

Highcliffe Sports & Social Club, Highcliffe

This representation is in support of an Application for Review of a Club Premises Certificate submitted on behalf of Dorset Police. This report is intended to provide both the members of the Licensing Sub-Committee and the members of the club (and their representative) with additional information, context, and evidence in support of the representation. This representation is being completed and submitted as soon as practicable for the benefit of all parties. Whilst all details are correct at the time of completion, Dorset Police reserve the right to amend / introduce additional information and evidence in advance of the hearing.

Background

Highcliffe Sports & Social Club operates a Club Premises Certificate for licensable activities as part of a wide variety of activities offered which are aimed at providing sports and social enrichment for those in attendance. These activities should primarily be for the benefit of the members of this club.

Due to the private nature of club premises, it is unusual for concerns to be raised to Dorset Police regarding these premises. Dorset Police will now highlight some of the interactions that have been associated with Highcliffe Sports & Social Club since December 2022, which has now led to Dorset Police bringing this club to the attention of the members of the Licensing Sub-Committee for consideration and determination through this Application for Review.

Concerns

An assault occurred in the lobby area at this premises in the early hours of Sunday 11th December 2022. This serious assault led to the victim being rendered unconscious following an attack by three individuals aged between 18-25. The offenders continued to assault the victim whilst they lay unconscious on the ground. One attacker kicked the victim to the head. CCTV was recovered from the club. The victim could not recall what had occurred leading up to the incident and [REDACTED], [REDACTED] stated to officers that she could not support the investigation as she is known to some of the offenders.

A visit was conducted to this club on the 15th December 2022 by Police Licensing Officers. The World Cup was being shown at the club and during this visit it was determined that there were inadequate controls or attention to whether non-members were being permitted to use the club facilities. When asked how many guests a member could accompany into the club, [REDACTED] stated that he was willing for any members of the public to make use of the premises. Advice was given to repair the faulty entry management system and that they ensure that the condition requiring drinking glasses to remain inside the premises is always upheld.

Dorset Police work closely alongside partners in the Local Authority, including Environmental Health Officers, who received a report of noise nuisance that occurred on Saturday 10th March 2023. A joint visit was then conducted with Environmental and Dorset Police to the premises on the 29th March 2023. During the visit, [REDACTED] explained that there had been a function on the first floor and that they had no control over the noise levels of the externally appointed DJ. It was advised that they must ensure that the licensing objectives are consistently promoted at the premises, including mitigation of any possible public nuisance. This visit led to information being shared regarding the Trading Standards package which educates staff regarding the importance of Challenge 25 and checking for customer ID.

On the 7th May 2023 a large fight occurred at the club during a Christening event. Police attended and discovered that customers had been required to intervene to resolve the disorder. No complaints were forthcoming and no formal Police action followed.

Following that incident, a further visit was conducted by Police Licensing Officers on the 18th May 2023. [REDACTED] advised that CCTV had been recorded. [REDACTED] further advised that had she been aware of the group that had booked the club then she would likely have refused the booking. It appeared that no risk assessment had been completed in advance of the function. Advice was offered regarding the appointment of an SIA Contractor to assist when required for future events. This would also negate the requirement for members to be placed at risk through their intervention in any future disorder.

A further visit was conducted to the club during the Highcliffe Food & Music Festival on the 10th June 2023. Police Licensing Officers queried whether the users of the club were members or guests of members with [REDACTED] who became aggressive and questioned how the club could generate membership in they did not open the club fully to non-members.

On the 4th August 2023 Dorset Police sent a letter to all Club Certificate Holders advising of the requirements that must be met by all Club Premises Certificate Holders. This was a joint initiative by Dorset Police, BCP Council and Dorset Council to ensure compliance and support clubs that may benefit from operating a Premises Licence, which enables them enhanced commercial opportunities, including the opportunity for an unrestricted customer base.

