

Public Forum

Licensing Committee

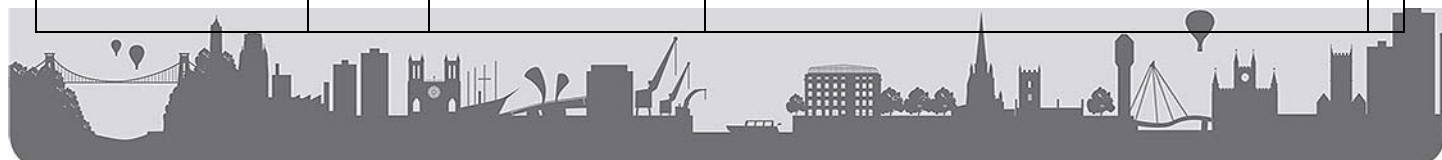
8th March 2021 @ 9am



To: Licensing Committee



Number	Page	Speaker	Agenda Item 6 Sex Establishments Policy Consultation
PQ 01	p.1	Speaker	Thomas Pearce
PQ 02	p.2		Gwyneth Brain
PQ 03	p.3		Dylan Woodward
PQ 04	p.4		Toni Mayo
PQ 05	p.5		Edan Webster
Statements			
PS 01	6-10		Dr Sasha Rakoff
PS 02	p.11		Ms Ollie Fortune
PS 03	p.12	Speaker	Katy Taylor
PS 04	p.13	Speaker	Anne Smith
PS 05	p.14	Speaker	Chris Green
PS 06	p.15		Jessica Risque
PS 07	p.17		Stephanie Poyntz
PS 08	p.18		Anon Worker
PS 09	p.19		Jet
PS 10	p.20	Speaker	Margot
PS 11	p.21	Speaker	Bristol Fawcett Society Helen Mott
PS 12	p.22	Speaker(?)	Charles Sherratt
PS 13	p.23		Laura
PS 14	p.24		Claire Thomas
PS 15	p.25		James Hitch
PS 16	p.26	Speaker	Carrie Hall Director Central Chambers
PS 17	p.28		Abbie
PS 18	p.30		P Pascual
PS 19	p.31		Ben Sollars
PS 20	p.32		Robyn Rooke
PS 21	p.33		Cheryl Sellwood
PS 22	p.34		Lucie Tutton
PS 23	p.35	Speaker	Sarah Classick
PS 24	p.36		Charlotte Greenstock



PS 25	p.37	Speaker	Jasmine Milne	
PS 26	p.38		Nicola	
PS 27	p.39	Speaker	Brendan Murphy BARBIE	
PS 28	p.40		Leighton DeBurca - Place Making Bristol Co Uk	
PS 29	p.43		Florrie Adamson Leggett	
PS 30	p.44	Speaker	Tracy Hale	
PS 31	p.45	Speaker	Chloe	
PS 32	p.46		Claire	
PS 33	p.48		Kayleigh Hide	
PS 34	p.49		Ms V Brant	
PS 35	p.50		Jeanette Plumb	
PS 36	p.51		Rebekah Wills	
PS37	p.53		Sophie Roberts	
PS38	p.54		Bristol Sex Workers Collective	



**Question from Thomas Pearce
With Replies**

1. If the committee decides to close these establishments, what financial help from the council will be given to the workers and their families who rely on this income to survive?

Reply:

The committee are not being asked to approve a final policy, simply to allow officers to undertake a consultation on a draft policy which proposes changes to the numbers of SEVs permitted in 2 localities in Bristol; the City Centre and Old Market. No decision on a final policy is being made at this time.

2. The consultation makes reference to 9 different respondents. Only one of these was a worker in the industry (and they were against the proposals). Did this consultation reach out to any unions that represent workers in these venues (for example, GMB union), or any sex worker advocacy groups when collecting this information?

Reply:

A wide range of people were consulted in the early stages as well as throughout the policy review. At each stage the Council has widely publicised the consultation and questionnaire both of which were open for any person or organisation to comment on. We have also written specifically to national groups representing sex workers, and will ensure that this is repeated in this consultation.

3. Please can I confirm the employment status of the workers at these venues? Respondent 4 (Fawcett society) puts forward that these workers are self employed. "The loss of one type of adhoc, often inadequately recompensed work could be substituted for more regular employment." Can the committee confirm that this is true in this case; and therefore whether these clubs are legally compliant. Nowak -v- Chandlers Bars in 2020 ruled that the workers at these venues are legally workers, and not self employed.

