



TRAFFORD
COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

*(Criminal Procedure Rules, r. 16.2;
Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9)*

STATEMENT OF James Boles

Age of witness "over 18"

This statement (3 pages) 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.

I am a licensing enforcement officer for Trafford Council based at Trafford Town Hall, Talbot Road. Stretford.

My role involves the enforcement of licensing legislation and Licensing conditions for licensed premises and the private hire and hackney carriage trade.

On 1st of December 2023 at approximately 1900 hrs I attended at Victoria Warehouse, Trafford Park with two colleagues from Trafford Trading Standard's, Melissa Shine and Alison Courtney.

Victoria Warehouse is a music and event space run by the Academy Music Group Limited. On the above date a music event was being held and approximately 3000 concert goers were expected to attend the event.

The majority of the concert goers were expected to be in their late teens to early twenties.

On arriving at the premises, I noticed that a number of street traders were selling merchandise relating to the artist who was performing that night at the venue. The traders had placed plastic sheeting on the ground and had the merchandise stacked on the sheeting.

I spoke to the traders and asked them if they could show me their street trading licences as they were not acting as peddlers and had in effect set up stalls on the street. One of the traders showed me a Peddlers Licence but I was unable to read it as it was so faded. I then informed the male that as a peddler he should be carrying his wares rather than setting up a stall with his goods laid out on the floor. The male then said that he would pack his goods up and move on, which he did. I then approached the other traders and asked if they had a licence to sell goods. Several refused to engage with me or stated that their licence was in a parked car or with a friend who was working further along the

road. After speaking to the traders for several minutes they all packed up their goods and left the area.

I then spoke to a member of the Vitoria Warehouse security staff and identified myself and my colleagues and stated that I would like to speak the designated premises supervisor Mr Russell Toal as we would like to gain entry to the premises.

A short time later we were joined by the head of security and by Mr Toal and they both escorted us into the premises.

We looked initially at the queuing process and security checks that were taking place. The concert goers were queuing in a car park adjacent to the building and where the customers were now filtered through a maze of barriers before they arrived at the security check points. On the night the process worked very well as the security staff controlled the number of customers approaching the entry point and they also had the facility to add further barriers to increase the number of people queuing if required.

During the time I observed the entry process the security staff checked all bags and used a metal detecting wand on customers as they passed into the building, the security staff engaged with customers and the atmosphere was very convivial. I did ask Mr Toal if a drug dog was in use at the venue and he stated that, a dog was used on “club nights” but was not used on all events and due to the profile of the expected audience a drug dog was not in use on that night.

After entering the building, I asked Mr Toal to show me the bars as I wanted to observe how they were being run and how customers were being dealt with.

We started with the main bar where I spoke to the bar manager who outlined the staff training process and how staff dealt with customers in relation to “challenge 25”

I then spoke to one of the staff members and asked her about the training process and how she would deal with customers.

The member of staff reflected what the manager had told me in regard to the online training process and how customers were dealt with in relation to the sale of alcohol.

I remained at the main bar for approximately 20 minutes, and I noticed that all staff challenged customers when they ordered alcohol and that all the customers I saw being served had to produce their identification and proof of age before they were served. I also noticed that all customers were served alcohol in plastic containers and that all cans and bottles were decanted into plastic containers before being served.

I then moved to the other bars in the venue, and I noticed that the same processes were undertaken in relation to the sale of alcohol.



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After checking the bars we attended at the main office where we were allowed to check the training records of staff which were all digitally recorded on their computer system. I then asked to view the CCTV system on the premises and Mr Toal led me to the CCTV room where I was able to ask the CCTV operators questions concerning the CCTV conditions within the premises licence. The CCTV appeared to be in good working order and the cameras covered all areas of the venue.

At 20.50 hrs we left the venue, and I noticed that the traders had all left the area and the road outside the venue was very quiet.

At approximately 22.00hrs I returned to the venue with Melissa Shine and the first thing I noticed was that the road outside the premises had been closed off with road signs so that a traffic free area could be maintained when the concert goers left the venue.

As I approached the entry point of the venue, I noticed that the street traders had returned and that there were several other traders with them, I would estimate that there were approximately ten traders with concert merchandise on plastic sheeting laid on the ground. Ms Shine and I spoke to the traders, we asked them to produce their licences but the traders refused to show any licenses and tried to avoid any conversations with us as they attempted to sell their goods. My feelings on this occasion were that the atmosphere had changed and the traders were more aggressive towards Ms Shine and I. As I was stood in front of the traders I noticed two males stood behind them. They were dressed in casual sportswear and did not appear to be concert goers. I tried to engage them in conversation asking them if they were with the street traders, the two males refused to speak to me, I assume that they were there to protect the street traders or that that they were there to monitor the selling the merchandise by the traders.

Ms Shine and I then moved down the road towards the junction of Trafford Park Road and Trafford Road where the second road closure had been put in place.

Trafford Park Road was very busy with concert goers leaving the venue and there were a large number of private hire vehicles and hackney carriages waiting to pick up customers, I would estimate twenty to 30 vehicles in the controlled area. I approached several of the vehicles and asked them if they had a booked fare. Any private hire vehicles who did not have a booking or any hackney carriages that was not licensed by Trafford, but were looking for a fare, I spoke to, and requested that they leave the area as they would be committing an offence of plying for hire. A few of the vehicles complied with my request but as I was moving down the road, I noticed several of the vehicles had accepted fares and were now driving off.

Unfortunately, most of the vehicles who were pointed in the direction of Trafford Park decided that they would do a 3 point turn in the road and drive towards Salford and Manchester.

Due to these manoeuvres several pedestrians narrowly avoided colliding with the



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vehicles and many of the drivers then attempted to drive through the traffic management barriers at the Trafford Road junction.

On arriving at the Trafford Road junction, I noticed that the road was heavily congested with vehicles the majority of which were private hire vehicles and hackney carriages. The vehicles were backed up from the junction of Trafford Park Road and Trafford Road and along the dual carriage way of the A5081 towards Manchester United ground. Many of the private hire and hackney vehicles had simply stopped in the road and were waiting to pick up fares ignoring the traffic lights as they changed and the road markings which are all double yellow lines at this location.

Ms Shine and I then spent the next 30 minutes telling the drivers to move on and that they were committing offences by stopping in that location. Many of the drivers moved on a few yards and again parked up waiting for fares and continuing to block the traffic lanes. Some of the drivers informed me that they had pre booked fares but only one out of over 20 drivers I challenged could show me a pre booked fare on his mobile hand device.

It was approximately 23.00hrs before the crowd dispersed and it was only at this time that the number of taxi drivers in the area thinned out.

If I was to describe the situation at the junction of Trafford Park Road and Trafford Road I would say that due to the behaviour of the taxi trade the situation for concert goers and other road users very quickly became chaotic and dangerous. We left the area at approximately 23.15hrs.

Signed:  (witness)

Date: ...07/12/23.....

(To be completed if applicable: being unable to read the above statement I,of, read it to him/her before he/she signed it.

Signed: Date:)