



Bristol City Council's Advertising and Sponsorship Policy

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Context

- Like many cities, Bristol faces ingrained health inequalities and increased prevalence of fast-food outlets in areas of high deprivation.
- BCC has ongoing commitment to tackling health inequalities and taking a prevention focus.
- Development of policy had support of public, councillors and Mayor. Precedent had been set by Transport for London.
- At the time of adoption, advertising platforms owned by BCC included 180 LCD-TFT bus shelters, 17 billboard sites and social media channels.
- At the time of adoption, revenue was estimated at £1 million.



Development

- Policy was developed over an 18-month period, including:
 - Working with Public Health to develop an evidence and business case
 - If we're honest: a lot of time on the back-burner
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Councillor scrutiny
 - Decision Pathway
- Following scrutiny:
 - Restrictions on high fat, salt or sugar food (HFSS) were broadened
 - Process for decision making was clarified
 - The consideration of the council's environmental aims were noted
- The policy was adopted at Cabinet (under previous Mayoral system) in March 2021



Advertising and Sponsorship Policy



Main tenants

- Sets a consistent and council-wide approach to advertising and sponsorship restrictions
- Sets out a clear (but not exhaustive) list of promotions that are not permissible (see next slide)
- Ensures all arrangements are governed by a signed agreement
- Historical arrangements to be subject to the policy at 'next contractually available juncture'
- Clarifies the council's role as a planning authority and advertising infrastructure
- Accompanied by a HFSS Policy Guidance Note. This sets out further clarity on carrying out the policy in practise



**Advertising and
Sponsorship Policy:
High Fat, Salt or Sugar
Policy Guidance Note**



Not permitted

- Advocacy of, or opposition to, any party political purpose
- Disparagement of any person or class of persons
- Promotion or incitement of illegal acts
- Promotion or availability of sexually orientated entertainment materials
- Promotion or availability of tobacco products or substitute tobacco products, weapons, gambling or illegal drugs
- Advertising of loan advancers which meet the Financial Standards Authority's definition of 'High Cost Short Term (HCST)'
- Advertising of organisations who offer ways to avoid paying legitimate tax in the UK
- Promotion or availability of foods and drinks that are high in fat, salt and/or sugar (HFSS) as defined by the Department of Health and Social Care's nutrient profiling model, without exceptions. This includes advertisements where there is a range of food/drink featured, some of which is HFSS
- Promotion or availability of alcoholic drinks. This includes advertisements where there is a range of drinks featured, some of which are alcoholic
- Promotion of a food or drink brand (including food and drink service companies or ordering services) where no food or drink product is featured directly. These brands and services will only be able to place advertisements if the advertisement promotes healthier options (i.e. non HFSS products) as the basis of the copy.
- Advertising that infringes on any trademark, copyright or patent rights of another company. Claims or representations in violation of advertising or consumer protection laws

Delivery and Impact

- Delivery needed to be pragmatic – early lessons were learned about the letter vs the spirit of the policy.
- Some foods fall foul of the policy but might not be considered problematic – smoked salmon, pesto and others all got discussed.
- Expect a strong level of interest from some councillors, campaigners and members of the public – both for and against.
- We were particularly mindful of our own content generation, but still came unstuck once or twice in the early days.
- One key lesson is people become adept at catching the obvious examples quickly, but the nuances take time – for example background imagery in non-food related brands' adverts.



Delivery and Impact

- Bristol Evaluation of Advertising Restrictions Study (2023) has highlighted a reduction in consumption of HFSS products in participants, but impact is limited by council only owning approximately 30% of advertising space in the city (BMC Public Health)
- Few breaches have occurred and concerns over financial implications have not been realised
- But systematising enforcement is challenging with limited resources. Onus is with advertisers to comply and contractors to enforce.
- Officers are now beginning the process of reviewing the policy, with particular consideration of advertising and sponsorship of high-carbon products
- BCC benefits from overseeing policy compliance with any advertising involving Bristol Design



Next steps

- The council's new Corporate Strategy 2025-2030 focuses its approach on prevention and commits to developing a wider health prevention framework
- Officers are now beginning the process of reviewing the policy, with particular consideration of advertising and sponsorship of high-carbon products
- The policy has paved the way for BCC signing up to the BNSSG Why Weight? pledge (May 2025). The pledge commits the council (and partners) to further tackling weight inequality and will apply across the council

Corporate Strategy



2025 – 2030

