

LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2022

Present:

Councillor Stephen Wells (Chairman)
Councillors Kira Gabbert and Michael Turner

5 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Councillor Stephen Wells was appointed as Chairman.

6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7 Application for a New Premises Licence for Soul Town Festival, Croydon Road Recreation Ground, BR3 3PR.

THE APPLICATION

The Chairman invited the licensing officer to clarify some administrative questions. In response to the identity of the applicant was, Ms Bateman confirmed that Soultown Festival, as referred to in section 4 of the application, was simply the name of the event and that the applicant was 'Stevens Limited' as per section 1.

In relation to section 10 and the start time of 10:00am for the provision of live music, Ms Bateman said this was for sound checks. She confirmed that the event would not be open to the public until 12:00, so the LBB Licensing Officer advised that sound checks were not licensable as there would be no public there. The provision of live music under the license would therefore not start until 12:00 on both days.

THE APPLICANT'S CASE

The Applicant said that they wanted to address some issues that had arisen in 2021. In relation to noise, the level had been within the license conditions, however it had been more noticeable because of the direction of the tents. This would be changed this year. The event had overrun by 15 minutes. Because the headline act started late, the Head of Security had decided that it was safer to allow the overrun.

The issue with the wristbands was that they could be squeezed on and off, which created some overcrowding in the VIP area. They had changed supplier and they also had a new security firm. In relation to the mother and child, they had spoken to the SAG afterwards, which was satisfied with how it

had been dealt with. With the bars, there had been a short-notice staff shortage due to COVID. It was not accepted that people bought in bulk as there was a 2 drink maximum. The Applicant acknowledged having a single refusal register had been a mistake and this time they would have a register at each bar, which would then be collated into a single one at the end.

Regarding the allegations of violence and drugs, this was denied and the Applicant said they were proud there had not been a single serious violent incident. This year there would be a street patrol team, who would be a visible guide to aid any members of the public who were off-site to routes home. Additionally there would be a litter team. There had been a meeting with residents on 7 February. One thousand letters had been sent and 9 people had attended

The site had been extended but the capacity was unchanged. This allowed the tent to be further back, which should be better at reducing noise. When the problem with the VIP wrist bands was discovered, a sweep was done and people were removed in order to make the area safe. This year's event would be the safest and the best experience for customers.

QUESTIONS TO THE APPLICANT

The Chairman invited questions and Cllr Gabbert asked about the collapse of the temporary structure in 2021. The Applicant replied that the structure was a scaffold tower that marked an exit. A pole had come loose, which made the structure unsafe, so it was taken down. The structure had been signed off as safe earlier that day, so he guessed that a vehicle may have clipped it afterwards. This year while there would be vehicles on the site, the structures would be protected by heras fencing. Once there were no more vehicles, the fencing would be replaced by crowd barriers.

Cllr Turner asked about drugs. The Applicant said there would be amnesty bins ahead of the festival with security present. The search time would be increased from 8 to 12-15 seconds. It was denied there was a problem with drugs. In reply to his question about staff shortages, the Applicant said this year they would be using 2 companies and had a contingency plan for absences.

The Chairman asked about emergency exits. The Applicant explained that at the end of the event, all emergency exits would open up as dispersal points. Dispersals would be staggered by using a DJ rather than the headline act at the end. If they had to cut a performance short, it would be the DJ and not the headline act.

The Chairman queried having toilets off-site in order to avoid anti-social behaviour in front gardens. The Applicant said they would speak to Network Rail about the possibility of having some at Beckenham Junction station.

The Chairman permitted Cllr Harris to speak. She asked about water for visitors and the Applicant said there would be water stations. The Applicant also said the last alcohol sales would be at 21:30, which was 30 minutes

before closing on the Saturday. The Applicant explained the security processes that would be in place and concluded by saying they would encourage staggered entry times, for example by having bigger acts on earlier.

The Chairman invited the Licensing Officer to ask any questions. He queried the access arrangements. The Applicant explained that ticket holders would be discouraged from driving. There would continue to be a shuttle bus to and from the local train stations. The police had suggested a park and ride service, which the Applicant would look into. There was no specific breakdown available, but access by private car was estimated to be quite low as the event was marketed at local people. In relation to emergency access, this would be by the main entrance based on police advice.

In relation to the Applicant's comment about a dedicated phone number for residents to contact, the Chairman said it should be for any problems, not just noise. The Applicant agreed.

Members then retired to deliberate.

DECISION

The Licensing Sub-Committee carefully considered the application for a new premises licence for Soul Town Festival, Croydon Road Recreation Ground, BR3 3PR, as amended at the hearing. In doing so, they had regard to:

- The four licensing objectives
- The Council's current Statement of Licensing Policy
- The Secretary of State's Revised Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003
- All written and oral representations by the Applicant
- All written representations by local residents
- All written representations by responsible authorities
- All oral representations by the Ward Councillor

Members noted the absence of any objection from any responsible authority. In relation to the police, they did not object provided that their conditions were followed--the Applicant agreed to abide by the conditions suggested by the police. Members were therefore reassured in relation to the prevention of crime and disorder.

Staggering entry and encouraging early entry by bringing forward activities would help overcrowding when queuing. The arrangements at the end of the day would protect patrons from harm at that point as well. Although the hearing bundle referred to a "temporary structure collapse" at the event in 2021, the Applicant's explanation of what had actually happened and the steps they would take to prevent a recurrence meant Members satisfied as to public safety.

The agreed condition for there to be a Challenge 25 scheme together with the lost child policy, the Applicant's description of their processes and policies for the sale of alcohol and the nature of the events and the audience that would be attracted caused members to conclude children would be protected from harm.

In relation to public nuisance, members took the concerns raised by local residents seriously, as well as the comments of the Ward Councillor and the history of certain problems at the event in previous years. Members were particularly reassured by the extent of free water to be provided and the marshalling of people leaving the event.

The Applicant also agreed that the contact number for residents would not be limited to noise complaints but for any problems with the event people might have, including anti-social behaviour, and that the number would be widely publicised. The Applicant was already planning on having a 30 minute drinking up time and Members considered this was essential in order to "wind down" patrons and reduce noise, disturbance and anti-social behaviour outside the premises.

On balance members were satisfied that any public nuisance would not be disproportionate or unreasonable. Accordingly, the objective of preventing public nuisance would be met.

The Licensing Sub-Committee therefore decided to Grant a new premises licence for Soul Town Festival, Croydon Road Recreation Ground, BR3 3PR in accordance with the application as amended in particular with there being no retail sale of alcohol after 21:30 on Saturday or after 20:30 on Sunday and subject to the agreed conditions as set out on pages 35-38 of the hearing bundle. Those conditions are necessary in order to uphold the licensing objectives.

Chairman