious and cordial relationship with other operators.

20. In respect of Sophisticats, the owners are John McKeown, Simon and Diana Langer (I do not believe Diana is a Director or has any day to day control of the business). I met John McKeown (a Director of Sophisticats) briefly at a meeting in 2007. They were invited to join the LDA but did not do so.

21. It was shortly after Sophisticats started development on their club in Brewer Street that we experienced problems during our renewal process in relation to Platinum Lace in Piccadilly. I have never had a complaint nor representations with any of my other clubs during the renewal process.

22. I have various bank loans and have been forced to use my family home as a personal guarantee for the business. Therefore, I have found the representations in relation to Platinum Lace concerning. I considered the complaints to be vexatious and I suspected they were instigated on moral and/or competitive grounds but had no evidence of the same.

23. The problems around the same time of our SEVL renewals occurred as follows;





## Incident - 2015

24. Shortly after our renewal in 2015, we were alerted by officers at WCC that they had been sent images of behaviour by a dancer that may be deemed inappropriate in our Coventry Street premises and they wanted to investigate the allegations.

25. The incident primarily involved a dancer we knew as 'Mindy' (stage name). The incident took place during the morning hours of 12th December 2015. The complaint was received by WCC on 23rd December 2015. On 5th Jan 2016, we were asked to attend a meeting with WCC officers for the following day.

26. 'Mindy' had joined 'Platinum Lace' shortly before the incident. From our induction record she had stated she had worked at Spearmint Rhino (Leicester) but a number of dancers at the club remarked she was in fact working at Sophisticats and this was entered on her dancer file.

27. We reviewed the CCTV that we had. The 'customer' (who we now believe to be a freelance reporter) arrived at the club with 2 other female customers. Their names are Veronika Dumitru and Dana Ene. I was made aware of their names as they had briefly worked in our venue and we still had their details on file. Their notes showed that they were working at Sophisticats.

28. From the CCTV, it seemed evident that the customer was taking every opportunity to touch 'Mindy' whenever security were not present. Of equal concern, 'Mindy' did not stop the dance, seek a member of management or a security supervisor, nor did she talk to the customer, all expressly contrary to her induction. The 2 females (Veronika and Dana) appeared to be doing everything they could to obscure the vision of our supervisors. We considered that the actions of all the participants were complicit. Mindy's behaviour, and that of the customer, were not in keeping with the accepted and usual behaviour of either customers or dancers at Platinum Lace.

29. As a result of this incident, we carried out a thorough investigation. 'Mindy' did not return to Platinum Lace after 12th December 2015. We tried to call her to discuss the matter with her but she would not answer her phone or return any calls. Her dancer contract was revoked and we worked with Glyn Franks of WCC to improve our CCTV and overall supervision of the premises. We fitted more cameras as requested by WCC, but had already expensed £23,605.41 from 2011 to 2014 on additional CCTV upgrades as requested at various stages (*See exhibit SW2: 'Platinum Lace London CCTV Expenditure'*). Mindy's real name is Billie Whyatt (see exhibit from Tony Nash TN3).

30. Following this incident, some Fleet Street papers published images (presumably taken by Veronika or Dana) to sensationalise the story. (*These appear at exhibit SW3*). The conduct is referred to again at a later date and as if to sensationalise or amplify the story, the article also mentioned a link between John Whittingdale MP and Platinum Lace. John Whittingdale has never been to 'Platinum Lace'. This was naturally a slap in the face for ourselves, WCC and of course, the industry as a whole. I was extremely disappointed that (whatever the motivation), these individuals, could potentially cause so much reputational damage.



31. From my perspective in relation to the incident, given the actions of the customer and individuals, I came to the conclusion that the incident was a set up. Unfortunately, at this time I had no proof of who had engineered these circumstances or their motivation.

#### Renewal – 2016

32. During the renewal process of our SEVL in 2016, we were informed by WCC that they had received correspondence in relation to conduct within our premises. On this occasion, two consultants had conducted 'independent observations' within our premises on 5th and 6th October 2016. I asked my legal team to obtain the correspondence accompanying the witness statements from Joseph Mercer and Mark Halton as I was unsure whether they were making a complaint or representation, I was curious to know who had instructed them and why.

