

MDA No.: 1645

Title: London's night-time economy

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee meeting on 4 September 2024 the Committee resolved that:

That authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to any output arising from the discussion.

- 1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair agreed the Committee's letter to Sir Mark Rowley QPM on the topic of London's night-time economy as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

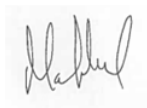
- 2.1 **That the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's letter to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner on the concerns raised about discrimination in licensing and policing of live music events be agreed.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name: Marina Ahmad, Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

Date: 10 October 2024

3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the Chair, in consultation with relevant party Lead Group Members and Deputy Chairs, under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the letter and its recommendations fall within these terms of reference.
- 3.2 The exercise of delegated authority will be formally noted at the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's next appropriate meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): 

Printed Name: Sal Fazal

Date: 09 October 2024

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.


Signature (Finance): Not Required

Printed Name:

Date:

Legal Implications:

The Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): 

Printed Name: Rory McKenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 15.10.24

Email: rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Alessandro Georgiou AM, Deputy Chair;
- Zack Polanski AM; and
- Hina Bokhari AM.

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, until what date:

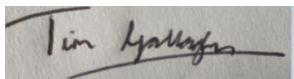
Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

Signature:



Printed Name: Tim Gallagher

Job Title: Senior Policy Adviser

Date: 10 October 2024

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature:



Printed Name: Helen Ewen, Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 10 October 2024



Marina Ahmad AM

Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

Sir Mark Rowley QPM
Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis
Metropolitan Police Service

(Sent by email)

3 October 2024

Dear Sir Rowley QPM,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the London Assembly's Economy, Culture and Skills Committee regarding a matter that was brought to our attention during our most recent Committee meeting on 4 September 2024 on the topic of London's night-time economy.

At the meeting, we heard from Dr Charisse Beaumont, Chief Executive and Co-Founder of Black Lives in Music (BLiM). Dr Beaumont shared with us a number of criticisms pertaining to the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) practices and conduct with regard to the policing of live music events.

The Committee recognises, first and foremost, that Met officers must have the ability to apply their training and be confident in the use of operational guidelines in order to keep Londoners safe at events. However, before preparing our final report, we would like to give you the opportunity to share your perspective on the issues raised.

- We heard that despite the abolition of Form 696, which required organisers to provide the MPS with information on the genre and potential audience of an event, discrimination against Black and Asian artists and organisers continues and is "stifling growth" (p.1).
- Dr Beaumont told us that the abolition of the form had not ended discrimination against Black and Asian artists and organisers as there are other forms, such as Temporary Events Notices (TENs), which can be used to elicit information from which to infer the ethnic background of attendees or genre of music played (p. 8).

- We heard that there are instances where the MPS is exerting pressure on venues to cancel events expected to attract a largely Black or Asian audience, citing safety as their main concern (p.8). Dr Beaumont shared with us her view that safety was part of a “racist narrative”, stating that rap and hip-hop events in particular were often targeted “under the guise of safety” (p.8).
- The Committee was further told by Dr Beaumont that event cancellations are particularly frequent in London. We heard that this is often not spoken about due to a “culture of silence” stemming from organisers’ fear of having their licenses revoked (p.8).
- We heard that there was insufficient engagement on part of the police to build relationships with Black and Asian performers and promoters. Dr Beaumont told us that this affected small venues in particular as they are more likely to lack relationships with councillors or the police, and are therefore finding it difficult to appeal against decisions (p.5).
- Finally, we were told that the MPS is monitoring artists on platforms like YouTube and Instagram, which can lead to artists being unfairly targeted. Dr Beaumont told us “If an artist, you could be a cello player and you might be related to somebody who might be involved in something bad. You want to go and play at an event, you are related to that person, so you cannot play” (p.8).

We have also been informed by Dr Beaumont that BLiM is currently conducting research to establish an evidence base to further substantiate the statements above. The Committee understands that this forms part of the Race Equality in Music Event Licensing (REMEL) project, of which the MPS is a project partner.

We have attached the full transcript of the meeting at the bottom of this letter.

We welcome you to share your perspective on the issues raised and look forward to receiving your response. We would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by Friday, 18 October.

Yours,



Marina Ahmad AM
Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee - 04 September 2024

Transcript of Agenda Item 5 - London's Night-time Economy

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): We now move to our main item of business, which is a discussion with our invited guests on the Committee's investigation into London's night-time economy. This meeting will be split into two parts, with the first one focusing on recovery from the pandemic and long-term challenges facing the night-time economy. The second part we will be looking at the role of licencing as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and more Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning or another diverse gender identity (LGBTQ+) and grassroots music venues.

I will now welcome with great pleasure our first panel of guests, Dr Charisse Beaumont, who is the Chief Executive and Co-Founder of Black Lives in Music; Councillor David Robinson, who is the Chair of the Licensing Sub-Committee at Lambeth Council; Steve Garelick, who is the Regional Organiser of GMB; and Dugald Johnson, who is the Policy Officer for Equity UK.

We have a number of questions to ask you, and I will start off, and if I can say to both panel members and Committee Members, it is a packed session, we have to get through these really quickly; therefore if you could restrain yourself just to answering quite succinctly and do not be offended if we say, "Could we move on?" because we have quite a lot to get through. Panel members, what I am going to do is start off with a question for all of you, and if I could ask you just for a couple of seconds before you answer the question, just to talk a little bit about your experience and the organisation that you represent. The first question is, in your opinion, what are the main challenges facing London's night-time economy at present? Charisse, can we start with you? Thank you.

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Some of the main challenges, I represent an organisation called Black Lives in Music (BLiM) The name saying what it says on the tin. We do data and research in the United Kingdom (UK) music industry in regards to lived experience of being black, Asian and ethnically diverse in the live music industry. With it, we published a report in 2021 and some of the verbatim quotes that we got in there were there were some serious barriers to putting on gigs, putting on events as a black person. Quite a lot of over-policing as promoters, having to change your name to become a white name just so you can get the gig. A lot of promoters out there who have very long-standing, a lot of experience in promotions and events for who are megastars now, but at grassroots level, putting on events and having their events getting cancelled or transferred to larger corporations such as Live Nation and AEG's (Anschutz Entertainment Group), just because of the issues with licencing.

We began to see this arise in terms of the [Metropolitan Police Service risk assessment] Form 696 working. We will speak about that later. We worked alongside the Musicians' Union to write an open letter to the Mayor [of London], Sadiq Khan, in regards to the issues of the legacy of Form 696 and how it is stifling growth within the black and Asian community to make a living, which is a human right. That has been well received, and I guess that is why I am here today. We have created a steering committee called Race Equality in Music Event Licensing (REMEL), chaired by Amy [Lamé, London's Night Czar]. We are doing some amazing work. We have amazing members of the board, industry stakeholders such as UK Music, the LIVE Group, Musicians' Union, as I have already mentioned, as well as the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), London local authorities, and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). We are looking forward to doing some great work there.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you, Charisse, and I am sure we will hear a lot more about that as we go on. In your opinion, what are the main challenges facing London's night-time economy at present?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): OK, one of the main challenges is the barriers to be able to, for certain communities, to be able to have the ability to be an entrepreneur. The night-time economy is obviously full of the arts, culture, heritage, as well as music, which is part of the arts. However, when you are black, I think the stat is only 2.8 per cent of black people have an occupation within that sector. That is reflected in the night-time economy; although we are seeing half a million people working within the night-time economy, I question at what level they are working at. There is nothing wrong with this, but are they entry level, are they security, are they bouncers on the door, do they have the opportunity to become entrepreneurs, put on events, put on programming that is of benefit to the night-time economy and to those audiences? I would have to say no. That is a major challenge in regards to black and brown communities within London at the moment.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Steve, just a few seconds about you and then an answer to the question please.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Thanks. Hopefully, you can hear me clearly. Basically, GMB Union represents workers at all levels of the night economy, just not within central London but within outer London. I would speak to the fact that does include National Health Service (NHS) staff, security staff, and others in custodial roles as well as those who are undertaking the work within the entertainment, arts, and other industries as well. Ultimately, there is a high level of issues, certainly multiple issues that have occurred post-pandemic. Some of that relates to travel issues and accessibility. Some of that relates to safety and security, not only for the staff who may be making their way to or from their place of work, but those who are undertaking work in very precarious circumstances, such as food delivery, the Deliveroo's and the Uber Eats of this world, and private hire and taxi drivers, who are more likely to face either verbal or physical assault than many others.

