

# Public Forum

## Full Licensing Committee AGM

### 19 June 2025



1. Members of the Licensing Committee
2. Officers

#### Questions

1. Joanna Booth
2. Dan Ackroyd

#### Statements.

1. Dan Ackroyd

Name: Joanna Booth

Committee: Licensing Committee

**Question 1 - What effect is the CIA having?**

What difference is the CIA zone currently having? (Please use your own words to answer this but do consider the following issues when interpreting the question's intention: e.g. do Officers believe that some applications aren't being made due to having the CIA in place? Or is it creating extra work for them? Or have any applications been refused in the past 12 months on the grounds of the CIA zone?)

**Response.**

**Officers are not able to speculate on whether applications are not being made due to the existence of the CIA.**

**The requirements for processing applications are the same whether the application is in a CIA or not, and the process is set out in statute.**

**According to our records no applications have been refused within the last 12 months based on the grounds of the CIA.**

**Question 2 - Are records kept about decisions**

It seems from reading some of the papers that the police may be using the existence of the CIA as a negotiating tool. Are records kept related to those discussions, and reported to the committee?

**Response.**

**The licensing authority are not a party to discussions between the police and applicants. If the police make a representation regarding a licence application the applicant and committee are able to see this, hear from each party, and consider the application at a hearing. Applicants and responsible authorities may discuss the representations and agree that if changes to hours or conditions are made that they don't consider a hearing necessary, which the authority can then consider.**

**The decision record of the hearing is published on the council's website.**

Question 3 - What evidence is there of misuse of the CIA?

From the minutes: "Officers advised that it was felt there was not enough evidence at this time to keep the CIA in place. The CIA was intended to be strictly applied and should not be used as a bargaining tool by responsible authorities." What evidence do officers have that the CIA zone is being used in a manner not intended?

**Response.**

**Licensing officers at the committee meeting clarified that the CIA should not be used as a bargaining tool.**

**The statutory section 182 guidance makes clear that a CIA should be strictly applied, whilst each case is considered on its own merits. The legislation sets out how applications are made and the basis for representations which should be on the likely effect of the application on the promotion of the licensing objectives.**

**Responsible authorities can make representations about whether they consider the CIA is being triggered. The committee must then consider all the information before them including their own policy and the legal advice provided before making their decision as to whether they believe the CIA is triggered or not, and whether the application can be made an exception to the policy.**

For clarity, my first question was originally asked at the CMRG, but was not in the remit of that committee, and so is being re-asked at the appropriate committee. It is possible Mr Hird may have forwarded this question also.

#### **Q1 - Decision factors**

I have to say that I find trying to understand how the Council works to be confusing.

Please can I have a simple explanation of why for the agenda item "Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) Policy Consultation" at the Licensing Committee on the 25th January, 2024, that the officer advice was: "Officer recommendation; removal of the current CIA, in respect of the city centre of Bristol."

#### **Response.**

**Based upon the consultation responses, the evidence that had been provided, and giving due regard to the Section 182 statutory guidance which requires there to be sufficient evidence for the creation or retention of a CIA, it was suggested that there was not sufficient evidence to retain the CIA at that time. A recommendation was made in line with this.**

**During the initial committee hearing members requested further information from a number of responsible authorities. A further report was published including the additional information and the recommendation was for the committee to consider the evidence and either retain the CIA or remove it and review the situation in 12 months time. At the hearing the committee heard from these responsible authorities and considered the additional information concluding that there was sufficient evidence to retain the CIA.**

#### **Q2 - Consultation responses**

The vast majority, if not all, of the responses to the consultation for whether to keep the CIA zone appear to have been dismissed as "not evidence based".

Exactly why the responses to the consultation dismissed? Although each person's opinion is just opinion, I would have thought that the responses in summation would amount to 'evidence'.

#### **Response.**

**Consultation responses are assessed in line with the Section 182 guidance, and a number of responses related to matters not dealt with under the licensing act which could not be considered. All the responses were detailed in both reports. The test is whether there is sufficient evidence to retain a CIA. The committee then**

**considered all the information before them and made a decision as detailed in the answer to q1.**

### Q3 - Consultation changes

What changes are planned for similar future consultations, so that the responses to the consultation for a 'Licensing matter' are considered?

#### **Response.**

**All responses to the consultation were considered both in preparation of the report and when the committee made their decision relating to the CIA. Each consultation is tailored to the matter it relates to, and different questions may be asked depending on what the changes or proposal are. All consultation responses are considered and assessed for relevance in any policy matter.**

cheers

Dan

Ackroyd

Two events at the licensing committee demonstrated indifference to public opinion, and arguably callousness in the way this council wields power.

The first event occurred during the review of the Cumulative Impact Assessment policy covering the city centre.

The public consultation that was carried out for this review was, metaphorically, chucked in the bin. I struggled to understand why and hope to receive a clear explanation in response to one of my questions.

What shocked me was the complete lack of surprise or remorse from officers or councillors that a consultation could be conducted in such a way that its results were unusable.

The second event was during a license review.

Following a campaign against adult entertainment licenses, BCC decided to review all sex-related licenses annually.

This yearly review was intended to allow the committee to review complaints made by members of the public.

Members of the licensing committee are expected to act judiciously and make decisions based on BCC's established policies.

What happened during one meeting was that a member decided to take a position based on Victorian era morality, and to invent new conditions for a licensee to undertake.

The position of that member could be seen as politically advantageous to themselves, as they represent a ward that has a population older than average for the city, and more conservative.

This seemed completely inappropriate.

I would strongly suggest that in future, if there are no complaints to discuss at the license review, then the licensee should be informed that the license will be renewed, and the meeting cancelled.

Requiring a member of the public to attend a meeting imposes costs in time and money. It also caused the licensee significant anxiety that their business might suddenly be forced to close.

I remain convinced that either the Committee Model Working Group or the Committee Model Review Group should have examined why the people of Bristol chose to move from a Mayoral to a Committee model.

That decision was not made on a whim.

It was made because the public has deep distrust of how this Council makes decisions.

As a quasi-judicial body, the licensing committee should be above reproach in how it makes decisions.

Dan Ackroyd