

Licensing Board issues warning to St Vincent Bar

The St Vincent Bar, was issued with a written warning after today's licensing board meeting.

The board spent almost two hours today considering an application by Police Scotland to review the licence under which St Vincent Bar Scotland Limited sells alcohol there.

One of the company directors, Christopher Grierson, is also a personal licence holder and he was present at the virtual meeting to answer questions from the board along with his solicitor Alistair MacDonald.

Convener Cllr Norman Work said at the end of the meeting to Mr Grierson: "You may think you have got off lightly here, but we do take these seriously. If you do come back again then I hope you realise that we are giving you the opportunity to show that you can work on this. I hope that you take what you have heard from the board as a serious matter. Thank you for coming along and appearing today."

There have been 17 complaints from 13 separate sources since June this year all concerned with the behaviour of people outside the bar, who included customers. It was acknowledged

during the discussion that some of those who were either congregating outside or on the steps of St Stephen's Church, and apparently flouting Covid-19 restrictions may not have all been customers. Some of the people sitting on the steps were carrying bags from supermarkets and at least one person seen by the police brought their own chair. This led the board to agree that not everyone was definitely a customer. Cllr Howie asked if the complaints aligned with the opening hours of the bar and the police confirmed that they did. His was a lone voice appearing to take a sterner approach to this review.

The area first became a problem during the summer, and as recently as last weekend a complaint was made. Those in the queue outside the bar were said to be blocking stairways outside private homes.

Mr McDonald on behalf of his client pointed out that nothing in this review today related to anything illegal. He said that his clients have complied with any guidance given by the police. He said that there have not been any significant recent issues, and he stated that since a meeting of the bar owners with the Licensing Standard Officers and police in mid-November there is an extra member of staff employed outside the pub whose job it is to move people on. He also said the bar is willing to look at alternative drinks containers if necessary.

Chris Grierson offered to reroute the queue north of the bar down towards St Stephen Street which he thought might help get round this issue. There are chalk marks and notices all round the bar and in the street, telling those who are buying drinks to move on. Mr Grierson said that they now have a member of staff outside at all times during opening hours and generally most people asked do move on. He also said that they do not serve people again if they have not moved on when previously asked.



St Vincent Bar St Vincent Street

Licensing Standards Officers say they have spent a significant amount of time at these premises since 24 June.

They visited the bar along with police and at one time there were around 60 people outside it. On another occasion they found three members of staff working inside the bar, and a small crowd on the steps of St Stephen's Church. No member of staff appeared to be patrolling the outside of the bar, despite what the licence holder said at the time – which was that the staff were conducting 20 minute checks.

It became apparent during the meeting that local ward councillor Cllr Joanna Mowat wanted to ensure that the bar retained its licence, and also wanted members of the board to act 'creatively'. She asked whether there was some way of amending the city's by-laws to help the licence holder, Chris Grierson, perhaps by ruling the steps out of bounds in some way. The steps of the church are presumably owned by former ballet legend, Peter Schaufuss who now owns St Stephen's. There are police notices on the gates of the church and on nearby railings warning people not to gather there.

The board decided to impose a written warning on the licence holder, that they would not review Mr Grierson's personal licence, to ensure that the police and the licensing standards officers have correct contact details for the directors of the company and the Deputy Premises Manager in case of any further complaints, and to refer the matter of any potential change in the bye-laws to the council.

The licensing board consider any reviews of licences on the basis of what are known as the licensing objectives which include matters such as preventing crime and disorder, securing public safety and preventing public nuisance.



St Vincent Bar St Vincent Street



St Vincent Bar St Vincent Street



St Vincent Bar St Vincent Street