

Review Luminar Leisure Club @ Life Andover

The Club @ Life is a large pub/night club premises situated in London Street close to Andover town centre.

The building is a former cinema and has previously traded under the names, The Savoy, Flicks and Chaplins.

The premises are currently run by Luminar Leisure who are the Premises Licence holders.

The building has two distinct areas: at the front in the former cinema foyer area is a bar and seating area with a further outdoor terrace which is enclosed by a marquee type structure during the evenings and winter months. This part of the building operates as a pub during the day and trades as The Pub @ Life. This area is separated from the main club part of the building by sliding doors which open to reveal a large dance floor further seating and a second bar, this operates as The Club @ Life

In the evening the pub entrance at the front is closed, the sliding doors to the club area opened and customers enter via the Club entrance on the east side of the building.

The maximum numbers of persons permitted on the premises are as follows:

Main Bar & terrace 255

Night Club 564

Main Bar & Club 819

The Premises Licence permits the supply of alcohol and regulated entertainment late night refreshment between the hours 10.00 – 03.00 and late night refreshment between 23.00 – 03.00

There have been a significant and disproportionate numbers of crime and disorder incidents linked to the premises which are outlined on the attached schedules. Analysis of incidents recorded at the premises has also shown an increase in the number of problems on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights with the majority occurring later in the evening.

The management at Club @ Life were approached by the Police Licensing Team in June 2006 and the concerns about the level of violent crime and general disorder were raised.

On 11th November 2006 Inspector Ian Whyton responded to an email from Poppleston Allen Solicitors who were acting on behalf of Luminar Leisure. He outlined concerns about the premises, in particular the unacceptable level of reported crime at the premises. Regrettably Poppleston Allen Solicitors failed to pass these concerns onto the management of Luminar Leisure

In November two door staff was arrested following an allegation that they assaulted a member of public whilst ejecting him from the Club. One of the door staff received a police caution on 1st December 2006 having admitted the offence. A report has been submitted to the Security Industry Authority.

The events leading up to the closure under S.161 Licensing Act 2003 are that around 00.20hrs on Thursday 14th December Police received a number of calls to Life reporting a large fight at Life. On arrival of the first police units it was apparent that disorder was occurring within the premises and they discovered a number of people had been assaulted. The incident involved a large group of soldiers and door staff had apparently tried to barricade them inside the building awaiting arrival of the police. One of the soldiers was seen inside holding a 4' table and appeared to be about to throw it through the window. On entering the bar PC Kingston was assaulted whilst trying to effect the arrest of one of the males. A second officer PS Austin (a female officer) was also assaulted and dragged along the ground whilst trying to detain another male. Two door staff and a member of the public were also assaulted during the fracas. Police reinforcements from surrounding stations were requested including the Hampshire Force Support Unit and Officers from Wiltshire. Officers at the scene were forced to draw their batons and deploy incapacitant spray to defend themselves.

PC Kingston says in his statement *"I have been a Police Constable for seven years and during that time I have attended a number of public order incidents. I am also part of the constabulary's Tactical Firearms Team and have been involved in armed arrests of aggressive and violent individuals, however this incident is only the second time in my career that I have called for urgent assistance as I felt that we were facing a group of violent drunken individuals who were intent on causing others harm and at the time I feared without extra officers we, my colleagues and*

I, would be overwhelmed by the number of these males and their intent to cause others injury."

PC Thelwell, who was also assaulted describes entering the foyer in his statement saying *"....I was greeted by complete chaos and immediately became concerned for my personal safety"* he goes on to describe how he was forced to back out of the foyer area *".....I was followed by a very large male who in my opinion was totally out of control and heavily in drink"*

In total 4 males were arrested and the police investigation is ongoing. It is anticipated that further arrests will be made in connection to the incident. Police Investigation at the time of the matter was hampered by the level of intoxication of some of those arrested.

At 12.12 hrs on 14th December 2006 Inspector Ian Whyton attended the premises and served a Closure Order on the Club.

Later that day a meeting was held at Andover Police Station between police and management of Luminar leisure, namely Steve Dennis (Director), Gavin Jones (Operations Manager) and Howard Cooper (DPS). During the meeting Mr Dennis stated that he fully accepted the police decision to make the Closure Order and recognised the 24hrs would allow for a "cooling off period" but wanted to be able to reopen and trade normally as soon as possible.

The following day, having considered the matter the police agreed not to extend the Closure Order beyond the initial 24hrs following a written agreement from the club as follows;

1. Life will cease the sale of alcohol at 23.00 on Friday 15th, Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th December 2006
2. All other licensable activities will cease at 23.00 on those nights, at which time the premises will be closed to the public.

These hours appeared appropriate as the majority of recorded incidents of disorder occurred after midnight.

A hearing was scheduled in accordance with the Licensing Act at Basingstoke Magistrates Court at 14.00 on Monday 18th December 2006. Due to lack of court time this hearing was rescheduled to 21st December 2006 at Andover Magistrates Court.

Following discussions with the police Luminar Leisure agreed to continue to restrict their hours of trading as previously outlined from 18th until the date of the new court hearing.

The matter was heard by Magistrates at Andover on 21st December with the following rulings.

No admission or re-admission after midnight.

No service personnel to be granted entry.

During the hearing the DPS for the premises Mr Howard Cooper gave an undertaking under oath that he would ban all military personnel from the premises. This undertaking from Mr Cooper subsequently formed one of the conditions imposed by the court.

The concerns of the Police in respect of the Club at Life are the significant number of criminal offences associated with the premises. Particularly those of assault and public disorder. It the view of the police that appropriate conditions are required to help reduce the unacceptable level of crimes occurring. Particularly the high number of offences apparently occurring during the late evening.