**How to Respond to Notice of a Student Party**

If you’re a resident who’s just received notice that your student neighbours are planning a party, what should you do?

First, don’t simply ignore the notice and hope for the best.

If you get a note through your letterbox, think about a few questions you might want answered, and then go and tackle the students about them. Or, if it’s a knock on the door and a prospective 21st celebrant is making an approach in person, don’t be so disarmed (or charmed) that you forget your own interests. If you want help with this, please contact me (see below).

The safest course is to insist the students stick to the University of Bristol’s party guidelines. There’s a reason these guidelines exist: Experience shows that when they’re not followed, neighbours are likely to be in for a rough night. Don’t be under any illusions. Once a party gets going, it’s almost impossible to get it stopped (currently, at least). The police have refused to intervene in recent events, no matter how loud the music or how many residents are being kept awake. (They will respond to public-order offences, such as drunkenness in the street, but not to noise from within a house.)

So, better to be safe than sorry – use the party notice to get your questions in now, while you can:

* **Will the party finish by 10pm if it’s a weekday, or midnight if it’s a Friday or Saturday?** Those are the times in the UoB guidelines; you would be ill-advised to agree to anything else. (If you do suggest more-lenient limits, you perhaps should point out to the students that you are speaking only for yourself—other neighbours may insist they stick to the rules.)
* **If the event is not likely to end by those times, how long it will last?** This question isn’t the prelude to a negotiation, where you agree to meet in the middle; it’s intended to flush out what kind of event this “party” is actually going to be.
* **How many people do they expect to attend?** The university’s guidelines suggest no more than three guests per student tenant. So if there are five tenants, that’s 15 guests, making 20 people in the house in total. Student parties commonly attract multiples of these numbers—there are reports of some events attracting more than 100. It’s a reasonable assumption that some of those people will get drunk and misbehave, and that these problems will come to a head in the very early hours.
* **Will they be hiring doormen, sound equipment or a DJ?** Yes, this is the new standard for student parties. We are not talking about home stereos that got turned up a bit too loud; these events frequently involve night-club-grade equipment that can take the roof off. The world’s best ear plugs won’t save you—if you share a party wall, the vibration alone will be very uncomfortable.

Whatever the answers, unless you know your students very well and have good reason to trust them, assume the event will be longer and bigger than advertised. Often, once the party organisers themselves have had more than enough to drink, they will no longer be able to control events, and will anyway have long forgotten any promises they made to you.

So, what do you do now?

You can contact the university and express your concerns. The Community Liaison Officer, Joni Lloyd, is at 0117 331 0627.

You could likewise contact the city council’s neighbourhood enforcement team (0117 922 2500 option 3), which deals with noise issues, and even the police (on 101). We might get more response from these official bodies if they are given advance warning.

You can also contact me – I cannot guarantee that I would do any better than you might do yourself, but given that I’m trying to engage with the police and the council, it’s possible I might be in a position to help. You can email me at thenoisepages@gmail.com or (better) text or phone me at 07804 102005.

Andrew Waller

May 2018