That curtains into or dovetails, I should say, into those working within security. We have heard about door staff among others. I also have members who work within University College London Hospital (UCLH) as an example, who are paid just 25 pence an hour extra to work in accident and emergency, wearing a stab vest, under immense risk and constantly facing disciplinary action for having to take action against those who are prepared to assault emergency service staff. It is a huge concern. We are deeply concerned for our casino members. We have a lot of members working in London's casinos. With the advent of online gaming that has had an effect as well. Ultimately, from a transport perspective, the cost of getting to and from work has not decreased in an era where we have seen a high cost of living surge in the past few years.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Those are what you would say are what you regard as the main issues facing the --

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): I think there are more issues. Certainly, there are consistent issues over businesses taking on staff in the wrong fashion. We have a situation with one very well-known company that has taken senior management staff within their own business and removed their normal level of wages and put them down to a lower wage and included them in the staff tronc or tipping culture, so they now get a proportion of the tips that go to the staff who are working at the coalface. Management is being paid that. Not only does that affect the possibility of them getting financial services for mortgages and the like, but it takes money away from those who are really working at the coalface. From my perspective, it is wholly inappropriate. It is a cost-cutting culture that should not be existing.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Great. Thank you. Dugald?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Hi, I am from Equity. We are a trade union of performers and creative workers. We have almost 50,000 members, about 75 per cent of our members are actors, the remainder are stage managers, drag artists, comedians, designers, directors, cabaret artists, variety performers, a whole range of things across the performing arts. Unsurprisingly, the largest single group of our members is in London. About 35 per cent of our members are based in London. We have collective agreements covering the majority of theatre in London on the West End, subsidising commercial theatre, and about approximately 80 per cent of West End performers at any one point are our members.

To pick two key challenges, they would be, firstly, the loss of venues for our members to perform in and, secondly, the immense cost of living pressures. In terms of the first, I do not think the Committee needs any reminding on the dire picture of the loss of venues in London over the past two decades. The Greater London Authority's (GLA) own figures tell, I think the figure is about one in six venues have been lost in the period from 2006 to 2022¹. This is obviously a massive threat to the ability of our members to do the work that they do. Many of these LGBTQ+ venues are crucial spaces for them to develop their crafts, to hone their performance and develop their career. They are also a reliable source of regular work for members where they may be doing much more irregular work in other venues.

The pressures are well known, and I am sure we will get into them around the cost of operating for those venues, licencing issues, pressure from property developers, and so on. There are of course some well-known examples and Equity most recently has been heavily involved in the campaign to save the Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, which is the latest LGBTQ+ venue to face closure or threatened with closure.

The second key issue for our members is obviously the cost of living. The performing arts is an incredibly tough career characterised by low pay, insecurity, short-term engagements, high barriers to entry. London is increasingly a very inhospitable place for them to build their careers without immense family support or other sources of support. Rising rents, transport costs, and so on make it more and more difficult for members to pursue careers. That is not just in smaller types of venue and less well-paid work, but our members, even who work on the best-paid types of work and on the best rates that Equity has negotiated on West End shows, tell us that they struggle with the cost of living and with security of income. In brief, those are the two main issues.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you very much. David?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Thank you, Chair. Thanks for asking me here this afternoon. It is a bit terrifying, if I am honest, looking at you all from here; summer is officially over. My name is David. I am a Councillor from Lambeth representing Clapham Town, recently elected as the Chair of Licencing about four months ago. But I come to you this afternoon with two decades' long experience in the night-time economy, having been a Disc Jockey (DJ) at probably many of the venues that you mentioned that have since closed down. I promise I did not contribute to them closing down. I have come at this from someone who has experienced that work and as someone being involved from a Lambeth perspective.

Lambeth is quite unique as a borough because most boroughs in London have kind of one area, do they not, where there is a thriving night-time economy. We have four. When you think we have got Waterloo South Bank, Vauxhall, Brixton, and in my ward of Clapham Town, which I believe outside the West End has the highest influx of people over a weekend, I think up to 30,000 people can pass through a weekend, which has

¹ Correction: The GLA statistics indicate that London lost six in ten LGBTQ+ venues between 2006 and 2022. This information was provided by Dugald Johnson on 16 August 2024.

its own challenges, especially around policing and anti-social behaviour, etc. But I just thought that is a unique kind of fact for you about us in Lambeth.

So that is who I am in my position and where I come to this. Two points in brief, I suppose I would piggyback on what you said, Dugald, about the cost of living crisis, but I would emphasise that from a business perspective, drinks are going up. Who can afford to go out anymore to some degree? I got a round the other week, and I thought, "How much?" Then that contributes to people's rent, to people's bills. Everything is going up, and people are feeling the pinch. I moved to London 20 years ago this month, I used to be able to go out every night of the week. The diversity and variety of London's nightlife is what attracted me here. I am not sure if we have that anymore, and I think that a huge contribution to that is there is just not as much change for people in going out anymore. There is a real risk, I think, for businesses not taking chances and being diverse with their programming.

If businesses are not being brave and making decisions, then I feel that London might go the way of some other international cities where we just end up being residential. I know we need homes and stuff, but this kind of segues on to my second point. High streets up and down the country are facing a huge challenge at the moment. I am thrilled that Clapham has a thriving high street because when I go back home to the northeast of England and Darlington and see that it is kind of deserted, what would we rather have, a thriving high street with the heavy night-time economy, or absolutely invisible?

But there are the challenges that kind of come in that as well, is you are not two or three months away from having to close and, if the venue closes, and then the landlord just decides to turn that into flats, and then you get residents that move in, that then start complaining about the night-time economy that has been there for 30-40 years, then you have got a clash there as well. I do not know, there is a bit of work to be done, I think, on the balance between residential needs and supporting local businesses. That is kind of piggybacking on the cost of living, but integration, I think, as well in town planning.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): OK. Thank you very much, and David, Councillor Robinson, please do not be terrified. We are a lovely, lovely Committee and we do not bite. Can I pass over to Assembly Member Polanski, please?

Zack Polanski AM: Am I not allowed to bite now?

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): No, you are not, absolutely not, all biting banned in this Committee.

Zack Polanski AM: Good afternoon, everyone. David, if I can come to you first, I just want to pick up on something you just said about making sure that nightlife is for everyone and not just one particular group of people. We have heard from Charisse, and I know the conversation is going to be returned to later by a colleague, around making sure that black artists and performers and creators are supported. On the flip side of that, what are you doing to make sure that the night-time economy is inclusive for everyone and, particularly black and brown audiences?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): From a Lambeth perspective, as I say, I have been in this role now for just about four months, and we have just had a mayoral election campaign, general election campaign. I am not going to come to this Committee and give you fake news of this is what I am doing or what we have been doing. I cannot speak to that effect from the previous chair, who would have been more involved in that kind of work, I am afraid.

Zack Polanski AM: That is OK. Do you have any reflections on things that you would like to do, even if they have not been done previously?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): There is still a bit of post-COVID work to be done in licencing and I think we are only just getting back ahead of that. I would like to see more engagement work with venues before things get to a hearing or reactionary. I would like to see a bit more prevention of working between business, local authority, and residents, though it is a bit more engagement work rather than things getting to final stage or whatever, where residents are complaining about loud music or whatever, so once the venue had gone. There is much more to be done, I think, here on the engagement work. Lambeth has just published a 2024-29 plan, which I believe is available via the website. Therefore, I would say, for me personally, more engagement, positive engagement with venues.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. Charisse, can I just jump to you on that? If I am thinking specifically about audiences, and I know you have largely come here to speak about the creators themselves, but are there things you would like to see local councils do to make sure that the night-time economy is appealing to more diverse audiences?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Absolutely. I think engagement is a real key word. Some of the feedback that we have had from our forums on REMEL is the need for engagement with more transparent processes. As you said, not starting at the end, starting from the beginning, which is more transparent processes and policies put in place in regards to licencing. Then engagement, some of the issues that we see in regards to the cancellation of events, larger organisations, larger venues do not have that issue because they have relationships with the police, they have relationships with their local councillors. But smaller venues, black promoters, do not have such relationships. Therefore, there is no protection, there is no transparency, there is no way of being able to appeal or rebut against certain decisions. Therefore engagement, using your word, engagement is key in regards to seeing through some changes in regards to policy and frameworks that are desperately needed in licencing.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. That is really nicely articulated. David, if I can return to you now on licencing. I just want to ask what role does licencing play in the local night-time economy and what are the key kind of considerations that you make in the committee when making licencing decisions?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): When something comes to committee, it is usually if there has been an objection. We are there to be the mediators for the hearing basically. I think there can be an issue that comes with that because you can make an objection from anywhere in the country, you can just be - for want of a better word - a not in my back yard, but then just making an objection for the sake of it, and it then ends up coming to committee. But did it need to then if something goes through? But I think we have been doing a lot more in Lambeth about trying to make sure that process of mediation is done much earlier. Did that answer it a little bit?

