

WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3) (a) and 5B; MC Rules 1981, r.70)

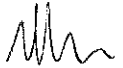
URN:

Statement of: NEIL SHARPE

Age if under 18: 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 I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it, which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature:  PC3883

Date: 27th APRIL 2010

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded: (supply witness details at end)

I am PC 3883 NEIL SHARPE of West Mercia Police. My current position is that of Police Licensing Officer for the districts of Bromsgrove and Redditch in North Worcestershire. I have looked after Redditch district for two years and took over responsibilities for licensing in Bromsgrove in June 2009. This role deals with all aspects of the Licensing Act 2003, as well as partnership working with other responsible authorities.

This statement is being written to give back ground information regarding a licence review application, submitted by myself, for the Costcutters store, Woodrow Centre, Woodrow, Redditch.

Police are seeking licence review because of events at this store in the past twelve months. These events have highlighted that two of the four licensing objectives of the Licensing Act 2003 have not been promoted. These being:

- The prevention of crime and disorder.
- The protection of children from harm.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 I attended Costcutters, Woodrow Centre along with officers from HM Revenue & Customs.

I witnessed Customs Officers seize a quantity of alcohol. This was due to revenue offences. In all 60 cases of beer, 17 cases of wine, 2 ½ cases of brandy, 1 ½ cases of whiskey where seized.

At the time of writing this statement, I do not have information on whether HM Customs & Customs prosecuted for this offence.

Worcestershire Trading Standards run test purchase operations throughout the whole of the county. They ask volunteers under the age of eighteen years to enter licensed premises and attempt to purchase alcohol.


On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2009, a female test purchase volunteer entered the store and bought alcohol. She was sold the alcohol by the current Designated Premise Supervisor ( DPS ) Mr Javid Iqbal.

The next underage sale took place on the following day, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2009.

PC 57 Nigel Bennett who is the local Police Officer for the Woodrow area of Redditch was on patrol in the shopping centre.

He witnessed a youth leaving Costcutters carrying beer. PC Bennett challenged the youth, who was fifteen years old, and then took the youth back inside the store. They identified the staff member who had made the sale. The staff member admitted the sale and offence.

The youth returned the alcohol and was given a refund. The person who made the sale was given a verbal warning.

 PC3883

Signature:

Signature witnessed by:

Statement of: NEIL SHARPE

URN: 

On 22nd June 2009, both of the Premise Licence holders, Mr Mohammed Sajid Ali and Mr Javid Iqbal were asked to attend a meeting at Redditch Police Station. This was with the Redditch district Inspector, Insp 273 Ian Joseph and myself.

We discussed both of the illegal underage sales and were assured that measures would be put in place to make sure it never happened in the future.

I also wrote to Mr Iqbal on 22nd June 2009 warning Costcutters that if a further underage sale took place in the coming months, Police would have no alternative but to seek licence review.

I produce a copy of this letter as exhibit NPS/1.

I again visited Costcutters with HM Revenue & Customs on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 to check on their alcohol. This time there were no offences and no seizures.

The court case took place on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2010 for the first test purchase operation on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2009. I am informed that the DPS pleaded guilty to the offence and was fined £742.77 including costs.

Then on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010, Worcestershire Trading Standards again asked under eighteen year old volunteers to attempt to purchase alcohol from Costcutters as part of a test purchase operation. The DPS again made a sale of alcohol to a minor.

I therefore have no alternative than to ask for this Licence review against Costcutters on behalf of West Mercia Constabulary.

Police have no confidence that this store promotes the licensing objectives.

All of these objectives are of equal importance under the Licensing Act 2003, but failure to promote one of these ie the protection of children from harm, raises great concerns about there ability to run a lawful operation.

Police believe that this is even more serious as two of the sales have been made by the DPS, who is a partner in this business. Surely he should be fully trained, aware of the law and making sure that children are not served alcohol from his store.

Unfortunately, if the DPS was to be removed from this store, Police feel that this would be in name only. Mr Iqbal would still be in charge of the store and sales of alcohol.

Removing him as DPS would not make any difference to the sales of alcohol at Costcutters.

I would ask the licensing committee members therefore to revoke the premise licence from this store. Stopping it selling alcohol altogether.



Signature:

Signature witnessed by:

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