33. From the statements of Messrs. Halton and Mercer it was clear they had various dances from various performers and the dances ranged in price (determined by time). Much of their evidence alleged impropriety within the premises.

34. Fortunately, using CCTV we were able to identify the two individuals and compare actual footage of their visit against allegations made in their witness statements. Whilst we agreed with some of their observations, in the main, their statements were grossly exaggerated, they had reported actions that clearly didn't happen, and omitted interventions from our supervising staff. I did not believe this to be the behaviour or standard of truly independent witnesses. As part of our internal investigation we kept copies of the interventions.

35. On the basis of the CCTV footage, and also the failure to record interventions which had actually occurred, we considered their evidence to be unfair, untrue and exaggerated.

36. We gave the CCTV footage to WCC so that they could form their own opinion as to the credibility and validity of the evidence. In the result, WCC renewed our licence administratively.

37. In consultation with WCC we fitted yet more CCTV at a cost of £18,582.34 (*See exhibit SW4: 'Platinum Lace London CCTV Repairs/Upgrades Since 2015'*) and mutually agreed to have a member of security dedicated to observing the live conduct and performance of the dancers (on the CCTV) during the course of a dance to reduce any likelihood of licence breaches. We had to increase our labour force with an annual cost in excess of £40,000. The 'CCTV observer' is also covered by CCTV meaning we can easily show that we have proactively adopted and support this proposal. Where the observer feels a licence breach may occur, they radio through to the supervising member of Security and ask them to intervene during the course of the relevant performance.

38. We gave consideration to whether we should ourselves take legal action in relation to the falsified evidence against us, but decided not to given that the intended disruption to our business had failed, albeit at considerable cost to us.



## Renewal 2018

39. During our current 2018 renewal, we have been the subject of yet more 'independent observations', this time by Stuart Jenkins and Nick Mason. The complaint was submitted to WCC by 3 individuals purporting to represent feminist views. I believe the report itself was written by Mark Halton.

40. The date of the visit by Messers. Jenkins and Mason was the 12th July 2018. Most regrettably, we didn't receive notification of their complaint until 26th September 2018 – some 11-weeks later and didn't receive their statements until 28.10.18. It appears obvious to me that the complaint was submitted on the last day of the renewal process (by Miss Lisa Oxenham, Miss Maya Von Doll and Miss Charlotte McCracken) probably in an effort to stop the evidence being challenged by way of CCTV and in itself then being undermined, as previously occurred. I am convinced that any genuinely motivated complainant would have acted promptly.

41. In relation to the statements of Stuart Jenkins and Nick Mason, despite their various allegations of poor conduct, when referring to the "Intervention Sheets" (part of our own Management and Procedures Documents) for that evening, we were able to establish that during the course of their dances, interventions from security staff had occurred (***As shown in exhibit SW5: 'Dancer Intervention Sheet – CCTV OPS'***). From their statements, we knew what time they had dances and with whom. The interventions that occurred during their dances were not detailed or even mentioned in their statements. I view this as disgraceful.

42. When I couple this omission to the standards to which my clubs actually run, the care we take to train dancers, monitor activities and pre-emptively enforce the rules, I reject these statements as exaggerated and untrue. We spoke to the Dancers concerned, however (and perhaps understandably) they could not recall the nights in question. They have however been at the club for some time and the allegations are not consistent with their known conduct.

43. Further, I received a covering email attaching the statements (***See exhibit SW6: 'Notice of Objection to Sexual Entertainment Venue (SEV) Licence at Platinum Lace 13 Coventry Street'***). It is very clear that this same document was used previously to make a complaint against 'The Windmill' as it still had their details on the document! When compared to page 5 of the Review document for the Windmill, (***See exhibit SW7: 'City of Westminster Application for Review'***) the narration of the complaint is virtually word for word and appears to list the same 3 complainants. Further evidence (***as shown in exhibit SW8: 'adobe properties'***) indicates Mark Halton as the author. If Mark Halton was the author of the complaint and recruited Messers. Jenkins and Mason, it is clear he is trying to avoid being caught out again (by delaying the complaint beyond the scope of the CCTV retention period).