Zack Polanski AM: Yes, absolutely.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Can I come back to you on a point that you just mentioned earlier about diversity, though, as well?

Zack Polanski AM: Yes, please.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Lambeth is, I think, one of the most diverse boroughs in London, and it is certainly what we pride ourselves on. There are a number

of different areas that we have; I think there is certainly a lot that appeals to different communities. I suppose that is what I wanted to bring to the Committee's attention as well.

Zack Polanski AM: That makes sense. I have got Steve and then Charisse.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Just on the licencing front, what I think we would also like to see is that when licences are granted, even for takeaway or food delivery, that there is a safety element for the workers working within those establishments. But also an element that allows access for those who are doing food delivery to be able to access the toilets and the handwash facilities. Because, on a frequent basis, workers who have no access to public facilities are out working multiple hours, long hours without access, and quite frequently, they are turned away at a door from a premises that is making a profit from selling products to consumers, without giving any thought to the workers who doing the delivery work.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. That is really important. If my colleague Caroline Russell [AM] was here too, she would be very keen to talk about public toilets I imagine. Thank you. Charisse.

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Hi, yes. I just wanted to say Lambeth has one of the first cultural officers, licencing officers, and is situated in Lambeth and it has been very well received. One of our recommendations is that cultural officers should be a statutory party in the licencing process, acting as a mediator, somebody who is proactive and supportive of black and brown artists and promoters and venue owners. Just to say kudos that there is some work happening in Lambeth.

Zack Polanski AM: That is really helpful context. Thank you. David.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Just to jump in as well, from your point there. We have faced an ongoing issue with striking a balance in licencing policy with maintaining a 24-hour economy and local community concern. Particularly at issue has been the managing, as you said, of late-night delivery alcohol and late-night refreshment licences. We have adopted standard conditions for premises' licences to give a degree of certainty in this area. But that is certainly something that has been coming up a bit more, even just in my kind of short time in this. I know you would probably like to hear a little bit more maybe to do with the O2, but, as I say, I was not Chair at that kind of particular point. Therefore, I do not feel I can talk to the effect of something to do with that this evening. I just wanted to flag that as well.

Zack Polanski AM: Understood. I just have two other quick questions about inclusivity. One is, I have been working with a group of young care-experienced young people with a policy forum called Drive Forward. They have been coming up with their own policies and ideas. One commitment I have made to them is to bring their voice into City Hall and to bring them up in Committees. When I talk to them about the night-time economy, they talked about loneliness, that is disproportionately felt by care-experienced young people. There is a barrier to engaging in the night-time economy, mainly what we were just talking about, cost of living, etc. Is there any specific work that Lambeth is looking into or you would be interested to see them do to make it specifically accessible for care-experienced young people?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Yes. As someone who found solace, as a young queer person, in nightlife, it was a valuable and really important thing to me, and I think that helped me get to sitting in front of you today. If there is anything to do with how we can be creating pathways to make our younger people getting involved with nightlife, I cannot speak on behalf of the cabinet member responsible for licencing, but I certainly would be interested in hearing more, yes.

Zack Polanski AM: I guess the suggestion would be some local authorities give people access to gyms for cheaper, for instance. I am just wondering if there could be something like that with music venues or theatre or things that happen in the evenings.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): There could be some that already are doing such things. I see there was a nod there from Charisse. I do not know if you maybe want to jump in on that. But I am sure there is probably stuff like that. I would be surprised if something like that already was not happening in Lambeth, to be honest.

Zack Polanski AM: Sure. My final question, both of us have known each other for a long time from the LGBTQ+ scene. It is not the most accessible in terms of wheelchair access or for disabilities. Is there any work specifically you are doing in Lambeth or know of around London around making sure that the night-time economy is accessible to disabled people?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): I have known some activists that have been on about this for a long time, and I do not think things have got any better any time soon. I do not know if that is - going back to what you were saying - we are losing our venues as it is, but the new ones that are opening up, are they becoming a bit more accessible? I am pleased that we have a venue in my ward of Clapham Town, Arch, that I think opened up just after COVID, which has complete disability access, as is The Bridge. I think people are much more conscious when they are opening a new premises, to make it available to all. But, again, I cannot speak to full effect of what the full Lambeth policy is on disability accessibility within the licencing policies.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. I am going to move on to Assembly Member Bokhari, but I have a little bit of a warning to everybody. Members, we are already slightly behind. If we could speed up the pace of things. Assembly Member Bokhari?

Hina Bokhari AM: Thank you. I am going to dive deep into the discrimination in licencing. I know that you have already touched on this, Charisse, but it was quite evident that there is a problem, and it was in a committee meeting, House of Commons, Digital, Cultural, Media, and Sports Committee meeting in 2019, which highlighted events being cancelled if they found out there was a hip hop or a rap artist playing and an artist was saying that they felt that there was institutionalised racism within the industry because of the kind of responses they were getting. Your own report said that 74 per cent of black music creators who were surveyed were dissatisfied. Have things got any better since then? That was in 2021, your report.

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Yes, we are about to launch an updated version of that report. Sadly to say, and I think about this all the time as Black Lives in Music, I wonder if we are failing because it has not. But one thing I am definitely heartened by is Committees such as this, where we as black people, black and brown people, have solutions. We live this experience, we see some of the areas where there is discrimination and we are able to address that. I want to be able to do that today.

To answer your question, it has not got better. We are conducting a piece of research alongside the Mayor and the MPS in regards to this very issue in licencing. It has never been done before; like most things when it comes to research and black and brown people. However, we have verbatim data stories for days. A lot of cancellations of events happen under four objectives, whether it is preventing crime and disorder, promoting public safety, preventing public nuisance, or protection of children from harm. We get the cancellation of

those events under those four objectives. The word “safety” always comes into effect. Are these events safe to put on? But safety, I would argue, or everyone will argue, is a racist narrative.

Our events get cancelled just because they are a Bollywood event or it could be jazz, or it could be drum and bass. It could be any genre that attracts a black and brown audience. This is the legacy of the racist Form 696, where promoters were made to write the genre and the potential audience that would be coming on top of a form provided by the police. Then there would be no surprise, given the current situation with the police, that these would be rejected. It happens time and time again, and it is happening even today, where venue owners and promoters will have to fill out temporary event notices just so they can put on an event after 9.30.

Sometimes, the event might be a jazz event, the jazz ensemble playing at a cultural hub, and they would get rejected. But when you leave that cultural hub and walk down the road, the pub is still open, playing the same music that they would not be allowed to play. This happens week to week. There are cancellations of events happening up and down the country, particularly in London, week to week. It is not spoken about because there is a culture of silence. There is fear of promoters losing their licence or not being able to put on an event again. We have some of the stories we hear even up to recently, large venues receiving that call from the police saying, “Please, we think you should not put on this event. We encourage you not to do so,” large organisations. Imagine if you are a smaller promoter and you are getting that call from the police saying, “We do not think your event should go ahead, and if it does, we may shut you down”. This is what black and brown entrepreneurs, promoters and artists face every single day, and it is very disappointing.

Hina Bokhari AM: That is disappointing. The fact that the MPS did scrap the Form 696, that impact has not made much of a difference then, despite the fact that they scrapped it?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): It happens by stealth. There are other forms to complete. The Temporary Event Notice Form (TEN) form, like I said, temporary event notice, you have to complete. Another form that does not say 696 on the top, there are other forms to complete. Then what our research and what the data that we are gathering from our researchers, there are other ways that the police are monitoring. They are monitoring artists on YouTube. They are monitoring artists on Instagram. If an artist, you could be a cello player, and you might be related to somebody who might be involved in something bad. You want to go and play at an event, you are related to that person, so you cannot play. There is a whole effect that is happening, and all of this is data-led. We have got evidence and we are just looking to capture it so we can present it here one day with your support. Then we can put some frameworks in place, as I said earlier, or processes in place where we can see a more transparent; that police will not be making a call where it is all verbal, but instead they will have to, if they want to object, they have to do it in writing so there is an appeal. We do not get to appeal. Unfortunately, to answer your question, the legacy of Form 696 is very much apparent, unfortunately.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Small-Edwards?

