

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

Crime No. []

URN []

Statement of Ben READER

Age if under 18 Over 18 (if over 18 insert "over 18")

Occupation Police Constable 2413

This statement (consisting of 2 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: (witness) [Handwritten Signature]

Date 14th March 2023

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)

I am PC 2413 Reader of the West Midlands Police.

I am a specialist licensing officer, based at Lloyd House, Police Headquarters.

This statement is in relation to a summary review for the premises licence that trades as 'Valeshas Nighclub' (Valeshas) in Walsall. Tragically, a young man, Akeem FRANCIS-KERR was murdered inside the venue in the early hours of Saturday 11 March 2023.

The licence reference is WS/PRL/0242 and the address of the premises is 17 Newport Street, Walsall, WS1 1RZ.

Walsall Council has confirmed that the Premises Licence Holder transferred the Premises Licence from his own name into the name of a 'partnership' called 'Capital Leisure' in July 2022. The Premises Licence holder prior to the transfer was Mr Sukhbir Singh Samra.

I am also aware from an email sent to Walsall Licensing from Mr SAMRA on 30th November 2022 that Mr SAMRA had drawn up a lease agreement with a company called Vision Leisure Limited (Company number 14412371) which was incorporated on 11 October 2022.

The directors of Vision Leisure Limited being Valesha Andrea ANDERSEN and Martin BELL who both run Valesha's night club on the ground floor and a lap dancing venue situated in the upstairs first floor of 17 Newport Street known as Savannah's Gentlemen's Club (which holds an additional Sex Entertainment Venue). Access to both clubs are available to customers internally via a staircase.

Vision Leisure Limited (Company number 14412371 and incorporated on 11 October 2022 - it has has two directors: Valesha Andrea ANDERSEN and Martin BELL) has a tenancy agreement with the Premises Licence Holder - Capital Leisure.

Signature

Signature witnessed by

Crime No.

URN

Statement of Ben READER

Capital Leisure is owned as a partnership with Mr Suky SAMRA being the owner however, I have not seen any documentary evidence to confirm that this partnership exists, its purpose or its members. Mr SAMRA is a councillor for Walsall Borough covering the Streetly ward, he is also a member of the Licensing Committee.

With the fast pace of the murder investigation and the enquiries that are taking place, I have only been able to review limited parts of CCTV and evidence relating to this case. Some of these matters cannot yet be disclosed for highly sensitive operational reasons.

I have been able to view some footage from the premises which I describe below.

From the footage I have observed, what stands out to me is that some of the suspects are granted entry to the premises shortly after 04:00. They do not queue like other customers, they are not searched (in breach of a licence condition), they simply walk in and shake hands with door security members in a familiar manner, as if the door security members recognise them.

At approximately 05:00, Akeem FRANCIS-KERR approaches the venue with a friend. The front door is closed. They knock on the door and make a phone call. At the same time, a member of security unlocks the door from the inside to allow a customer out. At this point, Mr FRANCIS-KERR and his friend gain entry to the venue.

Several minutes later the disorder takes place.

Mr FRANCIS-KERR is escorted out of the bar area by security staff with what turned out to be a fatal injury. He is escorted whilst standing up, and walking backwards, as if he is being ejected. When he gets to the cloak room, staff must realise that he is seriously injured and administer first aid. The offending group are not ejected by security at this time.

Signature

Signature witnessed by

03/2016

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

Crime No. URN

Statement of Jennifer Mellor

Age if under 18 N/A (if over 18 insert "over 18")

Occupation Walsall Licensing & Regulatory Service
Officer, West Midlands Police

This statement (consisting of 2 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:  (witness)

Date 15 March 2023

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)

I am Jennifer Mellor 60384 currently based at Walsall Police Station as the Walsall Licensing and Regulatory Services Officer. This statement has been written to assist with the Summary Review of the Premise Licence WS/PRL/0242 Valesha's Nightclub formally known as the Coliseum.

As part of my licensing duties I visited the Coliseum to introduce myself to the new tenants on Tuesday 6th December 2022. I attended with Sarah Heath-Marshall, Community Protection Officer at Walsall Council. Present was Valesha ANDERSEN, Martin BELL directors of Vision Leisure Limited and Dion Lewis the Designated Premise Supervisor at the time. From the conversation this was a new venture for BELL and ANDERSEN as neither had or have venues elsewhere.