Reply:

It is a matter for each venue to determine, and conditions within Bristol require that 'Performers may perform only in accordance with written contracts, which define their rights and obligations, including terms as to the nature of their performance and payment. No deduction shall be made from such payment unless permitted by the contract, and no deduction by way of penalty shall be permitted'.

Questions Gwyneth Brain LGBT+ Officer for Bristol South Labour Party
Replies

My question for the licensing and planning committee on SEVs as part of the Sex Establishments Policy section is this:

1. The council documents listed on its website concerning SEV licensing lists many voices of those who are claim feminism but are very much sex worker exclusionary in their feminism, voices not linked to SEVs directly and erasing SEV worker voices in favour of their almost paternalistic line of knowing what is best for these workers. Yet at the same time those documents only list one SEV worker speaking about her work and life and feelings on the industry and gives a very different image. Given many of the anti-SEV and other anti-sex worker arguments are around social justice and equality, and given a key tenet of social justice and equality is 'nothing about us without us' - how many workers at SEV venues have this committee listened to and will their voices be given weight as workers in the field?

Reply:

A wide range of people were consulted in the early stages as well as throughout the policy review. At each stage the Council has widely publicised the consultation and questionnaire both of which were open for any person or organisation to comment on. We have also written specifically to national groups representing sex workers, and will ensure that this is repeated in this consultation.

2. Have you consulted with sex worker collectives on this or are you giving more weight to outside voices imposing their morality in an attempt to remove agency from SEV workers?

Reply:

As above, we have consulted with, and will continue to consult with a wide range of people and organisations representing all stakeholders in this matter.

- Gwyneth Brain,

Dylan Woodward:

Please see below two written questions for the public forum section of the Licensing Committee Meeting on Monday 8th March.

1. The council's impact analysis makes the claim that potential safety issues for performers "would be entirely mitigated in localities where a nil cap is introduced." What evidence is there to support this claim, considering that a key argument of groups representing sex workers such as SWARM is that the existence of formal, regulated environments for different forms of sex work is essential in promoting harm reduction, as workers would otherwise be forced into riskier, unregulated environments.

Reply:

There is no evidence of unregulated venues within the city of a similar nature to the current venues. The focus of the EQIA must be related to the impacts of the policy on sex establishments which the council regulates. If the venue is removed then any potential risk to the performer within that venue is also removed.

2. Given the apparently low number of responses from performers in these venues, what efforts were made to encourage responses from performers, trade unions which represent them such as the GMB, or sex-worker advocacy groups such as SWARM?

Reply:

A wide range of people were consulted in the early stages as well as throughout the policy review. At each stage the Council has widely publicised the consultation and questionnaire both of which were open for any person or organisation to comment on. We have also written specifically to national groups representing sex workers, and will ensure that this is repeated in this consultation.

Question: Toni Mayo

Reply:

1. What consultations have taken place with organisations such as Bristol SWARM regarding SEV licensing; to ensure that those affected by the proposed licensing rules are sufficiently involved in key decisions that affect them, and their rights and safety are ensured?

Reply:

A wide range of people were consulted in the early stages as well as throughout the policy review. At each stage the Council has widely publicised the consultation and questionnaire both of which were open for any person or organisation to comment on. We have also written specifically to national groups representing sex workers, and will ensure that this is repeated in this consultation.

Toni Mayo

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Bristol South CLP Women's Officer

Questions: Edan Webster

Replies:

1. During the Covid pandemic, much of Bristol's nightlife has been put on hold, and the unemployment rate has more than doubled; with the huge impact that this devastating year has had on Bristol's economy; what are the farther impacts going to be for the workers, and for the surrounding businesses if these independent clubs - who employ more than 100 women, many of which are single mothers and students - are forced to close in the wake of this pandemic?

Reply:

The committee are not being asked to approve a final policy, simply to allow officers to undertake a consultation on a draft policy which proposes changes to the numbers of SEVs permitted in 2 localities in Bristol; the City Centre and Old Market. No decision on a final policy is being made at this time.

Sexual Entertainment Venues have already had to be closed in law throughout the pandemic, as they are one of the named restricted businesses.

2. Bristol City Council carried out a study in 2018, with a view to "use the information gathered from this survey to inform a draft policy" and the results of the survey found that the majority of Bristol residents felt that they were happy for SEVs to continue to operate within the city, provided they were away from places of worship and schools; why is the council wishing to go against the data found in their own research, where the purpose of the aforementioned research is meant to inform the policy?