James Small-Edwards AM: Thank you, Chair. My question is also to Charisse, it kind of continues on the same theme. In one of those reports from the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee was talking about artists getting their events cancelled on the day, as you mentioned. There is one here that we have of an artist being told that the venue had just Googled them, searched them up on YouTube, listened to their music, and said, “Oh, you play hip hop?” and she said, “Yes”, and they said, “Sorry, we are going to have to cancel your event. We will lose our licence.” How much of a barrier is there still for black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) musicians in wanting to perform live in London?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): For creators wanting to perform live, you have to really be - as we are entrepreneurial - we have to be innovative. Social media is helping. However, you cannot really grow an audience. You know what it is like to go to a live event, it is so special, there is nothing like it. Like I always say, it would send a person, an audience member from indifference to an expert fan instantly on an amazing performance. Therefore, it does hinder an artist's career. Therefore, if you are not able to perform in front of an audience, how can your audience grow?

On top of that, if you are a manager or a promoter, if your event is getting cancelled 20 minutes before the event, in some cases, you are losing money. As I said earlier, we as black and brown people have a right to work. This is a human right. We are working. The creative industries are a place of work. Yes, you are using your creativity, but ultimately you can make money. With these licencing decisions, the question is how much is it costing the night-time economy by cancelling these events? These are the things that we have to look at.

In regards to audience, we are talking about the night-time economy, people who want to go out, people who want to see their favourite rap artists, their favourite singer, folk singer, go and play; I have to say, yes, rap and hip hop, under the guise of safety, but I have to say the evidence that we have is across all genres. We are talking about race here, not genre. Genre is used as an excuse. But on Form 696, it was what type of audience are you expecting? So if we are seeing a lot of black and brown audience, i.e. if you are doing a Bollywood event and we have got people who have shared with us that they have put on a Bollywood event and had a rogue - I do not think it was rogue - but a rogue licencing officer come in and shut down the event just because they can, and they lost out on months of revenue, months of revenue, and it destroyed their lives. That is one person who did a Bollywood event, and we are talking about Christmas parties, we are talking about various different types of events. Licencing is an issue that we do need to discuss and ensure that it is transparent and fair.

James Small-Edwards AM: You mentioned about Lambeth and their cultural officer and that being a good introduction. Are there any particular examples of good and bad practices in different parts of London?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Absolutely. We have had some people, say Islington is a good example of a borough that is doing well. There are no issues there, but one. Every other borough seems to be inconsistent. There is an inconsistency of approach when there are flagships, a lot of these venues, a lot of these promoters are used to be the poster child for that borough, "Look, we are so diverse. Look, we are so cultural, and this is what we are doing." But they get their TENs rejected. They are not allowed to operate after certain hours, if at all. That affects the food and beverage aspects post gigs as well. So, we are talking about a whole economic factor in this where black and brown people are being used as the poster child for London boroughs, but at the same time not being treated as fair as their white counterparts.

James Small-Edwards AM: Thank you, Charisse. Steve?

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Perhaps a step in the right direction might be a borough inclusivity or venue inclusivity register where borough commands from police, licencing, and obviously venues are involved. Because, if people know where the road map is for those venues, then they are more likely to want to be able to go to those venues, and it will also hopefully shame other venues into wanting to be part of that register. The question is then able to be asked, "Why are you not part of that inclusivity register?"

James Small-Edwards AM: Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you very much. Assembly Member Garratt?

Neil Garratt AM: Thanks. Just listening to all of that makes me think that it might be worth us writing to the police with some of those. They are not here. It would be – how would I put it diplomatically – I would be interested to hear their response to some pretty strong concerns that have been raised. I do not know whether we could do that as part of our evidence-gathering to write to the police and say, “What is their version of these events?” Because I think what has been said, I think that we ought to put that challenge to the police is what I am suggesting. Could that be something we could do?

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Yes, I think we could, and I think that is a very good idea. Thank you, Assembly Member Garratt.

Neil Garratt AM: Coming back to licencing and I suppose the difficulty of getting a licence, retaining a licence, possibly even expanding a licence, in the wild optimistic dreams that we have of our night-time economy, what we have heard previously is from venues that it is difficult and not just difficult, but sort of a complicated labyrinth. I did sit down with the head of licencing at one of my local councils and asked them to explain it to me, and at the end of it, I think I knew less than when I started. I do not know whether either David or others, is there work that happens maybe in Lambeth or that you are aware of elsewhere, just to help venues to navigate, put public opinion to one side for a moment, but just the legal maze itself to get to the application and to get all the bits of paper in the right place.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): I think we have got a strong team of officers that try and always say to anybody who is having an application, we are here to work with you and help you, guide through it. We want to see businesses thrive and be open. But, again, just coming into this role fresh, I think one of the roles that I have been trying to understand is what is the picture across London? I have contacted my counterparts up in Camden, Islington, and Westminster and said, “Can we get together for a little bit of a chat to try and understand?” Because Joe Public does not see going out in London like we see our boroughs. You do not stay in one borough; you kind of go all over. Therefore, I think that is important to understand in how we operate and learning and having lessons learned of how other local authorities, what they are doing.

But I have almost felt like, considering how large a night-time economy in Lambeth has, do we have a small team, should we have a much larger team? I think the answer – we are still investigating this – but I am not sure how well-resourced local authorities are at the moment to be able to have a more substantial team of officers. But I would say the ones that we particularly have are very big on the engagement, again, and making sure that they are walked through the process of it in good detail.

Neil Garratt AM: Yes. It is an interesting point because sometimes licencing is one of these areas where it is very technical. The people who really know it inside out forget all of the things that everybody else does not know or does not even understand remotely. Sometimes, you can assume far more knowledge from people. In terms of the GLA, I do not know, from the GLA, have had sort of outreach from them to support either that or other aspects of --

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Yes, there is a whole night-time enterprise thing happening in Lambeth at the minute as well that I have not been as much engaged on yet, but I think there is something coming up very shortly. Yes, I think the GLA has been quite supportive with cabinet and licencing officers in developing a kind of night-time plan for Lambeth.

Neil Garratt AM: That would include support for venues to try to navigate the licencing process, you think?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): I think, but for me personally, I would like to see something like a licencing forum that brings together existing venues, police and local authority, that gets everybody sat around the table, maybe meeting quarterly, that has - I was mentioning this to Zack earlier when talking about engagement - something that is keeping a conversation going. Maybe it is something like that where these things can come up, working with the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) a bit more closely and all that kind of thing. Do not necessarily reinvent the wheel but look at existing resources and make sure we are maximising them to the best of their ability, really.

Neil Garratt AM: I mean BIDs are a good point, presumably most of these sorts of areas that have a night-time economy are town centres and things, are the sorts of places that often have those.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Yes.

Neil Garratt AM: I do not know; you just made me think that I do not know what my local BIDs are doing in this regard. I might take that away as homework. In terms of the hearing, if you like, one of the things that I am often conscious of, it happens in planning as well and in licencing, is there is usually a queue around the block of people objecting. There will be the local residents and their association, off the back of that often, the local councillor whose personal views might not align with that, but anyway, they know which side their bread is buttered, so they turn up at the Licencing Committee. Then there will be the police, who usually will have something to say about security, and they very rarely will be encouraging wild nights out. You meet some police officers outside of the uniform, sometimes they understand the benefits of the night-time economy.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): In the venue.

Neil Garratt AM: Yes. But how often, if ever, is there somebody who comes in, who makes a formal representation on paper, or who attends the hearing to say this would be great; this venue is wonderful. They have currently got a licence to 11(pm); I would love them to have this application to be open until 1(am)?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Oh, you have got me. Thank you, Mr Garratt. I went into licencing straight away, and I became chair in April. I am really stretched to think of somebody who has come in. I mean, we have had written testimonials of support, usually for takeaway services to be open a little bit longer, but the objections far more outweigh those than attend in support. It is tricky for Members of Parliament (MPs), Councillors, Assembly Members. They usually come along as well to object, not to kind of say, "Oh, this would be really great for the local economy, the local area. Residents can get involved", etc, etc. No, I would say that they are few and far between those that usually come to us that are in favour. But I do know if that is just the natural British way to complain.

