

Statement: CS08.01

Cabinet – 1st September 2020

Re: Agenda item 8 – Clean Air Zone

Statement submitted by: Councillor Anthony Negus

The rethinking on the CAZ is much as the more radical yet realistic approach I have been advocating for over a year at the briefings to OSMB and with greater focus since Covid. Lockdown and what has followed has initially created vehicle reductions and so cleaner air but this has consolidated since and it has become possible to plan for longer-term changes in work and travel patterns.

Rules and red-lines force changes and have variable effects on addressing problems but we would prefer a shift in approach, aided by realistic alternatives, without which problems move into different locations and morph into new issues. The CAZ could have been a support aid when treatment was needed.

Bristol LibDems are therefore pleased that common sense has finally prevailed in the face of Covid-reduced traffic and likely resulting changed work patterns:

- we welcome a different approach that we believe should seek to deliver sustainable assurance of Clean Air instead of a physical 'zone' that seeks to control the problem of unhealthy air quality rather than solving it
- we are enthusiastic about the use of innovative, smart technology but it must be trusted and so monitoring needs to be transparent and publicly accessible to assure confidence
- we believe that this approach now presents opportunities to address and overcome our concerns about additional and unfair pressures on people with older diesel and more polluting vehicles though any local scheme will need to rely on government funding
- this alternative 'fix' should work for now but it is crucial that the city builds on this to make such temporary relief permanent by increasing efforts to tackle the issues that, if not solved, will make a physical restriction zone permanently necessary in the future
- we should seek the transfer of the government grant for the CAZ to a more sustainable action plan, strengthening the grants already received recently for social distancing and active travel.

Fundamental to this forward thinking should be franchising our bus service , using government funds for treatment and suppression of the most frustrating need in Bristol - having a clean, reliable, safe and easily-accessed means of getting everyone to and from all parts of our city as we need it, not as profit dictates.

- we want the new priority to be measures that reduce all polluting vehicle emissions and offer alternatives

Bristol LibDems urge the mayor to make the most of this unfortunate opportunity.

We need to accelerate our transfer to alternative means of clean(er) transport lest we slip back. Covid for all its sad consequences has offered us a brief opportunity to put this right. This will need co-operation and trust and a workable appealing mass-transit system, probably an improved bus service for the foreseeable future, that operates under franchise to deliver the service the whole of this city needs to reduce our dependency on polluting cars.

But we must also move up the agenda the movement of goods that no previous strategy has meaningfully addressed.

Bristol LibDems believe it is the right thing to support this developing change of approach without which other opportunities for more sustainable solutions cannot be immediately tackled. We want lasting change to improve the well-being of all our citizens. Let's draw a line under heavy-handed restrictions and start applying the necessary smart treatments.