

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROCHDALE

**STATEMENT OF WITNESS**

(Criminal Procedure Rules 2005 r27.1(1);  
Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980,  
s.5B)

**STATEMENT OF: Dennis Chalmers**

**AGE OF WITNESS (if over 18 enter 'over 18'): Over 18**

**OCCUPATION: Trading Standards Senior Officer**

I am employed by Rochdale Borough Council Public Protection Service as a Trading Standards Senior Officer within the Partnership Enforcement Team and am responsible for the enforcement of a wide range of consumer protection legislation, including regulations pertaining to the sale of illicit tobacco. On 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021, as part of Operation CeCe and on behalf of Stockport Council and Trading Standards North West, I conducted an enforcement visit at premises known as Go Local 18 Castle Street, Edgeley, Stockport, SK39AD due to intelligence received about the sale of illicit tobacco from the premises. I was accompanied by Sgt King of Greater Manchester Police and my colleague Phillip Mykytiuk, from Rochdale Borough Council Partnership Enforcement Team. Upon entry to the premises I encountered a Sikh male and a young girl aged approximately 8 years old. The male confirmed himself to be SALJEET SINGH, date of birth [REDACTED] and a young girl was his niece.

This male stated that he had just started working at the premises and the owner was at the Cash & Carry. After introducing myself I asked if he

This statement consisting of 4 page(s) each signed by me, is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated the 16th day of December 2021

Signed: D Chalmers

was authorised to sell alcohol in the absence of the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS), the male just looked at me with a blank expression. He clearly did not know what I was talking about or had any written authorisation. I explained that he could not sell alcohol without the DPS being present if he was not authorised or trained to do so. I then explained the reason for the inspection and that a dog handler and a tobacco detection dog, would be entering the premises in a couple of minutes to undergo a search of the premises for illicit tobacco. At this point the male spoke to the young girl giving her what appeared instructions in a foreign language. The young girl then exited the shop very quickly, I asked the male what he had said to the young girl and where had she gone. He replied that she had gone to the other shop, just over the road. A search of the premises was undertaken by the tobacco detection dog and a negative result. I completed the paperwork and explained that he was not authorised to sell alcohol, at this point he informed me that he was going to close the shop and wait until the owner turns up. I then exited the premises. Whilst I was conducting further visits in the area of Castle Street, Sgt King received a message from the police call centre who had taken a call from a member of the public informing the police that whilst, we were visiting business premises on Castle Street, an Asian male had been observed placing large quantities of tobacco into the boot of a vehicle located at the rear of Go Local on Castle Street. The vehicle in question being a Toyota registration index MF\*\*\*\*\*. We

made our way back to the rear of 18 Castle Street and found parked at the rear of the Go Local premises a Toyota vehicle registration MF\*\*\*\*\*, whilst stood at the vehicle a male came out of the back door of Go Local and identified himself as AKSHAY AHUJA date of birth \*\*\*\*\*, he informed the police officer that this was his vehicle and he was also the owner of Go Local. The police explained that we had information that tobacco had been observed being placed into the boot of the vehicle, which we suspected of being counterfeit. The male voluntarily opened his vehicle and a quantity of tobacco and Vapes were found inside the boot. I recognised the tobacco to be illicit due to the fact that it was not presented in accordance with UK law, in that the packets bore coloured packaging and the health warnings were not presented in accordance with the relevant legislation. The vapes were examined and found to be non-compliant products, as they did not contain the importer details and warnings symbols required by law. The items were seized, with the owner claiming at the time that the items were for personal use only and were not sold at his premises. I explained that the items are illegal regardless and this is a large amount for personal use. The items seized 41x packets of 50g Amber Leaf rolling tobacco, 400 Richmond cigarettes, 160 x Geek Vapes and 70 x Elf vapes. Whilst speaking to the owner of the premises and seizing the goods from the vehicle a group of several youths who were outside of the premises started to be abusive and shouting at the Police and Trading Standards officers. At one point it

took four police officers to deal with the youths who were now nose to nose with officers, shouting abuse. The officers gave a final warning to the youths to go away or they would be arrested, whilst the police were dealing with the disturbance caused by the youths, unknown to us was that some of the youths had removed the number plate from the police vehicle. They then rode off waving the number plate goading the police to chase them. Whilst the police were dealing with the youths, I was getting verbal abuse from a group of females, shouting "Have you nothing better to do, fuck off the Street". At this point it was decided for a quick withdraw from the area, due to the hostility in the area from the public. Given the presence of illicit goods with the owner of the premises, the fact that the worker at the shop had no authorisation to sell alcohol and not trained in age restricted products, whilst having access to age restricted products to sell to customers (legal or otherwise). The hostility in the area from groups of youths and the public, towards the authorities. I would have serious reservations against the management of the shop dispensing alcohol from the premises or from leaving the premises in the control of persons 'fit and proper' for the purposes of complying with the licensing objectives under the Licensing Act 2003.