Neil Garratt AM: Possibly. I was going to say, as a Councillor, I did once attend a Planning Committee to be really strongly in favour of a thing and I was conscious that was apparently not a thing that people do. The reason I mention it is because, obviously, when you sit in one of these hearings, you hear a balance of arguments one way or the other, and you will always hear a clear argument from the police and from those various people I have mentioned about why this is a problem. If there is nobody in the room saying, "This is a really good thing", let us pick a central London place, Soho, let us say, "It is a really good thing that London has this vibrant area that people from across the city can go to", and that representation does not appear in that hearing.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): But, as Chair, and I think we have got a really strong committee, when we are having deliberations, we will make the argument for that with ourselves. Deliberations can take hours. I would say we do take strongly into consideration what is

presented to us, but people do their research before a hearing, we have site visits, people take into account the area of where it is. I would say it is not something that is, “Oh, all these people have turned up and objected, so we will just sweep that through”. There is a lot of consideration that is kind of taken into them and I think, yes, I think I mentioned earlier at the start, you know, London was known for our nightlife, were we not? If we are developing into this kind of library city, for want of a better phrase, where that kind of culture and nightlife are going somewhere else, it is something to keep a lookout for, really, I suppose.

Neil Garratt AM: I do not know where they are going. If you find out, let me know.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): I do not know. I do not know where they are going. Let us have a group visit.

Neil Garratt AM: OK. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Clarke?

Anna Clarke AM: Thank you, Chair. Charisse, I am coming back to you and what you have been saying so far has been really interesting and, I think, very illuminating. Just to reflect on what Neil had said, I have also been in a committee to show my support for it in the past. It does happen, but these things can be very, very complicated, especially when you have hundreds of emails telling you why things are really bad. But, in your opening comments, I was really interested to hear about your work with REMEL and how that is going. But mostly, you have touched on this before, about the research into the experiences that REMEL is carrying out. I am just wondering if you could tell us a bit more about the methods and what you will eventually do with the research that you conduct across London?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Thank you. Yes, we are really excited about this piece of work that we have been commissioned to do by the GLA, and we are working, as I said earlier, with a conglomerate UK Music, Musicians’ Union, the LIVE group, which is the umbrella trade body for the live music industry, to unpick and find out what is happening in regards to licencing of events. We are grateful to be working with the MPS, MOPAC, and London local authorities. We have been discussing this, this is a project that is already just over a year old, but we are commissioning our researcher this month and commencing the research this month.

I have to take an unbiased view, but I kind of already know what it is going to say because of just the research that we do. However, the outcomes that we are looking to ensure that REMEL, that group of stakeholders, is holding MOPAC even to account. I know MOPAC holds the MPS to account, but holding MOPAC to account. We are hoping that we are getting some insights from the research that will allow us to create a framework to ensure that processes are correct. The only way we can do that is through the help of the GLA. Therefore, we are really grateful to be here today.

There are some best practices that we have seen around the world, particularly in Wisconsin, in the United States of America (USA), where they faced the same issue; all of the hip-hop and black events were being shut down. They were able to work with the Mayor, able to work with the police, to ensure that there was transparency and that that community of musicians, creators, and entrepreneurs, venue owners and promoters can thrive.

We are hoping to emulate the same thing. We have a stakeholder group of experts in research such as an organisation called Sound Diplomacy, which look at the economics of music all over the world. They are also a part of this; therefore, there will be a financial aspect of it, these current licencing issues, and what the loss of

it is to the economy. It is going to be a thrilling piece of work if executed well. The plan is there. Hopefully, it is executed, and then we will get a report that we hope will, for lack of a better word, change the game. We need this to change now. We have been talking about it. There was a Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) meeting in 2000, and this is age-old for us since Windrush, since putting on events, since having our cafés burned down, and it is the same thing. We need to see a change.

Anna Clarke AM: I very much look forward to seeing that research, and I hope we are able to bring that back to Committee and give you an opportunity to explore it. Just to say, I have spent lots of time in Wisconsin, including last week, and I have never heard it referred to in this Chamber. Thank you for that.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you very much. If we could have sight of the report when you release it that would be wonderful. Assembly Member Georgiou, you had a quick question to ask, did you not?

Alessandro Georgiou AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes, I did. Simply because it is topical and Steve and Dugald, it is primarily aimed at you both, given your work with staff. What impact would the Government's proposed restrictions on outdoor smoking have on your workers and the sustainability of their jobs if footfall declined? I am not asking for your view on the health aspects of smoking and whatever, but there is a social impact and an economical one. Just very briefly, your views.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): I will look, as an example, towards casinos. There was a stage where individuals could smoke in casinos, and there was the question of what damage that would cause. Obviously, that dissipated. On the health side, there was an uptick on the fact that individuals were not taking in second-hand smoke, and I recognise there is a question around the health aspects of vaping, which will be some time down the line to see where we are at on that picture.

I think there is no doubt that certainly individuals find themselves generally outdoors where smoking is taking place. Frankly, I do not know that it is necessarily going to affect venues or restaurants per se, except in those instances where there is outdoor smoking or outdoor beer gardens or pavement seating, as an example for those working in restaurants or food service in general. Certainly, I think it is too early to say what that looks like. I would imagine this is something that potentially even predates Labour because it is something that I would imagine the Department of Health would have been looking at in the round, and therefore, it has possibly been coming down the track for a while. We need a bit more time to consider what that could mean. Obviously, anything that can affect jobs is always going to be of concern. We want people to be able to earn, we want London to be successful, and we want obviously for businesses to be successful to pay the workers a fair living for the job they are doing, but we want them to be safe and healthy as well.

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Obviously, it is not something that is top of Equity's concerns, I would say. When it comes to the theatre, already obviously then audiences cannot smoke in theatres. I suppose where it might be more relevant is when it comes to smaller venues, drag venues, for example, but I think the smaller venues have much larger problems on their plate than the effects of any further restrictions on smoking.

Alessandro Georgiou AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you. Just to say I am going to give one venue as an example, and it is the Yard in Soho, you know, nice courtyard out the front. The reason I know is because they do brilliant mojitos in there, or at least the last time I went. When you go, generally, a lot of people are outside smoking, social aspect, and that could be a draw to the bar. That is where I was getting at from an economical perspective. But, Steve, on your point, I appreciate it is too early to tell. But thank you for your responses. Thank you, Chair.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Forgive me; I should have said for anyone following that we are now on to the section about night-time workers, in case anyone wondered why we have suddenly jumped. Assembly Member Small-Edwards?

James Small-Edwards AM: Thank you, Chair. Yes, mainly to Steve and Dugald again, what impact has the pandemic had on people working in the kind of broader night-time economy, in the performing arts and entertainment sector?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): For our members working in theatre, obviously, the pandemic led to a total stop of their work. There are few other industries where work had to completely cease for such a long period as theatres, not to mention obviously members who work in nightclubs, where they were closed for even longer. That had an enormous impact on the theatre sector and on the performing arts entertainment sector more widely. That impact is still being felt. There are obviously areas which have recovered much more quickly than others. In the West End, audience numbers have already more than recovered to their pre-pandemic peak. But in other work, which is the majority of our members work in smaller theatres, in drag, cabaret, and so on, obviously the impacts of those are still really deeply felt.

In terms of Government support, one of Equity's main concerns around that is that a lot of that support our members were not eligible for. About 40 per cent of our members were not eligible for the self-employment income support scheme and had to turn to other sources of support like benefits, Universal Credit, where there were all sorts of problems there too. The Cultural Recovery Fund, which was the Government scheme to support venues to keep going after the pandemic, that obviously was of great support to lots of venues. But for the workforce that did not necessarily translate into money in their pockets and keeping their livelihoods going.

