

Appendix E

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 16. 2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9

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Statement of: Nicola COOPER

Age if 18 or
under:

Over 18

*see overleaf (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: Police Constable

This statement (consisting of 2 page(s) each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and 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.

Victim / Witness signature: Digitally Signed 22/02/24

Date: 22ND February 2024

I am Police Alcohol Licensing Officer 8820 COOPER of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary covering Taunton & West Somerset since October 2012.

On Wednesday 21st February 2022 at 14.59 I received a telephone call from Mr Steven Cox of Laburnum House Hotel, 4 Sloway Lane, Highbridge. He was returning a voice message I had left earlier in the day. I wanted to speak to Mr Cox before sending him a letter dated 21st February 2022 regarding unauthorised sales of alcohol and other licensing issues at the premises. I wanted to discuss the matter by telephone before issuing the letter and discuss the premises licence.

When I answered the telephone Mr Cox was initially polite and I asked why he had submitted an application to vary the Designated Premises Supervisor from his Father Mr David Cox to himself. He said he was more involved in the running of the premises and his father was now elderly. He went on to say that he had just signed a 7 year lease for Hinkley workers to occupy the premises and I stated that he did not have planning permission for that as it had not yet been decided. At that point Mr Cox became verbally aggressive over the telephone towards me calling me a "jobs worth, and that I was rude and he paid my wages". I asked what he meant by that and he said "you must know what I mean by paying your wages and referred to council tax". The call lasted for 15 mins and 51 seconds and Mr Cox would not let me speak. I did not get to discuss the letter or the premises licence.

During the call Steven Cox said it was my job to advise him if he was doing anything wrong. I tried to clarify that he had been a licence holder for over 35 years and he responded "that is for you to find out". He was repeating "listen to yourself, saying something about using my authority, repeating that I was a jobsworth and that he would be making a complaint about me. I asked him what were his grounds for making a complaint. He said there must be an ulterior motive and to just tell him what it was and that I had a personal vendetta towards him and I was rude. He said I had not written the letter and someone else must have written it and to tell him what was going on. At this point he had not been sent the letter or seen it or knew of it's contents. I had only previously met Mr Cox once before and face to face on 14th November 2023 when I had advised him about his licensed area. The letter I was sending to him was putting everything in writing as we must keep a record. He refused to discuss the contents of the letter with me in a civil manner before it was sent to him.

I found Mr Cox to be unprofessional, rude, sarcastic, intimidating towards me. Under s.4.62 of the s.182 guidance of the Licensing Act the Government considers it essential that police officers, fire officers or officers of the licensing authority can identify immediately the DPS so that any problems can be dealt

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Witness Name: Liam FRAMPTON

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with swiftly. I did not feel that I would be able to resolve any problems with Mr Cox due to his obstructive attitude.

I eventually said that I would just send the letter to him for signature by both Premises Licence Holders and he said email would be better as the Bulgarian's steal the post.

This is not our expectation for a proposed Designated Premises Supervisor or indeed Premises Licence Holder to speak to a Responsible Authority in this manner. I was so taken aback with Mr Cox's outburst that I put the phone on to loud speaker for colleagues to listen to. They advised me to end the call which I did.

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