Response to Public Consultation on Sex Establishment Licensing November 2010

In addition to receiving response from residents and businesses to the on line survey the following responses were sent by email

Response 1.

The draft sex establishments licensing policy looks appropriate:

* Do you agree that the council should limit the number of sex establishments in the borough? Yes

* Do you agree that the limit should be set as nil with an exemption for premises that are currently operating as sex establishment?

Yes, provided that "if any of the existing premises cease trading there is no presumption that the council will consider any new applications more favourably"

* Do you wish to add any comments to support your opinion?

Are saunas and massage parlours (e.g. Aqua Sauna on Hornsey Road) treated in the same way as sex encounter establishments? It seems that these are probably more of a licensing/working conditions/legal issue/ than legal sex encounter establishments. Strip/lap dancing sex encounter establishments also appear to be of more concern than sex shops and theatres. The frontage of the sex shop on Islington Green has become less appropriate with it's recent change of ownership/display; are there requirements for displays in public places?

Response 2

Good afternoon. I am instructed by ### in connection with their licensing in this area. I am asked to respond to the consultation, in this capacity, and the Response is attached for your committee's kind consideration.

You will be aware that (my client) is keen to work with the authority in respect of licensing issues, and I understand that they have already responded and assisted in connection with practical issues and in offering the dancer code of practice etc.

They are especially supportive of the Council's concise policy and in particular the proposed manner of dealing with the limit on the number of licensed premises. As a lawyer, however, I regret that I have had to voice some concerns. May I invite your team and legal adviser to consider the attached Comment in this respect to ensure that the proposed Policy being presented to members for consideration is not open to challenge in the future.

The suggested amendment made in the Response document on this paragraph is on the basis that your legal adviser assures you that the currently proposed method of dealing with this is a viable way forward, and that my fears are unfounded.

(NB the detailed response from this consultee on the draft Sex Establishment Licensing Policy will be considered by the Licensing Committee when it meets to consider the draft policy in 2011)

Response 3

I am keen to stress my approval of a NIL limit on Sex Establishments in Islington.

I lived in Shoreditch a couple of years ago and found myself incredibly intimidated walking home at night past the 'Blush' tabletop dancing venue and the 'Rainbow Sports Bar', eventually making me choose less well-lit roads in order to avoid the area (unfortunately the lesser of two evils).

Not only to these kinds of places promote an incredibly degrading and sexist view towards women, serving alcohol alongside this, the environment surrounding the venues are hostile and occasionally unsafe for women.
I also think it is important not to normalize the existence of Sex Establishments as a message to young people growing up in Islington (as I can only see how they would negatively impact on the attitudes of the boroughs teenagers).

I understand that the Nil policy would not cover establishments already in existence- is there a list available of licensed Sex Establishments is Islington? And are these licences due for renewal in the future (if so- is it possible to prevent renewing licences after the nil policy is in effect?)

Response 4
Thank you for your e-mail. Having read through the draft Sex Establishment Licensing Policy I can comment that it appears to properly address the vital issues that must be considered by your Authority in dealing with applications for licences under this legislation.

It is very comparable with other authorities proposed policies .

Can you confirm when the policy will, or might be, adopted and invoked.

Response 5
Why do you need to have sex establishments in your borough?
What is the purpose of these venues?
The research on this industry has proven time and time again that the workers involved, mostly women are abused mentally, physically, sexually and financially.
Is there a need for these places? Why would you want to collude with the awful dysfunctional sex industry?
* Sex shops
* Sex cinemas
* Sex encounter establishment

Response 6
I am responding to your consultation on the Sex Establishment Policy of Islington council.
Do you agree that the council should limit the number of sex establishments in the borough?
Yes, definitely.

Do you agree that the limit should be set as nil with an exemption for premises that are currently operating as sex establishment?
Yes, I agree that limit should be set to nil. But I think that premises currently operating should also be shut down.

Do you wish to add any comments to support your opinion?

Sex establishments promote gender inequality by encouraging sexist attitudes from the men who visit them. This spills out into the streets when the men leave the clubs, endangering women and girls in the area and on public transport. It has been shown that incidences of rape and sexual harassment increase in the areas around strip clubs, and this is certainly borne out by the experiences of myself and women I know. Sex establishments also create an atmosphere in which it is OK to buy a woman or girl's body for sexual simulation. Sex establishments have clear links, whether direct or indirect, to the prostitution trade. They are contrary to the Gender Equality Duty which the council is bound by.

Response 7
I write to you regarding the consultation currently being undertaken in Islington in relation to the adoption of the new legislation regarding Sex Establishment Licenses, brought in under the Policing and Crime Bill.

Dr #### and I have been working on a major ESRC funded research project regarding the regulation and working conditions in the lap dancing industry in the UK. It is the first of its kind in the UK. More information can be found here about the project: http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/research/projects/regulatory-dance.php
We are attaching a copy of the preliminary findings report which you may find useful in terms of policy-making with regards to the new licenses. Please feel free to pass this on to whomever you feel would find it relevant or useful. We will be releasing a full report on the findings early in the new year (January 2011).

We would also be more than happy to come and speak to you regarding the consultation. However, if you have any questions or queries regarding the findings in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Response 8

I have been through the document and it seems quite straightforward, however I can't find anything with regards to cost of initial application and annual renewal, I have had a look on your website but can't find anything there either.

Also it states that there is to be no external advertising, I am assuming that we can advertise our trading name and what we do (current signage).

I am assuming that the current conditions on the premises license that relate to striptease will be ported across to the new SEVL?

All the other requirements we already have in place.

To answer your question on Doc 1,

I do agree that the council should limit the number of SEVL's in the Borough and my reason for agreeing to this is that our business has a finite number of clientele and therefore it is only right that the council keep a balance of what is on offer to what the general public want.

I also agree with your second point "that the limit is set at Nil but an exemption for premises that are currently operating as a sex establishments", however I would add that it should only apply to those with "Express Permission" currently on their premises license.(as you know some operators got through on Grandfather rights on the conversion of the Liquor license 1964 to 2003 premises license in 2005, in other words it didn't say they couldn't so that meant they could and without any specific conditions). This was one of the reasons why this additional legislation was brought in by government and is one reason why we supported the principle of it.

We as exiting operators with express permission and with a good track record should be allowed to continue to operate, we spoke with Alan Campbell MP, and he stated that this legislation is not designed to stop our business but just to help control and regulate it. It can not be forgotten that we as exiting operators have exiting leases, loans and commitments to staff and a lot of these cannot be easily undone (I personally have Personal guarantees on all my leases).

I hope my comments help and I can see that the council have recognized what I have said above and I welcome this new legislation in to Islington Borough.