Unsurprisingly, the impact was not equally felt, and the greatest impact fell on those who are most underrepresented in the industry already. No surprise that the performing arts is an incredibly difficult area of work to get into and that the sort of diversity picture on performing arts is quite poor. Some figures that we got into 2021 showed us that about 44 per cent of black men and women had left the profession, and we do not expect that they have returned in the same numbers as workers with greater resilience and support might have returned to that industry. That has obviously been a really serious impact in terms of access to performing arts, which are already a really difficult industry to get into and survive in.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): There have been multiple issues on multiple levels. As an example, we deal with issues in relation to food service delivery drivers who bring in to, as an example, Pret A Manger. We saw a huge amount of Prets close down. Best Foods, who service those sites, obviously saw huge challenges post-pandemic and it is starting to move back in the right direction for food service in general. I would also add that food service workers who are in food delivery also face a further set of problems, especially in central London environments. If you can imagine taking palletised deliveries into premises and then facing individuals who are prepared to steal and pilfer from those pallets, food products and obviously get away literally scot-free after threatening those who are making the delivery. They are not going to want to put up a battle over that, but obviously, it is a risk to those individuals. These are individuals who face this on a regular basis.

We have seen general concerns over incomes reducing and restaurant closures, as an example, hospitality has seen a real problem, even with regard to hotel hospitality, where numbers are still slowly returning back to where they need to within London. There are multiple reasons for this, but obviously, the cost of raw products and what that means when you are putting something on to a menu has increased. Where we were looking, I suppose, pre-pandemic, at something like £7 or £8 for maybe a burger meal, now you are looking probably

nearer £12 or £14. That is going to have an effect. The moment you start to look at a higher-level menu that is going to have an effect. Once people start talking about increased service charges that are not necessarily even meeting the hospitality staff, that will have an effect.

The closures have been the biggest issue because restaurants are not getting the traction they should, especially on nights of the week that they used to. I worked at night for many, many, many years, and I can speak to the fact that the dimension of central London and even outer London has changed quite considerably. You look at the take-up of venues, restaurants, hotels, and the footfall; it is really noticeable when you are out. I think it is a real disappointment. More needs to be done to perhaps say London is open for business and we need to get that message out to the wider world.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): James, I think David wanted to respond.

James Small-Edwards AM: David, did you want to come in?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Just very quickly to add to what Steve said. I think, in some ways, it is almost unhelpful to think about it in terms of recovery from the pandemic because it sort of suggests that there was a disruption, and then it would just sort of return to where we were. But we obviously know that the pressures on venues and workers are greater than they have ever been, and lots of them are kind of unrelated to the pandemic. Some of the things Steve was talking about in terms of the massive increase in operating costs and cost of living pressures on workers are kind of a huge threat and, in some ways, connected to the pandemic, but in many ways, not. I think it is important to bear that in mind.

James Small-Edwards AM: Yes, and as you say, many venues were closing pre-pandemic anyway, and restaurants were closing pre-pandemic anyway. David?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Just to come in from my previous life perspective as someone who was a DJ for many years in a lot of London's LGBTQ+ venues. Post-COVID, I have to say, I have found that the offers and the varieties of places to play had shrunk considerably. Venues, promoters, budgets, have just completely oomph, whether that has been a brewery who are struggling, but independent venues as well really struggling. I think I made this point at the start, if you do not have that rich diversity in your programming, I think we lose out a little. It was almost like you could not just be a DJ anymore, "Do you do drag as well, or what else can you do? Can you sweep the floor as you go across the room?" You are doing three jobs in one. Maybe it is a generational shift as well, like I will never forget; I still DJ from site to site; I am still cool, I think, but somebody comes up and says, "What is your playlist?" It is like it is not Spotify. This is from in here. I do not know; I think streaming services have, in terms of live music anyway; I do not know in people's approaches to things, but yes, just some observations of what it was like from a personal perspective. But I have to say, the self-employed support scheme was an utter lifeline for people like me during COVID and certainly got me through it.

James Small-Edwards AM: Thank you very much. In our first Committee meeting, we spoke to venues and employers. One of the things they said was they are finding it difficult to recruit skilled workers, and they think there is a skills shortage in the performing arts and entertainment sector. I guess possibly for Dugald, but is that something you would agree with and if so, what would you put that down to?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): When those producers are talking about, or the theatre associations are talking about, the skills shortage, my understanding is that they are mainly talking about technical occupations to do with lighting, staging, etc., where we do not represent them. They would be probably represented by someone like Bectu, who represents all the kinds of technical backstage stuff,

whereas we represent people on the stage, performers. I cannot really speak completely to that. You would be better asking Bectu. But from a performer's perspective, the pitch was obviously very different. Where there is intense competition for roles and lots of budding performers who are willing to put up with the most horrible working conditions in order to try to launch their careers, which is obviously one of the defining issues of our work as their trade union is to deal with this conflict between their desire to be performers and securing good working conditions for them.

James Small-Edwards AM: OK. Thank you very much. Charisse?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Just wearing my music industry hat fully on right now is that I am unsure if there is a skills shortage per se in terms of the technical aspects, in terms of audio engineering, etc. I question access and opportunity, particularly if you are from a diverse background. There are plenty of people, workers looking for opportunities that they just do not seem to have or do not seem to get. Also, I know that there is a concerted effort within the music industry to look at apprenticeships for those technical and production-type jobs. I know, or everybody here knows, that is the mandate of the DCMS at the moment in terms of educating post-16-year-olds to find pathways to industry. That is something that we do at BLiM. We create pathways to industry. We have over 100 music industry partners where we bridge that gap. We will work with the Royal Opera House or the Royal Albert Hall and we will work with different organisations such as Production Futures so that there is a bridge that we can see people get work within the live music industry.

We are one organisation, and we do that. I know there are many other organisations that do that as well. Hopefully, I am not saying anything irrelevant, but some of the keywords are there in terms of there is movement in the UK music industry to see change and to see access and opportunity, even from the youngest to the smallest of age, even in schools, they are trying to recruit and train and say, look, the music industry, the live music industry is open to all. I watched a video yesterday; it is very real that they are going into schools and pitching this to young children. Hopefully, we see those effects, our work, the work of the music industry and the work that they are doing within schools so that we can see a booming economy later on in the future.

James Small-Edwards AM: Yes, I know the new Government is really prioritising creative education in schools from an early age. Yes, I look forward to seeing their plans and could not agree more. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Assembly Member Polanski?

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you very much. Dugald, if I can just come to you briefly. When I was working in the same clubs that David was and also sweeping the floor and doing the hospitality sector, I was also an immersive theatre actor. This question might be a little bit niche, but I want to talk more widely about things that are not the traditional work within the entertainment industry. You may start at midday, and you would work until midnight, and you might do five or six shows in that time, one-hour shows, and the contract would often say a performance like a West End performance would be from 7.30 (pm) until 9.30 (pm). It felt like the new kind of world of working, the contracts had not caught up. What work are you doing to protect these kind of workers in these kind of alternative industries and make sure the contracts and people are properly represented?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): You will probably know more about some of these issues than us, and I think it is a constant challenge for us to keep up with the sorts of work that members are doing. It is easier in places like the West End, where we have really long-standing relationships with producers. But lots of areas of the industry are much more like the Wild West when it comes to the sorts of pay and conditions

that they are putting up with. Drag, for example, is one area that we would put in that kind of box of smaller areas of work that are less well regulated by our collective agreements, where we are making a real concerted effort to make those performers aware that Equity is a union that represents them, that can fight for their rights, that can come along to meetings with producers and so on, just so that they realise the Equity is a union that is for them and it is not just for actors on big theatre stages.

One of the main practical ways that we are supporting members in these sorts of areas of work is like standard contract terms. Because you will probably know a lot of the time, these types of work do not involve any kind of written contract whatsoever or any agreement of terms or often any discussion of pay before you even get to the venue, or maybe even after the show. We are encouraging members through template contracts to put things in writing with venues and to help them to fight for better sort of working conditions. Because, often, members will not have any dressing room facility, particularly it is an issue for drag artists if they are having to turn up in drag; there are obvious safety concerns there, or not having the right privacy in terms of changing rooms. So, getting a handle on these issues and how widespread they are and then bringing them together. Because ultimately, we are a union of our members, therefore empowering them to speak to each other about issues that they are all facing and to take action together through things like a drag network, which we were recently setting up, bringing together drag artists from different parts of the country.

But, yes, it is much more difficult to organise members in these places, not least because we are not a traditional workplace where everyone is at work at the same time on the same shop floor if you like. Our members are working often alone in venues late at night, so there is a real challenge of reaching members, speaking to them about us and recruiting them.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. Steve, I can see you want to come in. Can I just ask you a question in the interest of time, so that you can feed it in as well, which is that insecurity and low pay run throughout hospitality and leisure, what should the Mayor be doing?