Reply:

The committee are not being asked to approve a final policy, simply to allow officers to undertake a consultation on a draft policy which proposes changes to the numbers of SEVs permitted in 2 localities in Bristol; the City Centre and Old Market. No decision on a final policy is being made at this time and this consultation will further inform the Council in making a decision.

Edan Webster, Bristol resident, BS16

Bristol Statement

Not Buying It works closely with survivors of the strip industry to raise awareness of its harms. Our CEO helped bring in SEV legislation 10 years ago to end the licensing of strip clubs like cafes. More recently, Not Buying It has been involved in 2 successful High Court cases against one council (Sheffield) showing its pro-strip industry stance was a breach of equality law. It should be noted that this included *not* giving due consideration to the overwhelming evidence of the harm of the industry, particularly its objectification and commodification. It included *not* listening to the valid concerns of those who object. It included *not* considering the impact of the industry on society at large in addition to those working in clubs ¹.

So we want to be sure the council is aware that the strip industry is inherently harmful. And it is harmful *even in* a perfectly run club, with no breaches, no sexual contact, respectful punters who behave like perfect gentlemen and management that genuinely does treat staff like it's one big happy family.

This is because the entire premise of the industry is inherently harmful. It is based on the objectification of women and the commodification of women's bodies. Objectification, self-objectification, commodification are all intrinsically harmful. And this is harmful *whether or not* it has been chosen (and in a society where girls are bombarded from the youngest age with hyper-sexualised messages, so that this becomes part of your very identity and self worth, then of course there is going to be an endless stream of young women who 'chose' lap dancing).

As Elena ², formerly in the industry says: "I'm a sex object anyway"

Lucy ³: "I'd fallen for the myth that lap dancing is a good way of making a lot of money very quickly.

Vicky ⁸:

"I went into that job .. believing that it was in some way going to be ..empowering. What I didn't realise .. is that my perception of female sexual identity was entirely framed and formed of objectification. The sexuality you display in a lap dancing club, in pornography, in lads mags, is entirely centred upon one thing: the gratification of men. My body as a tool for your pleasure - to be admired, to be manipulated, to be used. Lap dancing and standard pornography are not liberation and they are not empowerment. They are the best trick yet from the bag of female repression. If we pay you for it, then you can't complain."

¹ <https://localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/licensing/399-licensing-news/38697-council-concedes-in-strip-club-policy-legal-challenge-over-equality-duty-failure>

² Elena's testimony: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/19/gender.uk>

³ Lucy's testimony: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/mar/08/sex-industry-lap-dancing>

The harm of objectification, self objectification and commodification – ie the entire premise of lap dancing is confirmed by researchers ⁴ and psychologists ⁵, ⁶.

It is confirmed by women who have *exited* the strip industry:

Liz ¹⁰ “At the end it was dehumanising, soul destroying and filled with desperation..”

Elena ² “The men just see you as an object, not a person, and whether you are equally engaged in their desire is irrelevant”

Women who have exited the industry also make another very important point. When you are in it you do not see or acknowledge this harm:

Elle ⁷ “ I felt validated by the attention, validated through the compliments. I told myself I was powerful, I was the one taking advantage of the men, those poor souls. I was the one in charge.”

It wasn't until Elle left that she realised the harm: “For the first time in a very long time, I felt like myself, my authentic self. I felt like I'd finally found myself. .. The one thing I didn't expect to feel is relieved, yet that's how I feel now. I feel free”

Vicky ⁸ “The perception of lap dancing is that it's easy to make lots of money. *You can't admit to being the exception to the rule.* You have to play the game. You're a dancer, of independent means, you're glamorous, exciting. Whereas in reality you are skint, spotty, exhausted, hungover. You have a rash from constantly shaving your pubes. And with every night that goes by you begin to feel less and less like a human being.”

Keisha ⁹ “in reference to those still within the industry, it is impossible to give a balanced, free-of-coercion opinion on something for which your very survival depends upon. You will find the vast majority .. are disproportionately at high risk of homelessness, food poverty and other complications which come from a lack

⁴ <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/089124302236987>

⁵ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/713840248>

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3508959/#B5>

⁷ Elle's testimony: <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2018/06/14/the-lost-soul-elle-elizabeths-journey-through-lap-dancing/>

⁸ Vicky's testimony: https://notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/LAP%20DANCING%20testimony_%20Vicky.pdf

⁹ Keisha's testimony: <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Keisha-Testimony.pdf>

of economic opportunity ..Therefore, the argument of choice is a tainted one. What real choice is poverty or exploitation?”