I was informed the ground floor would be renamed to Valesha's Nightclub which has a capacity of 350 persons. There would be a strict dress code, no trainers, man bags, caps hoodies etc. All glassware would be polycarbs and bottles decanted. Although they have a licence until 8am of the morning, they agreed to a last entry policy of 04:30 hours, the front door would be closed from this point. They would aim to be closed as a venue on this floor around 6am unless they had customers spending money in the club and would remain open until 8am. Come next Feb/March they would be looking to run student nights on a Tuesday night.

The first floor which has the benefit of a Sexual Entertainment Licence would be renamed Savannah's Gentleman Club, this has a capacity of 150. This floor would also have a last entry policy of 04:30 hours. They were hopeful of attracting customers from outside of Walsall. They would look to close this floor off at 6am unless they had customers spending with the girls. Glassware would be used in this area. There will be a "no touch" policy with the girls and this area is covered by CCTV.

They confirmed all their cameras had been upgraded for clearer images. The SIA door team would be from UK bodyguards who would be provided with bodycams, they would also be suited and smart.

Signature



Signature witnessed by

03/2016

OFFICIAL – (when complete)

Crime No.

URN

Statement of Jennifer Mellor

I fully explained the lack of police after 5am of a weekend and that they seriously needed to consider the safety of their staff and customers should they trade after these times. They further advised they are looking for upmarket customers and from what they had seen in Walsall during the NTE, most customers would not be allowed in their venue.

On 10th January 2023 I attended again with Sarah Heath-Marshall. Present was ANDERSEN director of Vision Leisure Limited and now the Designated Premise Supervisor, and Daniel MORRIS their manager at the time. During the meeting they asked for the removal of the 04:30 last entry policy. I strongly felt it was too soon to be making changes in policy when they had only been open for a matter of weeks. Furthermore they had not be running to their maximum capacity to ensure they had robust policies in place. After being repeatedly asked by MORRIS to the point of annoyance I, out of fairness agreed to speak with the Area Neighbourhood sergeants for their decision.

I received a telephone call from MORRIS confirming the continuation of the 04:30 last entry policy for a further 3 months until the end of March 2023 after they had time to reflect on the conversation. This was also confirmed in a later conversation with ANDERSEN.

Signature



Signature witnessed by

03/2016

OFFICIAL – (when complete)

Witness contact details

URN : / / /

Name of witness: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr

Former name

***Email address:**

***Email address needed for correspondence i.e. support material to be sent**

Address Postcode:

Preferred telephone number: Alternate telephone number:

Agreed means of contact and frequency :

Gender Date and place of birth Ethnicity Code (16+1)

DATES OF WITNESS NON-AVAILABILITY: (12 months)

Witness care

Does the witness require a Special Measures Assessment as a vulnerable or intimidated witness? (*youth under 18; witness with mental disorder, learning or physical disability; or witness in fear of giving evidence or witness is the complainant in a sexual offence case. ALSO crimes involving gun and knife crimes and victims of Modern Slavery Act 2015*)

Yes No If 'Yes', submit **MG2** with file in NGAP, contested or indictable only cases OR to read VPS in GAP cases.

Witness Consent (for witness completion)

- a) I am aware that I may have to attend court. Yes
 - b) I have been given the Victims' leaflet **with the crime number on**. Yes No
 - c) The Victim Personal Statement scheme (victims only) has been offered to me. Yes No
 - d) It has been explained to me what will happen next with this investigation Yes No
 - e) I consent to police having access to my medical record(s) in relation to this matter (*obtained in accordance with local practice*) Yes No N/A
 - f) I consent to the statement being disclosed for the purposes of civil proceedings if applicable, e.g. child care proceedings, CICA, CLPD. Yes No N/A
 - g) **Child witness cases only.** I have had the provision regarding reporting restrictions explained to me. Yes No N/A
- I would like the CPS to apply for reporting restrictions on my behalf. Yes No N/A