Dorset Police received a report on the 19th August 2023 that [REDACTED] had become aggressive towards staff at this premises. He was reported to have refused to leave the club when requested to do so due to intoxication. He had reportedly sworn at staff and threatened to throw items at them as they had refused to serve him alcohol. [REDACTED] had left the club prior to Police attendance; however, it was confirmed that he was believed to have been intoxicated due him celebrating his birthday. No members of staff wished to make a complaint.

On the 9th September 2023 Dorset Police identified that Highcliffe Sports & Social Club were advertising an event that specifically invited non-members to attend. This information was shared with the Licensing Authority who confirmed that no Temporary Event Notice had been served. The Licensing Authority approached the club to seek further clarity and ask them to address the concerns highlighted.

There was an exchange of emails and detailed advice was offered to [REDACTED], who replied to advise that events of a similar nature had been taking place for several years. Despite the advice offered by the Licensing Authority, it was clear that the requirements of a Club Premises Certificate were not being met when events continued to be advertised via social media and specifically welcomed non-members to attend.

Details of these advertised incidents are enclosed within an appendix document.

Following an investigation by Dorset Police concerning an assault associated with the premises in October 2023, no further information or evidence is being offered by Dorset Police and Dorset Police respectfully ask that the members of the Sub-Committee disregard this incident in their determination.

Available Outcomes to the Sub-Committee

To assist the members of the Sub-Committee in their determination, Dorset Police make the following submissions in relation to the available outcome options in respect of this Application for Review of a Club Premises Certificate.

Take No Action

Dorset Police are concerned that this premise has been brought to our attention on several occasions since December 2022. Whilst it is accepted that there may be a requirement to support and engage with operators to ensure that a club premises is safe and not presenting a risk to the community, it is unusual for any club premises to come to our attention at all.

Dorset Police are concerned that, despite the efforts of Dorset Police and our partners to seek improvements, this club continues to undermine the licensing objectives. Whilst the operators have appeared to cease the advertising of events for non-members, concerns remain that the operators

would not have taken decisive action to comply with the requirement of their certificate in the absence of an Application to Review.

The concerns identified by Dorset Police demonstrates that taking no action is not an appropriate determination following this hearing.

Exclude Licensable Activities from the Premises Licence

The current Club Premises Certificate permits a wide variety of licensable activities to take for the benefit of members and bona fide guests.

Dorset Police do not propose that the removal of any particular licensable activity will result in these concerns being addressed, except perhaps for the provision of alcohol by retail. Dorset Police understand that the removal of this licensable activity would result in significant loss of revenue for the club, however, this would be due to the failure to adhere to the general requirements of a club premises certificate and the conditions attached to this certificate.

Modify / Add Existing Conditions

If the Sub-Committee members were inclined to consider modifying the existing conditions, Dorset Police draw the attention of the members of this Sub-Committee to the document produced by Bill Donne on behalf of Highcliffe Sports & Social Club.

Dorset Police make the following observations in respect of the conditions offered by Mr Donne on behalf of his client –

3.0 Incident Reports

- Incident reports should be completed prior to a member of staff or responsible person completing their duty on that day and not within 24 hours of the incident.

4.0 Staff Training

- Staff must receive accredited training. This is kindly offered free of charge by BCP Council's Trading Standards Department through South West Trading Standards.
- Additionally, a specific condition requiring that the Challenge 25 scheme is promoted at the venue is appropriate to ensure that all staff are protecting children harm. Dorset Police can assist with appropriate signage if required.
- Training records must also be available for authorised persons, including Police Licensing Officers.

6.0 Risk Assessments

- There should be a First Aid qualified person present for any function outside the usual operating schedule.
- Dorset Police invite the Sub-Committee to include a detailed condition requiring that a written risk assessment is conducted as to the necessity for SIA Door Supervision for functions outside the usual operating schedule or for specific events, such as festivals, televised sporting events or similar such events that are likely to attract a large attendance. Dorset Police can assist with the wording of this condition if required.
- All risk assessments must be available for a period of at least 6 months.