Liz ¹⁰: “The strange thing about lap dancing is how things that would be unacceptable in real life become normal in the club.”

This lack of acknowledgement of harm is particularly telling in those fresh to the industry:

Liz ¹⁰ : “For a time lap dancing was great, and a job that I truly enjoyed. I felt sexy and confident in work and felt part of a team with the other girls; the manager really liked me and was always complimentary to me and fair.

Elle ⁷ : “I have many friends that still strip. They claim they love the work. I know they don’t. They love the money. They tell themselves sweet lies to cover up the truth. I hope with all my heart my friends find their way out, find their own validation, find their own freedom.”

These are just some of the reasons why no one from the industry ever speaks out, publicly, against it (or if they do it is always ‘other clubs’ that have problems, *not* their current place of work).

This form of denial has also been evidenced by academics. Who have noted not only denial but ‘higher loyalties’ to the strip club and even dissociation ^{11, 12}. This is research, by the way, carried out by pro-sex trade academics in clubs they deem well run in an industry they see as empowering. These academics attribute this extreme emotional damage to ‘stigma’.

This harm cannot be prevented. You cannot write an Equality Impact Assessment that nullifies this. You cannot ensure the wellbeing of those in the industry, you cannot abide by equality law while you license the strip industry.

And this harm is not just about breaching equality law in terms of gender, the industry is also inherently racist and homophobic:

¹⁰ Liz’s testimony: https://notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/LAP%20DANCING%20testimony_Liz.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01639625.1992.9967914>

¹² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/713840274?src=recsys>

As Keisha ⁹ points out:

“ .. clubs are fundamentally sexist, racist, homophobic establishments who fetishize colonialist stereotypes of "exotic" BAME women by reducing them to their physical and racialised attributes

.. the forced depiction of lesbianism by heterosexual dancers for monetary gain is also a contradiction with any other work establishments adherence to equality law.”

Furthermore, this harm is not just about the harm done to women in the industry, it is about the harm done to *all women in wider society*. You are equally bound under equality law to seek to prevent this. But if you license strip clubs, you cannot. You cannot prevent the attitudes that licensing the strip trade promotes in those who use it or the messages its mere presence loud hails about what women are for and how men are supposed to treat and view us.

As Vicky ⁸ puts it “mainstreaming of lap dance clubs fits into a sexist ‘sex object culture’ underpinning gender based violence and discrimination.”

Keisha ⁹: “objectification breeds violence by default, it cannot be reformed.”

As the lead solicitor for the successful legal challenge against Sheffield City Council points out:

‘This is an important battle for sex equality ..in convincing the Council of the **negative impact of women generally of allowing a proliferation of strip clubs**” ¹³

“The law is very clear that if a particular issue is highly relevant for sex equality, a public body must look very carefully at **any negative impact on women.**” ¹⁴

And: “a local authority .. must look long and hard of the adverse impact on sex equality of letting such an enterprise [a strip club] **exist at all**. Otherwise it will be acting unlawfully and be subject to legal challenge.”¹⁵

I’ll finish in the words of survivors of this industry – and yes, they see this as something they have survived, which surely speaks for itself:

¹³ <https://dpglaw.co.uk/sheffield-city-council-concedes-on-strip-clubs-policy-challenge/>

¹⁴ <https://www.notbuyingit.org.uk/sites/default/files/Sheffield%20Press%20Release.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SheffieldShame.pdf>

Keisha⁹: “If you care at all for the welfare of these vulnerable women instead of profit - you will not licence exploitation.. instead, you will provide support for exit services to help aid these women out. You will provide an alternative.”

Darna¹⁶: “You, as decision-makers and policymakers, must remember that you have a commitment to creating communities where women have real work .. Moreover, you have a responsibility to young girls who are still not there. You can no longer help my survivor friends or me; in our case, the damage is already done. That said, you can create a better life and a better community for my daughters. Like your own daughters, they don't deserve to be sold to punters.”

¹⁶ Darna’s testimony: <https://notbuyingit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Darna-2019.pdf>

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Dear democratic services,

Please find below my statement relating to agenda item 6 of the licensing committee meeting at 9 am on Monday 8th March. I will not be attending the meeting as it clashes with work.

Kind regards,

Ollie.

I have never been to a sexual entertainment venue and I don't plan on it either, but common sense and evidence from other countries shows that is far less detrimental for society as well as the women involved for sex work to be legal, regulated and for those in the industry to pay tax and be full members of society.

