

## **Licensing Breaches at Spearmint Rhino, Sheffield: Representation to Sheffield City Council**

This is the representation made to Sheffield City Council on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 detailing just some of the activity Private Investigators experienced with numerous dancers over the course of two visits. Representation was made by Charlotte Meade, Women's Equality Party Sheffield, and Lisa Markham, Zero Option Sheffield.

I am here representing the Women's Equality Party Sheffield Branch, but also Zero Option, One Billion Women Rising and Not Buying It.

We have urged the Council for the last few years to look, and think, more deeply about the effects that strip clubs have on our communities, in both Sheffield and wider society, but this has not happened. This has led to a variety of local people feeling that they have had to take matters in to their own hands. Many of you would have seen the reports in the national and local press in the last few days.

Two experienced former male police officers visited Spearmint Rhino, on two different occasions in February 2019, identifying numerous breaches of the licensing conditions and unlawful activity.

To read from their report:

" X then lowered herself onto my lap facing away from me, gyrating her buttocks, into my genitals, and reaching forwards grabbed and massaged my testicles. She said I had nice balls and that she loved balls and loved dick and squeezing balls, which I took to mean testicles and penis."

We are also in possession of film footage of their investigations.

The club's own rules state "Dancers may not use language of an inappropriate, suggestive or sexually graphic nature at any time." These rules form part of the license which was last approved by the Licensing Committee in 2018.

Further rules include: "Dancers must not sit or straddle customers. May only touch a customer above the customer's chest, and only with the dancer's hands."

Again, from the Pls' report:

" X then laid on her back next to the Investigator and opened her legs with her left leg across the Investigator's lap, X then knelt on the floor in front of Y, rubbed Y's vagina with the fingers of her right hand, licked Y's vagina with her tongue, kissed Y's vagina, rubbed Y's vagina with her fingers, put

those fingers into Investigator's mouth saying "taste it" and put those fingers into my mouth. X inserted her right forefinger into Y's vagina, licked and patted Y's vagina and kissed Y's mouth."

Again, the club's rules state: "Dancers are never to intentionally touch the genitals or breasts of another dancer or to knowingly permit another dancer to intentionally touch their genitals or breasts. Dancers may not perform any act that clearly simulates masturbation, oral sex or sexual intercourse, including the insertion of any object including their own finger into any genital opening."

The last quote Lisa will read you from the report today is as follows:

" A knelt in front of me and gently bit my penis through my trousers, rubbed my genitals with her hand saying she loved old dick and loved balls as well. A repeatedly rubbed my genitals outside of my trousers."

The findings detailed by the Investigators clearly show the links between the so called "acceptable" part of the sex industry, sexual entertainment, and prostitution. They are a continuum of the same line.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines prostitution as "The practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment " - it appears that this what is going on in Spearmint Rhino in Sheffield. Not only a breach of their licensing conditions but possible unlawful activity. This is what you have been licensing in the middle of our cultural quarter and next to our Student Union and student accommodation.

It is no longer acceptable for Councillors who find this subject "difficult" or upsetting" to choose not to be involved. It is no longer acceptable to turn the other way and pretend it is not happening. This is a matter of upholding the law and upholding your Public Sector Equality Duty, something which you have failed to do for at least the last few years.

We have been objecting to Spearmint Rhino since the Women's Equality Party was founded in 2015, others in our group have been objecting since it was first given a license.

We have requested a meeting with the appropriate Licensing staff immediately in order to share the evidence we have and would request that Cllr Dagnall also attends that meeting. The club's license should be revoked with immediate effect.

We have been "asking" for a few years, but we now demand that, as they have started to do in Rotherham, all Councillors step up to the mark, equip yourselves with the knowledge and expertise of the effect and reality of sexual entertainment and make Sheffield an SEV free city.

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Not Buying It - [no@notbuyingit.org.uk](mailto:no@notbuyingit.org.uk)

Zero Option - [zerooptionsheffield@gmail.com](mailto:zerooptionsheffield@gmail.com)

One Billion Women Rising - [https://twitter.com/OBR\\_Sheffield](https://twitter.com/OBR_Sheffield)

More about the reality of lap dancing here: <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/background>

Abuse recorded in 50 clubs (1/3 of the UK strip industry): [www.notbuyingit.org.uk/StripSleaze](http://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/StripSleaze)