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Well, I think there should be a charter that is strong in place on that front. I am just going to quickly revert back because there are some parallels; the keyword was security there. There are plenty of people who are working as security staff, frankly, who do not know what the law is surrounding work, who are frequently sent from one venue to another venue by taskmasters. There is no time element control, there are no health and safety controls in place, and frankly, there is a huge concern from our perspective over how we reach those atomised workers. There is something to be said in relation to that as well from where we are.

In terms of job security, frankly, until some of the laws change around the fact that you have to have two years' tenure or there is an equalities issue with an employer, frankly, most people are out of luck. It is a crapshoot whether you get a decent employer or venue to be working for. I call it the apprentice school of management, these individuals who say, "I make strong decisions. I do what I like, and people follow me." Where frankly, this is not the way to manage; this is not the way to behave. Getting people to sign up to a charter, taking people on that journey and saying, "This is what is right", and people being able to identify good employers, I think, is just as important, not only for the workers but for the individuals who are gaining value as consumers from those venues.

Zack Polanski AM: Can I just dig into that briefly? Because our primary role here is to hold the Mayor accountable, is there anything you would like to see the Mayor doing to drive up those standards?

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Well, I think we can all ask for the Mayor to include that in a passport for London if you like. Ultimately, there is a value for everyone. I spoke earlier in relation towards

making sure that, not only are we sending the message that London is open to the world, but I think also to the rest of the UK. The other thing I would say is it does not help when mainstream media put out negativity. They do not tell the good stories. That is a real concern to me. We can highlight on a micro level the good news stories, but unless positivity is coming out there, that does not help us either. There has been a continual ongoing diatribe that says London is this, London is that, we will look towards the negativities, the criminality, when there were so many good things about London. The Committee helping the Mayor note that we need to get that message out that London is definitely open for business is the value. The Mayor is already doing that, but we need to amplify that more.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you. The Mayor ran on the manifesto pledge of making London a living wage city. We had a part 1 to this panel where various venues said that paying the living wage is really difficult in the conditions that they are having to face with rising costs, etc. What would be your reflections when people say there is a trade-off between running a successful business and going for economic growth and making sure that your workers are paid properly? Obviously, it is not just about pay; it is about working conditions as well.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): I make no apology in expecting people to have a quality of life and not just a pay increase when a pay increase is needed; that just keeps them just above inflation. The whole point is about quality of life and improving people's quality of life for them to be able to do the things that others do without giving it a thought. Will I have to rob Peter to pay Paul? From my perspective, I would think from most smart people's perspective as well, they would say I would want my neighbour, my colleague, my friend, my relative to be able to have the best of the best, and that comes down to salary as well.

Zack Polanski AM: Yes, the workers are often described as an alien group as opposed to the fact that everyone is a worker, like someone who has got a job.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Well, certainly, but nonetheless, I do not want businesses to fail. I want them to be successful. I ran a business; I am not coming from left to centre on this. But there is an ethical way to do things, and there is a right way to do things. We have heard about entrepreneurial spirit from individuals, who literally have to make ends meet to make something work within an area that is not working at the moment from Charisse. Ultimately, if they are throwing money away and losing that money, I understand there is a problem there. They have to pay everyone. But the reality is all of us need to make sure that we can protect those who have not got a voice, who cannot advocate for themselves, to make sure they are being paid correctly. I understand when a business is feeling under the cosh over this, but unfortunately, prices have increased, and it needs to make sense as well from an employment perspective. If it cannot work, I am afraid it cannot work. People need to be paid to do the job. You cannot just hope they will do it for love.

Zack Polanski AM: Thank you very much. Thanks, Chair.

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Could I just add, performing arts workers, actors, are told all the time that this is the art, it is all about the art. Well, it may be art, but it is also work, and there are plenty of people who are making a lot of money out of it. Therefore, we will obviously always fight for our members' right to be paid fairly for the work that they do.

Zack Polanski AM: I think Charisse put it really well at the beginning, too, when you said it is a human right, your work. Thank you.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you, Dugald, and you have literally just beautifully segued into my question as well, which is about unpaid work. I think it is well established that unpaid work is a way that people can get a foot into the door, early career starts and things. What interventions can the Mayor take to improve

pay and conditions for career starters? Are there alternatives to this type of working arrangement to help people just starting out in their careers?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): You are totally right that unpaid work is obviously a massive issue in performing arts. Just recently we have dealt with a festival in Cambridge where the workers, the actors were told that they are volunteers, it is all done on a voluntary basis. It is a sort of equal artistic endeavour, but that festival is charging x amount for tickets with audiences in the tens of thousands, clearly making money out of this endeavour, and that is not being passed on to artists. We see cases like that all the time. As I was saying, artists and performers are constantly told that they need to agree to these sorts of conditions in order to build their careers and get on.

These are obviously long-standing practices and conditions in an incredibly competitive type of work. I think in terms of what the Mayor can do, I think working with employers and venues to make sure that they understand obligations around pay, around minimum wage rights, is something that they can do. Obviously, the Mayor has limited controls when it comes to employment rates directly, but some of that education, working with venues, enforcement, labour market enforcement is obviously a problem in the UK and well documented that we have a totally inadequate number of labour market enforcement officers to cope with the population. I think it is something like one in 1,000, one labour market enforcement officer for every thousand workers², and an employer can expect an inspection of their employment practices once every thousand years. Obviously, there needs to be much more investment across, not just the performing arts but across the economy, in enforcing these rights so that performers and other workers are paid properly.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): OK. Thank you.

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): Can I just, sorry, just on this front? It is not just unique to the arts. When you have somebody working in a bar or a pub who said, well, we have reached midnight, the venue is closed, that is what you are paid up to, but you have got cleaning up time, washing up time, and all of the other things that go with it, and you are expected to do that for nothing, or you have got to get set up for the next day. They are not being paid for that. The management expectation, and this frequently happens, "Well, you are lucky you have got the job. If you do not like it, go elsewhere", is consistent. Also, I would like to speak just quickly to the fact that health and safety in venues is a consistent issue and, because of the lack of the enforcement officers that are necessary to look at what things look like quite frequently, my belief is there is not only a risk to those who are working within the premises, there is also a risk to the patrons.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you for raising that, Steve. It is very important. Dugald, we heard from a venue operator in the first part of the investigation in July, we heard that many people working in the theatre sector prefer casual work arrangements as it permits flexibility. How far is this echoed by your members, and are there certain types of casual work arrangements that are more desirable from a worker's point of view than others?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Yes. Our members, on average, when we last surveyed them, earned about £15,000 a year from their work in the industry. Obviously, some will be earning much, much more, and some less, but obviously what that tells us is that they are earning probably at least the majority of their work, their income from work in other industries supplementing it. It is entirely normal for our members to be working in other industries. That could be hospitality work, working in theatre bars or restaurants; it could be teaching, facilitation, role play work. There are all sorts of casual types of work that our members rely on to supplement their income.

² Correction: The figure is 0.29 per 10,000 workers. The International Labour Organisation benchmark is one per 10,000 workers. This information was provided by Dugald Johnson on 16 August 2024.

I know that those employers and those theatre pitches will tell you that casual forms of work, including zero-hours contracts, are essential for them to do that. Many of our members say that they enjoy the flexibility with those types of work, but Equity's view would be that we do not need to rely on zero-hours contracts to provide that sort of flexibility and, in line with every other union in the movement, we will tell you that zero hours workers are exploitative and empower bosses at the expense of workers in terms of that flexibility, and that it often involves one-sided flexibility where the worker cannot really get out of it, but the employer can cancel shifts at last notice, and so on. We absolutely understand that flexibility is really important for members and their supplementary work, but that does not mean that we accept exploitative practices like zero-hours contracts.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. Thank you very much. Assembly Member Bokhari?

Hina Bokhari AM: Thank you. I am just going to focus on the union perspective from Equity and GMB. You have talked a lot about what the Mayor could do. There are initiatives such as the Good Work Standard on improving pay and conditions, and that is a big factor of his work. Do you think that there is more that the Mayor could be doing generally?