Obviously venues like Urban Tigers exist only on the very edge of the sex industry but they are still part of that group. I have nothing but respect and admiration for any woman who makes the decision to earn money this way and I believe that society has a duty to keep them safe and protected. Pushing them underground by closing venues does the opposite.

Many sex workers in the Netherlands, for example, are being furloughed at the moment which means that they can keep themselves and their community safe during lockdown. What do you think sex workers in this country are doing where it is illegal? Those who are unable to make money via webcams are undoubtedly putting themselves and society at risk by having sex in exchange for money!

Closing sexual entertainment venues was a pre election pledge made by Marvin Rees. If you're wondering why he has waited until now to threaten Urban Tigers with closure then I should think it's because he's trying to distract the people of Bristol from the fact that he has:
failed to deliver an arena.
failed to intervene sooner when Bristol Energy was clearly haemorrhaging tax payers money
failed to deliver the number of affordable homes he promised.
failed to sort out the city's air pollution problem until central government got heavy.
Failed to provide answers to questions when held to account by opposition councillors; and finally:
Failed to inspire faith in citizens of Bristol like myself who lent him my vote back in 2016 in good faith.

I am angry that women are not only being used to divide opinion with this agenda item but also to distract us from the fact that the mayor has failed, in my opinion, to get on top of the real problems that this city faces.

I genuinely don't know how this council can go to bed at night knowing that the number of people waiting to be housed by the council has risen from 12,000 to at least 13,000 in the last few years. That's what this organisation should be focussing on; get your priorities straight!

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Katy Taylor Director of Bristol Women's Voice

Dear Councillor

I am writing ahead of the 8th March meeting when the full licencing committee will agree to put out the draft policy that includes a NIL CAP on sexual entertainment venues for consultation.

I am aware there is a campaign orchestrated by supporters of sexual entertainment venues and that Councillors have been receiving letters to this effect.

As an organisation run by, for and with women across Bristol, I am writing to stress our support for the nil cap policy. We'd also want to thank you for the work you have done so far to research the impact of sexual entertainment venues on women and girls, for listening to their experiences and for engaging with experts and women's organisations as part of your process.

At Bristol Women's Voice we strongly feel, as the research shows, that sexual entertainment venues are detrimental to the wellbeing of women and girls (and men and boys) and that a nil cap will improve women and girls' access to and experience of public city centre spaces.

We would also highlight that, given Covid-19 has prevented the running of sexual entertainment venues, women who were working in them will have had to find alternative employment over the last year and in this respect, now is the time to implement the nil-cap policy with the least disruption to that small number of women's livelihoods.

Supporting women into non-exploitative, paid work is also cost effective for any Council. It means women will be in work where they are far more likely to be paying taxes (often not the case when self-employed in the strip industry) and it avoids the very costly mental health or social support women are evidenced to disproportionately need if they remain in the sex trade.

Thank you again for your work to implement a nil-cap policy; it is important and valued.

Yours sincerely,

Katy Taylor

Director

Bristol Women's Voice

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8th Nov Lic Committee – SEV

Dear Services

I write to ask you as chair of the Women's Safety Task Group in Bristol to note our support of a nil cap on SEVs in Bristol. We also feel it is wholly inappropriate to be considering this licencing on International Women's Day, a day reserved for the celebration of women and of the progress we have made towards equality when SEVs are regressive.

We feel the presence of SEVs makes cities less safe for women and Bristol is no exception. There is considerable evidence of women who work in SEVs being assaulted by male punters and this not being reported to the police, as it would threaten the business. The presence of a venue which promotes the selling of sexual behaviour of men by women, promotes an unhealthy power balance in what should be an equal relationship. There is also evidence that being self employed in an SEV is a gateway to prostitution and that many of the workers, when interviewed after their time working in an SEV are very damning of their experiences calling them places that "destroy people. Not only the dancers but I've seen men in here who blow their whole paychecks in one night" and "It robs you of your heart and soul. I would tell anybody – you should tell everybody, don't do it". All of this is detailed in the attached research paper.

The Mayor has committed to a nil cap. I also write as someone who has seen evidence of the danger to members of the public, particularly women, when walking around SEVs at night; people who leave come out and harass women passing in the street. I used to live at the end of a street where there was an SEV in east London and was frightened to walk past there at night.