Dorset Police welcome the addition of the proposed conditions to this Club Premises Certificate; however, we would also invite the members of the Sub-Committee to consider imposing conditions as follows –

- One dedicated member of staff for each room that is being used for licensable activities.
This additional safeguarding requirement will ensure that there is adequate supervision of all areas being utilised for licensable activities. This is a large site and appropriate management, particularly when children are often present, is necessary for this club.
- Maintenance of a secure and auditable signing method for members and bona fide guests.
The existing system is known to have been faulty for several years and Dorset Police are not aware that the system has been repaired. There must be a secure method of ensuring that there is control over the attendance of the club to ensure that the management are comply with the requirements of a club premises certificate.

- CCTV coverage for all areas that licensed within the outline of the plan.
This will provide additional deterrence and ensure that the CCTV is fit for purpose if an incident requires further investigation.
- Documented log to ensure that there is CCTV recorded for a continuous 31-day period.
This is necessary to ensure that the management can be confident that the CCTV system is operating as required. Any faults can be quickly identified and rectified.

Dorset Police also invite the members of the Sub-Committee to ensure that all glass vessels remain inside the premises for the purpose of maintaining public safety.

Suspend the licence for a period (not exceeding 3 months)

Any temporary suspension of this Club Premises Certificate is unlikely to result in any substantial improvement to the concerns highlighted above.

Dorset Police would only support a short suspension of the Club Premises Certificate if the Sub-Committee members would be reassured that a short suspension, whilst the club members put in place any necessary measures as required in the final determination, would assist the club members and provide the necessary confidence to the members of the Sub-Committee that the changes imposed would be effective.

Revoke the Licence

Dorset Police support the view that this option should be a last resort for the Sub-Committee. Whilst fiscal issues are outside of the considerations of the Sub-Committee, Dorset Police consistently adopt a proportionate approach, wherever possible, to remain sensitive to commercial viability of businesses and clubs and to ensure that we support an outcome which reflects the concerns identified. If this club were to have the permission for the supply of alcohol revoked, they could continue to offer sporting and social activities.

Dorset Police acknowledge the value that clubs such as this add to communities as places of social and economic value, however, where the presence of any licensed premise becomes detrimental to a community or presents a risk to those that enjoy the use of a licensed premise, appropriate action must be taken to seek improvement and address those concerns.

Dorset Police have engaged significantly with this club and its management with limited success.

If the members of this Sub-Committee cannot be satisfied that one of the alternative outcomes will adequately address the concerns that have been detailed above, consideration must be given to the revocation of this certificate.

Introduction of a Premises Licence

Whilst it is not an available outcome for this Sub-Committee, Dorset Police suggest that to provide the club with the opportunity to expand their clientele, it may be appropriate for the club to apply for a Premises Licence, either in place or alongside the existing permissions afforded to them by the club premises certificate.

This solution will require additional administration; however, the Licensing Authority are willing to support them to apply for a Premises Licence if required.

Conclusion

Dorset Police invite the Sub-Committee to follow the Section 182 Guidance, issued by the Secretary of State, which invites the members of the Sub-Committee to consider the above options in their determination. It is our view that to avoid the revocation of the Club Premises Certificate, the members of the Sub-Committee should be satisfied that one of the alternative outcomes will mitigate the concerns that have been highlighted above.

This premises have required a disproportionately high level of support and intervention than other premises of a similar nature and size throughout the BCP Council area. Dorset Police and our partners

recognise our role to engage positively and support certificate holders to achieve compliance and to uphold the licensing objectives.

Dorset Police invite the members of the Sub-Committee to consider this report, alongside the appendices, and support us to ensure that all licensed premises operate to the highest standard in the BCP Council area.

Dorset Police do not intend to repeat our above concerns to the members of the Sub-Committee during the hearing, however, as the Licensing Authority's main source of advice on matters relating to crime and disorder, we will be pleased to answer any further questions that you may have during the hearing.