

Staff at petrol station fined for selling alcohol to under-age girl

SURREY Police has applied for a review of a Guildford licensed petrol station after two of its employees were prosecuted for selling alcohol to an under-age girl.

Rajaratnam Uthayaraj and Mahalingham Maharajan appeared at South West Surrey Magistrates' Court after a joint test operation by Surrey Trading Standards and the force.

The court was told that a 15-year-old bought a bottle of beer from Shell Service Station on Aldershot Road without the seller questioning her age or asking for identity.

Uthayaraj, the designated premises' supervisor was fined £2,000 and ordered to

pay costs of £1,200. The seller, Maharajan was fined £200 and ordered to pay costs of £168.50. A licence review will be heard before the licensing committee in 28 days.

This is the second time that the petrol station on the A323 Aldershot Road has come to the attention of the police in recent months.

In October, two men were jailed for 18 months, each for their part in a £1 million credit and debit card-cloning scam.

Uthayaraj and Maharajan did not have any involvement with this operation.

The new licensing act, which came into force at the end of last year, provides increased powers to tackle

irresponsible trading.

In January 2005, brothers Subramaniam Ravindran and Subramaniam Manoharan were ordered by magistrates to each pay £600 plus costs after they were caught selling alcohol to a 15-year-old in a test purchase operation at Pinewood Post Office and Stores in Ash the previous year. The store is still to this day not able to sell alcohol.

A second incident of selling alcohol to a minor at the Shell service station in November is under investigation.

A Shell spokeswoman said: "Shell regrets that the sale of alcohol to an under-age girl was made by the retailer and retailer's staff at a Shell

branded station and action has been taken. Alcohol is no longer being sold at the petrol station.

"Shell keeps sales of alcohol at petrol stations under constant review.

"The retailer running the store has applied for a licence at the station in the event that it is decided to reintroduce sales there."

Guildford's licensing enforcement sergeant, Mark McGovern said the under-age supply of alcohol would not be tolerated in the borough.

"This conviction demonstrates that Surrey Police is working with its partners and together will take a firm line on any licensing breaches," he said.