- *I understand that the information recorded above will be passed on to the Witness Service, which offers help and support to witnesses pre-trial and at court.*
- *I understand that my details may be passed to other agencies who can offer me help and support in relation to being a victim of this crime.*

I give my informed and explicit consent for my personal details to be passed to other agencies that can support me or are involved in the criminal justice process. Yes No

Signature..... Date

Parent/guardian signature..... Date

Address

Contact tel no

Supporter signature..... Date

Statement taken by (*print name*): Station:

Time and place statement taken:

Signature Signature witnessed by

Timeline relating to Valesha's

20th January 2023

Log: From CCTV
Crime Number: None
Time of incident: 04:35

MO: THE COUNCIL CAMERA HAS PICKED UP AT 04:35 HOURS IN THE EARLY HOURS OF FRIDAY MORNING A YOUNG GIRL BEING CARRIED OUT OF THE VENUE WITH A FRIEND. THE MALE CARRYING HER, WHO AS AN OFF-DUTY DOOR MEMBER OF ANOTHER VENUE FALLS OVER WITH THE FEMALE AS HE STRUGGLED TO GET HER OUT OF THE VENUE. BOTH GIRLS ARE THEN LEFT ON THE STEPS AND THE SHUTTERS OF THE VENUE CAN BE SEEN COMING DOWN.

I HAVE SPOKEN TO THE VENUE ABOUT THEIR DUTY OF CARE WHERE I WAS INFORMED THE FEMALE STRUGGLING HAD HURT HER HIP BUT THEY DID ADMIT WAS DRUNK. THEY WILL ADDRESS THIS MOVING FORWARD AND ENSURE THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN AGAIN. I HAVE RECORDED THIS INCIDENT AGAINST THEIR VENUE.

ADDITIONAL: SAVED ON AXON: INTOXICATED FEMALE LEFT ON THE STEPS OF VALESHA'S NIGHT CLUB XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

28th January 2023

Log: None
Crime Number: None
Time of incident: 04:15

MO: THIS HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED TO THE POLICE DIRECTLY. XXX XXX THE MANAGER STATED THAT AT APPROX 04:15 XXXXX XXXXX WAS CAUSING ISSUES AT HIS DOOR, "XXXXX ATTACKING OUR DOOR AGAIN LAST NIGHT" XXXXX "LOBBED" A CAN AT VALESHA WHICH HIT HER HEAD. NO INJURIES AND VALESHA IS NOT WILLING TO MAKE A COMPLAINT.
XX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Additional: XXXXXX XXXXX is on the Pub Watch banning list

4th February 2023

Log: XXXX-04/02/23
Crime Number: 20/XXXXXX/23
Time of incident: 07:21

MO: CALLER HAS CALLED TO SAY THAT HER BROTHER HAS BEEN ASSAULTED AFTER HE HAS LOST HIS PHONE IN ANOTHER NIGHT CLUB. HE HAS ATTENDED VALESHA'S TO PICK UP HIS PHONE AS IT HAD BEEN MAPPING THERE. HOWEVER WHEN ATTENDED, STAFF MEMBERS HAVE DEMANDED £50 FROM HIM, WHICH HE HAS REFUSED AND THEN THEY HAVE GRABBED HIM BY THE NECK , BROUGHT HIM TO THE FLOOR AND KICKED HIM TO THE FACE , THIS HAS CAUSED PAIN AND DISCOMFORT

ADDITIONAL:

XXXXX XXXXX: EXTERNAL CCTV HAS BEEN VIEWED, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A SCUFFLE BETWEEN THE IP AND THE MANAGER XXXXX XXXXX, THE IP WAS NOT TAKEN TO THE FLOOR. FOOTAGE SAVED ON AXON COLLAR NUMBER XXXXX XXXXX XXXXX

12th February 2023

Log: From CCTV
Crime Number: None
Time of incident: From 04:44

LAST ENTRY POLICY IS 04:30AM

ON 12TH FEB 2023, THE FOLLOWING CUSTOMERS WERE LET IN

04:52 MALE

04:56 FEMALE

05:04 FEMALE

05:05 MALE

05:13, 05:18, 05:20, 05:22

04:44 AND 05:04 SIA STAFF SMOKING AT THE DOOR

ON SPEAKING WITH XXX XXX ONE OF THE MALES COMING IN WAS XXXX, A MEMBER OF DOOR STAFF WHO WORKED THE LAST HOUR, HE ADVISED HE WOULD SPEAK WITH DOOR STAFF

FURTHER PHONE CALL WITH ANDERSEN, XXXX HAD NOT FED THIS INFORMATION BACK TO HER.

