

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

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Statement of George SIMPSON

Age if under 18 Over 18 (if over insert 'over 18') Occupation Police Constable

This statement (consisting of 4 page(s), each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature GO Simpson

Date 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded  (supply witness details on rear)

I am Police Constable 3356 George SIMPSON, of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, currently stationed at Shepton Mallet Police Station where I work as a Beat Manager.

As a Beat Manager I am responsible along with the licensing officer for carrying out licensing checks on pubs to ensure that they are meeting the conditions of their licence.

On 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019, Nicky KING Licensing Officer, PS 431 CLARK and I carried out a licensing visit at the Bell Hotel, 3 High Street, Shepton Mallet and number of breaches of licence were identified.

On 16<sup>th</sup> October 2019, Nicky KING, Olivia Denis from Mendip District Council Licensing Department and I returned to the Bell Hotel and found that there were still a significant number of breaches of licence. The premises licence holder Michael TAFT had a general belligerent attitude towards the conditions. The premises is also subject to a fire prohibition notice which excludes anyone from staying in the upper floors. As part of our visit we checked the first floor rooms to ensure that the notice was being complied with. In one of the bedrooms there appeared to be dog faeces on the floor and in the room next room there were the remains of dog biscuits. In these rooms were bits of furniture and mattresses on

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the floor. To me this and the general condition of the room was a clear indication that these rooms were being used by people. In the front 'conference room' there was still a large amount of furniture piled up and found on a discarded mattress was a handbag, though it did not appear that people were staying/using the room on a regular basis. While there a check of the CCTV system was also made, the CCTV monitor and hard drive is located in an office on the first floor. The time on the camera appeared to be 10 minutes out. While talking about the CCTV system Michael TAFT produced a stack of discs and explained that they were of incidents that had happened in the pub which he has retained as a way of preventing the offender(s) from returning to the pub.

Once we had finished upstairs Nicky KING and I started to work our way through the conditions of the licence with Michael TAFT. The first area of concern was the conditions linked to 'The prevention of crime and disorder'. According to the licence "on evenings when the premises carry out entertainment after midnight there will one member of door staff on duty at the main entrance to the premises". When asked about having door staff, Michael TAFT stated that he never has door staff on and has no intention of introducing them as he is able to manage any problem customers more effectively himself and that the introduction of door staff would be too costly.

Michael TAFT was then asked about the challenge 25 policy, there were no signs clearly displayed at the bar, there was a sign to the right hand side of the bar which was about being refused sale if under age, but this sign was partially obscured by other signs.

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The next area discussed with Michael TAFT was glass bottles being decanted into toughened glass or plastic glasses, which Michael TAFT explained that they don't have any problems with people using the bottles as weapons so they don't currently do this.

We then discussed drugs policy. As part of the licence "notices advising that no drugs will be allowed on the premises shall be prominently displayed" the only notice we could locate on in the entrance to the gents toilets, there were no signs in the entrance or anywhere else in or around the bar. We then talked with Michael TAFT about what to do if he found drugs in the pub, to which he replied that he would dispose of them himself by flushing them or throwing them in the bin. He was then asked about what he would do if he caught someone using drugs or attempting to deal drugs. Michael TAFT explained that he would simply chuck the person out and ban them from the pub and would not contact the police. When asked why he stated that he would not contact the police as the windows to the pub would be smashed due to reprisals.

Michael TAFT was then asked to produce his incident book and refusals register book, the incident book was handed over for examination but there was no refusals register to produce. Advice was given about what should go into the incident book and if there were no incidents then even that should be recorded in the book.

The conversation then moved onto what training records were held for staff members. Michael TAFT was unable to produce any training records for staff members and refused to even name all of his staff members. When talking about staff members and the high drug

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reading from the bar area Michael TAFT even mentioned he thought he knew who was responsible for the high drug readings behind the bar, but refused to name this staff member.

When looking around the bar and DJ booth, there was indication that people were smoking around these area, there were discarded cigarette butts behind the DJ booth and what appeared to be cigarette ash behind the bar.

Michael TAFT was asked about how he monitored noise from music and entertainment events and that it didn't affect noise sensitive premises such as residential premises. Michael TAFT was unable to demonstrate or explain what system he had in place other than possible popping outside while having a cigarette.

Finally Michael TAFT was asked about the policy for dealing with children and vulnerable people, once again Michael TAFT was unable to demonstrate that there was any such documentation or the staff had received any training in this area.

It is of my opinion that Michael TAFT is not in control of the running of The Bell Hotel and that he has shown a complete disregard for the conditions of his licence and has made little or no attempt to correct any of the issues we identified when we first visited in June.

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