

Appendix A – Initial responses from Medway Public Health and Kent Police

Public Health:

I have discussed this with the Director, and he has instructed me to continue to support the CIA and provide evidence for its renewal.

I would be grateful if you could provide me with a timeline so I can plan when I need to get the evidence to you to support this policy.

Kent Police:

Kent Police supports the continued use of Cumulative Impact Policies and recognises their value as an important tool in promoting the licensing objectives, particularly the prevention of crime and disorder. Where supported by a robust evidence base, such policies can assist licensing authorities in managing the cumulative effects of licensed premises within areas already experiencing disproportionate levels of alcohol-related harm, disorder and enforcement demand.

However, there remains a need for greater understanding, ownership and commitment to these policies by licensing authorities. A Cumulative Impact Policy is ultimately a policy of the licensing authority and should therefore be actively maintained, reviewed and supported by that authority. In practice, it often appears that the burden of evidencing and defending the policy falls disproportionately on the police, requiring significant investment of time, analytical work and operational resources.

Police licensing officers are frequently expected to provide detailed crime data, intelligence, demand analysis and hearing representations in support of a local authority policy, whilst receiving limited support from the authority responsible for adopting and maintaining that policy. This can create a perception that the policy is being driven by police evidence alone, rather than being a shared position owned collectively by the licensing authority and its responsible authorities.

Kent Police would also urge greater consistency in the approach taken by licensing sub-committees when determining applications within cumulative impact areas. Consistency in decision-making is essential to maintaining confidence in the licensing regime and ensuring that applicants, responsible authorities and local communities understand how the policy will be applied in practice. Where different panels adopt significantly different interpretations of the same policy, there is a risk of undermining its effectiveness and creating uncertainty for all parties.

To support this, there should be ongoing and consistent training for members sitting on licensing hearings. Such training should cover the purpose and legal framework of Cumulative Impact Policies, the weight that can properly be attached to them, relevant case law, and the consideration of evidence presented by responsible authorities and applicants. Improved training would help promote consistency, strengthen decision-making and reduce the risk of successful appeals or challenges.

Moving forward, a more collaborative approach is required. Where a licensing authority elects to retain a Cumulative Impact Policy, there should be a shared commitment to maintaining the evidence base, reviewing its effectiveness and supporting its application at licensing hearings. This would ensure that responsibility for defending the policy is appropriately shared and that decisions are supported by the broad range of evidence and expertise available across partner agencies.

Ultimately, Cumulative Impact Policies remain a valuable licensing tool, but their long-term effectiveness depends upon licensing authorities taking a proactive role in supporting, evidencing and defending the policies they have chosen to adopt, whilst ensuring that members are appropriately trained and that hearings are conducted with a consistent and transparent approach.