18th February 2023

Log: From CCTV
Crime Number: None
Time of the incident 04:31

MO:

04:31 DISORDER ON THE DOOR EVIDENCED. MALE IN BLUE PUFFER JACKET CAUSING ISSUES. THIS MALE WAS NOT ALLOWED IN.
04:32 FEMALE SEEN IN A PINK OUTFIT SEEN COMING IN AND OUT OF THE VENUE, LOOKED VERY YOUNG AND APPEARED TO BE GUIDED BY AN OLDER FEMALE.
04:45 FRONT DOORS STILL OPEN

THE LADY IN PINK WAS ALSO SEEN RE-ENTERING XXXXXXXXXXXX AT 03:21. WE BELIEVE THIS FEMALE WORKS AT XXXXXX AS SHE TOLD OFFICERS SHE WAS 20 FOR HAD NO ID ON HER WHEN AT XXXXXXXXXXXX

19th February 2023

Log: XXX-190223
Crime Number: 20/XXXXX/23 PLUS 3 OTHERS
Time of the incident 07:00

DOMESTIC RELATED ASSAULT BETWEEN EX PARTNERS AND A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC TRYING TO INTERVENE. RESULTED IN 4 CRIMES

IP LEFT THE CLUB AND HAS BEEN DRAGGED TO THE FLOOR BY THE OFFENDER. IP HAS MANAGED TO GET INTO A TAXI, THE OFFENDER HAS TOLD HER TO GET OUT SO THEY CAN FIGHT TO WHICH THE IP SAID NO, HE HAS THEN DRAGGED HER OUT RIPPING HER CLOTHES. THE OFFENDER HAS PUNCHED THE IP TO THE HEAD TWICE CAUSING A LARGE LUMP TO HER EYEBROW. IP ALSO HAS HAND MARKS AND SCRATCHES ON HER NECK CAUSED BY THE OFFENDER.

1 X COMMON ASSAULT, 1 X S20 1 X OTHER CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO A VEHICLE (UNDER £5,000). OFFENDER WAS SPITTING IN THE POLICE VAN. 1 X HAVING POSSESSION OF A CONTROLLED DRUG - CLASS B – CANNABIS

4th March 2023

Log: XXX-040323
Crime Number: 20/XXXXX/23 AND 20/XXXXX/23
Time of incident: 06:35:00 to 07:59:00

OFFENDER UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS AND DRINK HAS ATTENDED STA PAUL'S BUS STATION WHERE HE HAS BEEN SEEN TO URINATE ON STAND F AND TURN AROUND WITH HIS GENITALIA EXPOSED. HE HAS THEN BEEN SEEN AND HEARD TO APPROACH 2 UNKNOWN ASIAN FEMALES AND CALL THEM "PAKIS". POLICE ATTENDED AND ARRESTED THE OFFENDER. Earlier observed by CCTV in an altercation around VALESHAS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: THIS NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED FURTHER

5th March 2023

Log: From CCTV
Crime Number None at present
Time of Incident 05:02

IC3 MALE DRUNK AND DISORDERLY, KICKING AT DOOR, THROWING TRAFFIC CONES & REMONSTRATING WITH DOORMAN.

05:47 - AMBULANCE ATTEND & USE SPINAL BOARD.

05:51 AMBULANCE TAKE MALE AWAY.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: THIS NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED FURTHER, WE HAVE REQUESTED THE COUNCIL'S CCTV FOOTAGE.

11th March 2023

Log: XXX
Crime: 20/XXXXXX/23
Time of incident: 05:00

TRIGGER INCIDENT REFERRED TO IN THE SUMMARY REVIEW

THESE
PREMISES ARE
OPERATED BY
CAPITAL LEISURE
PLC



WARNING
NON-FLAME CABLES
IN OPERATION
WITH 0V TRAP RELAYING