I would be grateful if this email is acknowledged. Thank you

Best,

Anna

--

Anna Smith
Chief Executive Officer, One25

Lic Sub 8th March SEV

Chris Green OBE UN Leader of Men Founder White Ribbon Campaign UK

I give the information below about myself to show how seriously our work to end violence against women is taken at the national and international level. Work that councils directly undermine when they license sex entertainment venues:

In 2009 I was invited by the UN Secretary General to become one of only 11 men globally to be a UN Network of Men Leaders. Others in this group included the Prime Minister of Spain Jose Zapatero, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu . The UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon called on us to "Unite to change attitudes that incite, perpetuate and condone violence against women."

For three years I served on the Council of Europe Task Force to eliminate violence against women as a representative of the Congress of Regional and Local Authorities of the Council of Europe. This Task Force set the basis for the Istanbul Convention. Article 12 of this legally binding convention, states "Parties shall take necessary measures to encourage all members of society, especially men and boys, to contribute actively to preventing all forms of violence covered by the Convention." The UK prime minister David Cameron signed this convention some 6 years ago and the UK is in the process of joining the other 32 countries that have ratified it .

In 2004 I founded the UK branch of The White Ribbon Campaign – engaging with men and boys to end male violence against women and girls. In 2017 I was awarded an OBE for my work on promoting equality between women and men.

I feel it is the absolute duty of elected representatives to challenge the commodification of women and attitudes which condone harmful attitudes and behaviours.

Sex Entertainment Venues by their nature (promoting and selling sexual encounters) directly support and promote attitudes which constitute and foster discriminatory behaviour by men and boys towards women and girls, attitudes of entitlement which are the major causes of men's violence against women and girls.

The licensed availability of sex for sale on the high street encourages people with sexist views to think that their views are 'normal', acceptable and shared by others.

These premises condone the sexism and culture of violence and entitlement (from unequal pay to domestic abuse) present in the everyday lives of people who have developed harmful attitudes. It is these attitudes that public bodies with responsibility for the public health of citizens are directly tasked with preventing and eliminating.

Instead of continually licensing venues to legitimise harmful attitudes -and often much worse - the council should stop legitimising this form of the sex trade and support all women to exit who require such support.

Chris Green

I would like the opportunity to address the meeting if possible, however limited the time .

--

Chris Green O.B.E. (Equality)
 Founder White Ribbon Campaign UK,
 UN Leader of Men

8th March Lic Sub SEV

Dear Bristol's licensing committee,

It has come to my attention that the council are lobbying to put a zero cap on Bristol's SEVs rather than sticking to the current cap of two. I must say that I find this extremely Un progressive and actually very disrespectful, to decide how another human (especially femme presenting) can CHOOSE to use their time and energy to make a living.

I would like to clearly see the evidence of the correlation of having two SEVs and the violence towards women? How is this providing equality if shows including "The Black Full Monty" allowed to go ahead in the city centre?

These venues are not promoting the "selling of women's bodies on the high street", in fact diminishing someone else's job to this is, is more degrading than the job its self.

I have personally worked in both clubs in Bristol as-well as internationally and they both are the safest and extremely well run. They have multiple safety guards put in place to ensure the customers and dancers are safe and taken care of at ll times including making sure they wait for all the performers are on their way home and no one is hanging around at the end of the shift and the multiple CCTV cameras in all parts of the venue. The amount of security guards for the size of venue are more than I have ever seen and they are always very professional and take up most care in making sure all staff are well. The managers and bar staff are also always on hand and ready to keep anyone in line that is needed.

I also find it very unsettling that it is assumed, that all of the customers who come into the venues are creeps or dangerous. These people could be your brother/sister, or neighbour or even your husband/wife... you are implicating that probably more than one person you know is out to violently harm another human simply for going to enjoy their company in a safely controlled environment Yes, this does happen in other places I will not deny it but this very rarely if at all happens in these two venues and this actually comes from the point that more education is needed and acceptance not less.

I also keep referring to the customers in a gender-neutral terms because it is exactly that, gender neutral. I have had many customers who are of all binaries and sexualities, who have come and used the experience to build confidence in accepting who they are. To be able to tell someone things you may feel nervous about, who you know is not going to judge and some just to enjoy a fun night out with connections with people you would not meet otherwise. I also identity in the LGBTQ+ community and know that I can help share my experiences and knowledge to someone who may need a shoulder to lean on and bring a more relatable type of experience.