44. This told me that there was an obvious connection in relation to the complainants. At this stage, I did not know who had made the complaints or why. I was however certain at this stage that the statements from Jenkins and Mason did not paint an accurate picture.



45. Naturally, and correctly, in relation to the conduct of 12th July 2018, WCC carried out an investigation. The investigation was instigated by Mr Francis Keegan on 26th September 2018. This meeting was held between Kenny Favel (DPS and Director of Operations for London) and Mr Keegan with other management in attendance. Following a reshuffle at WCC, Mr Keegan had become our new Licensing Officer.

46. During the investigation meeting Mr Keegan said to Kenny Favel "Well it's the same people that set Windmill up, set you up again." We have of course co-operated with the investigation. I shall be detailing this in a statement concerning the renewal of our licence, which I understand will be dealt with in February 2019.

### **New Evidence**

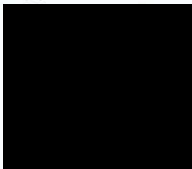
47. I was sufficiently concerned about events that I engaged the services of independent private investigators to find as much information as possible in relation to the background of the complainants during the course of each of our SEVL renewals. Quite simply, I was worried by the seemingly vexatious and repetitive nature of the complaints and the possible repercussions such allegations could have on my business and my family home, as well as eroding the working relationship we have established with WCC over many years.

48. The current state of the investigation is set out in the statement of Tony Nash, which I have seen. Mr Nash will make a deposition and present the evidence he has gathered separately. However, it is right for me to say that I am simply aghast at the methods which have been used to undermine my business and livelihood, which have included deceit and subterfuge.

49. From the evidence, correspondence between Simon Langer, John McKeown and James Millbank (freelance reporter) appears to me to demonstrate that the incident of December 2015 was orchestrated by Messrs. Langer and McKeown (of Sophisticats). They appear to have enlisted the help of an additional freelance reporter and two of their own Dancers (Veronika Dumitru and Dana Ene) to fabricate a story to discredit Platinum Lace. It is clear they specifically used 'Mindy', who in all probability was still working for them.

50. They also targeted another dancer in the club 'Carla', as they were also hoping to gain media traction by exploiting her personal relationship with a Romanian footballer. Within the e-mail from James Millbank to Simon Langer and John McKeown, James Millbank refers to Dana as 'your girl'. They also discuss the sums they paid to get the story in the papers, and talk about manipulating Westminster Council forcing them to take some form of action against Platinum Lace. Reading that chain of correspondence in full, I find it profoundly distressing that these West End operators have set out with such deliberation and venom, using underhand means, to put me out of business.

51. In relation to the licence renewal of 2016, we believe that Sophisticats engaged MJH Associates (Mark Halton) to carry out covert visits to Platinum Lace. The evidence also suggests Mark Halton was the author of the 2018 complaint. This is profoundly distressing.





52. On the profile page of Mark Halton on 'Facebook', Simon Langer is listed as a 'friend' – clearly a relationship to some extent exists (*See exhibit SW9: 'Facebook page of Mark Halton showing Simon Langer as a friend'*).


53. In the following year, from a text message dated 5th September 2017 between Simon Langer and John McKeown, it appears that Simon is forwarding a text message to John from 'Maya'. It seems clear that 'Maya' is uncomfortable putting her name to a complaint. From the timings, in all probability, the complaint in question is being made against The Windmill. 'Maya' was clearly unhappy making the complaint but did so. It is unclear what, if any pressure was bought to bear. In her correspondence with Westminster in relation to the complaints against both The Windmill and Platinum Lace, 'Maya' purports to represent women's rights. This appears to be a smokescreen to enable Messrs. Langer and McKeown to engage in a war against their trade competitors using underhand methods.