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): I do not think it is the issue of what the Mayor could be doing. It is about those who are adopting the standard or not adopting the standard who should be doing more. Certainly, we need to talk to the organisations who skirt around the periphery. I always talk about companies who like to put taglines on their headed paper or on their websites, "Black Lives Matter" or anything else. Mental health is important. All of these things that they put. But, really, are they doing the right thing? Talk is really cheap, but adopting those principles and following what the Mayor has put forward and doing it is the bigger issue. Therefore, my question would be, what are they doing to do the right thing? Why are they not following charters? Why are they not getting on board? I think that might be the question the Mayor needs to be asking, "Why are you not getting on board with doing the right thing by London?"

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Yes, I would echo what Steve said around putting the onus on employers to take accountability for the way they treat workers on multiple fronts and not just pay. Lots of these areas can be much more difficult to make a difference on, but overwork is a massive issue and lack of adequate rest breaks, or legal rest breaks is a big issue for our members working in theatre where a six-day week is completely normal in this industry, unlike any other, including two matinees a week and issues around transport home and safety of transport home late at night, are really serious issues too. It is not really just about black letter pay and conditions, contracts, but about the whole experience, and obviously, there is much more outside of things that the Good Work Standard that the Mayor could be doing in terms of transport and safety for performers.

Hina Bokhari AM: I will be coming to Charisse at the end, but there has not been a lot of discussion about the Night Czar, whose main responsibility is the night-time economy. Have either of you had conversations with the Night Czar, meetings, and discussions about these particular issues that you have been raising?

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): I have been involved with some meetings with Amy Lamé in the past. I would say they are infrequent only by dint of the fact I think the team are looking at a plethora of issues. Therefore, they have probably less frequent engagement. I do not expect any different, it is not like my engagement with Transport for London (TfL).

Hina Bokhari AM: You do not have a number of meetings that you have had?

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): We have intermittent meetings. But I cannot give you a precise number. I would say we have just as many meetings, as an example, or engagements where I might see other individuals involved in that industry, or even the likes of Michael Kill [Chief Executive Officer, UK Night Time Industries Association] or other people like that, who have skin in the game, as it were. Ultimately, we would always encourage as much engagement as possible. Certainly, when it comes to night-time issues with regards to transport, I really have very frequent meetings with TfL. Therefore, I can speak to the fact that, even with the Deputy Mayor, I have diarised meetings that take place. But obviously, we would always welcome every opportunity to engage.

Hina Bokhari AM: Yes, of course. Yes. Equity?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): I am not aware of any regular meetings between Equity and Amy Lamé.

Hina Bokhari AM: Yes, you are not aware of any. The support that you are getting from the Night Czar is intermittent or you are not aware of it. That is interesting in itself. Would you like to see some more support from the Night Czar?

Dugald Johnson (Policy Officer, Equity UK): Yes, we welcome support and I know that --

Hina Bokhari AM: And more engagement, yes,

Steve Garelick (Regional Organiser, GMB): The opportunity to be part of London and help make a difference is always going to be valued when we are able to speak on behalf of and advocate on behalf of our members to make sure that those who have the facility to make a change can hear what we have got to say to make that change happen.

Hina Bokhari AM: Therefore, more engagement would be very welcome. That is good to hear. Charisse, I would like to end with you. I think the role of the Night Czar is really important when it comes to particularly for black and brown people that you were talking about earlier, covering from licencing to working conditions to the industry itself. What kind of engagement have you had with the Night Czar, and what would you like the Night Czar to be doing more proactively?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): We have had quite a positive engagement with the Night Czar, to be honest, a consistent overview of REMEL in regards to the project, and the research. In regards to the GLA, we received funding, significant funding, to conduct this piece of research. I feel they have been a great support and, if I would be really honest if that support was not there, it would be just another blow, so I guess that is my warning in this.

Hina Bokhari AM: The support has been definitely from the Mayor from getting the fact that you are doing this research now.

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): We are doing this research, but in front of me, I have got a list of recommendations from our pre-research forum and would like to start seeing those carried out specifically to the GLA. Our job here at BLiM is to hold them to account and we welcome the dialogue that we currently have, and we want it to continue. Right now, it is new; like I said, it is a year and a half old. We are in a very good place with them. We want it to continue, therefore that is my warning in a sense of --

Hina Bokhari AM: Do you think that the Night Czar has a really good understanding of the challenges that you are going through right now and what needs to happen --

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Absolutely.

Hina Bokhari AM: -- and would have a good understanding of what the recommendations would be from your perspective?

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Absolutely. They have had an ear to hear and coupled with the work that they do, it has bridged the knowledge gap as well. We are all on the same page in regards to our forums, the steering committees, everybody in as a part of REMEL. There have been no issues in regards to the Night Czar. We are pleased for the best part for the moment.

Hina Bokhari AM: OK, great. Well, thank you for that.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you very much. Assembly Member Georgiou?

Alessandro Georgiou AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you, Chair. I will be very brief. This is to you, Charisse. I appreciate that you feel well supported by the Mayor and the Night Czar, but going off the theme, what Assembly Member Bokhari and Assembly Member Garratt were talking about, in terms of someone being at a Licencing Committee, shouting from the rooftop, "Allow this venue to go ahead", how many times has the Night Czar or a member of her team come to a Licencing Committee or gone to the police and said, "Can you please reconsider the decision that you have made?"

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): I cannot answer that question because I have not seen it. However, looking back at what I have seen in regards to this issue of licencing, it has definitely been a group effort led by the music industry. The influence of and the coming together of different organisations like, as I mentioned before, the Musicians Union and UK Music and their influence at Government level has made it a little bit easier, but if you are talking about that individual, I have 100 stories like that. We have work to do. We have a lot of work to do.

Alessandro Georgiou AM (Deputy Chairman): I appreciate that. I do not want to create more work for you, but if you possibly could write back to the Committee of instances - I appreciate off the top of your head it may be difficult now - of where Amy Lamé or the --

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): I have them in front of me. I will do some to --

Alessandro Georgiou AM (Deputy Chairman): Yes. If you could send them where they have turned up and said, "Yes, please support this application", it would be good to hear those stories.

Dr Charisse Beaumont (Chief Executive and Co-Founder, Black Lives in Music): Absolutely. In this case or scenario, we are working to add a little bit of grace. No grace should be given in this situation. We are actively working with these individuals on these forums to make changes, and this has been the agreed route that we will go down. It is a collaborative work. However, like I said, I have a list of recommendations, which I would love to send to you, that we would like to see the Night Czar and the GLA take on now before we even get to the research. Yes, I hear you. We want to see action now.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you. David, you had something to say?

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): Yes, just very quickly, just to say that the Night Czar was heavily supportive, I believe, with the Brixton O2 hearing. I have certainly had positive experience from sitting on the LGBTQ+ Venues Forum. I know they have certainly raised and championed venues that might have been at threat like, for example, the Royal Vauxhall Tavern (RVT). However, it might always be appropriate for the Night Czar to attend what is a local authority hearing or such or whatever.

But it goes back to a point that you were saying, Steve, about good news stories. It is very hard to get them out. I feel like the Night Czar is almost under an impossible task, really, and I feel like there are much more bad news themes to get through. She has had such an impossibly high task that sometimes the good news does not always come through. We need to see a little bit more of that and to hear a bit more of that.

Marina Ahmad AM (Chair): Thank you, Dave. Also, on the good news aspect with the work from that particular office, it is really important that we acknowledge – and there has not been very much publicity about this – that after the really awful events with the Brixton Academy in December 2022, the London Night Czar convened a national forum for safety with venues. We do not talk about that, and a lot of excellent work has come out of that. Thank you for raising the issues about good news.

We have now come to the end of this part of this investigation. David, hopefully, you are not quite as terrified as you were at the beginning. Can I thank our excellent panel, Charisse, Steve, Dugald and David, for the really enlightening answers that you have given? We are going to take a few minutes to swap over and a bit of a comfort break for the Committee as well, but before you go, as now has become a tradition, could we ask you to pose for a photo with us as well, please? Thank you very much.

Councillor David Robinson (Licensing Sub-Committee Chair, Lambeth Council): One more thing before I go very quickly. Our Lambeth Council invites you all to a walkabout in Lambeth. I know, Chair, we have done one in the daytime, and so you are more than welcome to come for an evening in Lambeth with myself and officers. There you go.

[The meeting adjourned at 3.37pm, reconvening at 3.45pm.]