It is always very important to not assume that every dancer in the venue is the same, there are single mums who else will not be able to support their children there are students who want to fund university degrees and there are people on the poverty line who need to care for sick parents, like myself. Taking away this opportunity of work after a global pandemic is unfair and will push for more underground events/bookings/venues that will not be as controlled or safe, endangering the entertainers further to violence and health conditions.

We want this to go out to public consultation so the voices of the people of Bristol can be heard and not just have a decision made behind closed doors and also without the people who this will directly affect having an opportunity to address the council.

I also find it very distasteful that threatening people's livelihoods during this pandemic is appealing when you know full well there normally is a lot more public support and this just seems like another political move at our expense once again.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email, I know it is long but as you can see, I am extremely passionate about not letting what I call my home club get permanently closed down because someone else has decided control over my body, in my home city.

Kind regards,

Jessica

Please forward this email onto members of the Licensing Committee.
If this email is likely to be published or read out, please redact my name.

Dear Councillors

I would like to thank you for your consideration of a nil cap for SEVs in Bristol.

I recall when the SEV legislation was introduced in 2010, I was hopeful that the City Council would adopt a nil cap. I moved to Bristol 13 years ago and one of the reasons I like the city and decided to make it my home is because it is progressive and forward thinking. I had hoped that the city would be leading the way in showing that it values women and girls as equal to men and boys.

In 2011, the Council did reduce the number of SEVs in the city by adopting a cap of three which was good news but it was not the outcome I and many others had sought. I hoped that the review of the policy, due a few years later in 2014, would then result a nil cap. I am aware that the City Council has, since 2014, taken the time to consult extensively with women's groups and experts in the field and I am very pleased that the Licensing Committee has now taken the extremely positive step of consulting on a nil cap.

The timing of the nil cap is opportune as most, if not all, of the performers at the SEVs will have sought alternative employment during the pandemic. The Council will naturally face accusations of putting women out of work by those with a stake in the industry but hopefully the actual impact will now be minimal. The owner of the clubs has other thriving businesses and presumably would not herself be too impacted.

It always felt incongruous to me that a city that signed the White Ribbon pledge, and which has other policies that promote equality between the sexes, licensed SEVs in such a prominent location in the city. For both men and women, boys and girls, it normalises the entitlement that men feel over women's bodies. My own experience is that I have been the victim of sexual harassment many times over the years and around half the time when I go out running I experience some form of sexual harassment, from men beeping their car horns to trailing me in their car. This ranges from the inconvenient to the downright frightening, and it is something that I, and probably most women and girls in the city, have come to normalise and almost expect. Implementing a nil cap in Bristol would go some way to sending the message to all of us that men and boys are not entitled to women's bodies and it also means that the SEV policy will finally be consistent with many of the Council's policies and duties.

Thank you for your work on this. I very much hope that the Council agrees to adopt a nil cap as other councils have now done.

Member of Bristol Fawcett
Member of Avon & Somerset Police's Women's Independent Advisory Group

PS I note that a former SEV, which is now the tapas bar Pata Negra, has recently been used as a film location for a new Netflix series - 'The One'. It is heartening to see what was once an SEV now a thriving business and that it will be seen in a series that will shown across the world soon. This is a great advert for our city!

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Anon

To whom it may concern

I am writing to express my support of the two Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) in Bristol. They have been my home over the past 8 years. Giving me the freedom of work as a dancer and staff. Performing and teaching classes to men and women. The friends I have made have been invaluable and a great support.

I understand that the licencing committee is meeting on Monday 8th March to discuss the Sex Establishment policy Consultations and the city Centre Cumulative Impact Assessment and there is a chance that a nil cap will be put forwards and considered.

The closure of the strip clubs would not only affect all the staff working there and there/our lively hood but would also have a knock-on effect to the wider economy, especially after covid-19. What about all the birthdays and stag and hen dos? The restaurants, hotels, bars, clubs, suppliers, the list can go on and all can be linked.

The two SEVs in Bristol are known to the police as law abiding, well run places, in fact causing fewer problems than other bars and clubs. As proven with the red, amber and green system the police use. I personally have never had any problems and feel so safe in all of the years I have worked there.

The age-old claim that strip clubs cause city centre assaults is simply untrue and has no factual evidence to back it up. It is merely shaming women. This is a modern world and every 'man' is responsible for their own actions. The focus should always be on the perpetrators not using us as a scape goat! whether there is a nil cap or not you are not going to rid Bristol of unfortunate crimes to women and girls. Infact inforcing a nil cap will push the industry underground making it impossible to regulate and make safe for us women and girls.