54. From a text message dated 29th September 2017, John McKeown replies to Simon Langer telling him that they need to compose a letter 'objecting to the renewal at The Windmill. It seems very clear to me that John McKeown and Simon Langer conspired to gather evidence and used Maya to make the objection. The last text message reads; *'I thought Mark was doing that.'* Evidence now suggests he probably did write the objection.

55. In relation to our current renewal application (2018), we believe that the same person; 'Maya Von Doll' (real name Maya Hawie) was prevailed upon to make the representation to WCC of 26th September 2018 (for conduct relating to 12th July 2018). She is not only a business partner with John McKeown for a music production company, but I also believe she gained a mortgage by fraudulent means whereby John McKeown and Simon Langer (through the business) provided 'Maya' with payslips and paid money into her account (this is from testimony of Diana Langer that is included within the deposition of Tony Nash) despite her not working at 'Sophisticats' (Simon or John would then collect cash from her at a later date). John McKeown, Simon Langer, Dimitri Tikovoi (Maya's partner) and Maya Hawie are also equal shareholders in a Music production company (SYPM MUSIC LIMITED). Dimitri Tikovi and John McKeown are shown as the company directors. Between the parties, they each have 25 shares out of a share capital of 100 shares.

56. My entire management team, staff and dancers alike, are distressed by the current allegations. They simply do not represent the standards which we have set and enforce within the club. The evidence is undermined by the timing of its submission and the failure to record interventions from our security team which actually occurred.

57. When I consider what we have been through over the last three years, we (along with WCC) have been made victims of deliberate, mercenary and callous actions designed to cause damage and loss to my business, whilst abusing the SEVL renewal process along the way.

58. I would point out that the means used to obtain the evidence fall well short of RIPA guidelines and evade the checks and balances necessary for such statements to be classified as 



credible evidence. It is clear that the tactics used to bring about the 'complaints' are aggressive, unscrupulous and corrupt. They abuse the licence renewal process and are calculated to gain pecuniary advantage by destroying business competitors.

59. In every incident where a complaint has been reported to WCC, we have proven the alleged incidents to be fabricated, distorted or exaggerated and we now know who orchestrated the complaints. All complaints have been generated from a single source.

60. As to the motivation, I am only able to conclude that old-fashioned greed and dishonesty are the motivation behind their actions.

61. I want to say something about the impact on me and my staff.

I am extremely distressed that a business competitor would use malicious tactics against me, and in the process seek to blacken the reputation of my club and its workers.

62. On every occasion of malicious interference, my management team and I have been subjected to a test of our integrity and reputation. I am glad that on every occasion our own procedures have proven the various events as fictitious. In terms of man hours, again on every occasion my management team and I have had to work through the day and night (for approximately 10 days straight) to produce evidence contrary to the claims. Four of the six management in Platinum Lace Coventry Street have children, three of them with children under 4. These unwarranted tactics have an impact at every level.

63. We have had to engage solicitors and a QC to evaluate our position and build a defence – this was a costly exercise.

64. The overall impact is that the club is not as busy (over the Christmas period) as it otherwise would be, because the non-renewal causes tension and uncertainty. The 'fake news' as published by the national papers are extremely damaging to our reputation, the industry as a whole and all the staff and dancers who have pride in their work and the club. Customers who enjoy the secure environment and entertainment also stay away due to an associated reputational risk. One of the charities that I have supported for over 15 years requested that 'Platinum Lace' did not have a visible presence at an event this year, which has been heart-breaking for me. In the past we have helped raise vast sums of money for the charity: as said, these unwarranted tactics have an impact at every level.

65. Through working in partnership with WCC, we have continually improved our CCTV and internal procedures at significant cost to the business, and I am pleased to say that we remain on good terms with Westminster officers and we are more determined than ever to weather the current storm.

I therefore ask the Council to consider the evidence and decide whether Messrs. McKeown and Langer are fit and proper to be the licensees of, own or manage sexual entertainment venues in Westminster.



Simon Warr

Dated; 31.12.18