It is also confusing to me on why us women are targeted and not left to make up our own minds on what we deem suitable employment. I am a nearly 40-year-old woman, married longer than I have been stripping, with 4 kids. I chose this job as it provides me what need, job satisfaction, support and being financially stable. I chose to be a stay-at-home mum and provide for my kids how my mother did for me. I never miss a match, dance competition or awards assembly. I am always there in person for my children and only work when I chose to, how much I want to, when I want to.

Why must we be targeted when male strip shows in the main Bristol nightclubs and regular shows at the hippodrome are celebrated and mass advertised? What makes us different apart from our sex? I am a feminist and I believe in standing up for ourselves, it is what we teach our kids right? As well as being fair and non-judgemental? I am not asking for any special favours just basic rights of equality and understanding to let us work and support our family's how we chose to.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Sincerely

xxxx

(I give permission to quote/use my email but please keep my name confidential for the sake of my children. Thank you)

Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to submit the following statement for the sex establishments policy consultation agenda point during the licensing committee meeting on Monday 8 March.

I have worked in a selection of Strip clubs across the UK, working in Bristol, Cardiff, and Birmingham. I first started to strip in Clubs in Bristol, and the clubs in Bristol are important to me. I have returned to live in Bristol and look forward to the point where it is once again possible to work within the Bristol clubs Stripping has given me freedom and flexibility in work, I have grown and learnt about myself within this job. I have had financial stability through the work. Working within clubs I have felt safe and looked after by the security and club staff. I have felt empowered and learnt so much through working with and around my colleagues the other dancers there.

I was shocked to see the proposal for a nil cap SEV policy within Bristol. The pre consultation survey clearly shows the majority of people in Bristol feel that SEVs have a place within the city at appropriate locations and venues.

I cannot see how the licensing committee and city council can in anyway see it as acceptable to disregard this survey's results and proceed with a nil cap policy consultation. It is an affront to democracy and a wilful waste of public money.

These clubs have been closed for a year, the dancers at these clubs cannot expect to go back to work for a number of months. But there is a light at the end of this tunnel, the possibility that club closures will end at some point this summer or autumn. But this nil cap policy is an attempt to permanently close these clubs forever. To permanently remove these jobs.

I can see little mention throughout any of the supporting documents for this proposal around the risks involved in forcing SEVs underground and move away from licensed SEVs to private and unregulated parties.

If dancers work is removed from them by the loss of safe work environments, some people will be forced to accept work that they would not normally accept, work that feels risky.

while anecdotes are not research, I speak from personal experience of accepting work during the current closure of clubs that I would not normally have accepted, I hoped that the work was not as risky as it seemed, unfortunately it was. I was sexually assaulted.

I look forward to being able to safely work within a club setting again.

I do not wish to sign this with my true name due to the stigma unfortunately associated with this work. and the fear that it would impact on my ability to work other jobs

I sign this with the stage name of a dancer friend of mine who lost her struggle with mental health in the first lockdown last year.

May her memory live forever

Love and solidarity with all who are struggling. This is a demand to not accept a nil cap SEV policy

Jet

04/03/2021

SEVs Licensing

Dear Committee,

I work at Urban Tiger as a dancer. I really wanted to share my experience with you and hopefully this will help you understand why implementing a nil cap on SEVs in Bristol would be a mistake.

I started dancing in August 2019. Due to being newly self-employed, I have been unable to receive any financial help from the government since the start of the pandemic. Closing down my workplace would be a massive kick in the teeth after what has been an incredibly hard year for me and my colleagues.

Prior to working there, I worked several minimum wage jobs which I thoroughly disliked, and I had to live from paycheck to paycheck. Doing a job I hated most days of the week and being under constant financial stress had really taken a toll on my mental health. Alongside this, I was trying to kickstart a career in the arts and I felt like no matter how hard I tried, it was impossible. In early 2019, one of my friends, who had been dancing at Urban Tiger for some time, suggested that I should give stripping a go. I finally took the plunge a few months later. This turned out to be the best decision I ever made. Financially, it lifted a massive burden for me, I started living instead of surviving. I was finally able to invest time and money into my career in the arts and get it started properly. Working at Urban Tiger also allowed me to meet some of the most intelligent, confident, empowered and nicest women I have ever met in my life. I believe I have made some lifelong friendships thanks to this establishment.

Closing down Urban Tiger and Central Chambers would be a huge mistake. I do not believe these venues contribute to problems in the city centre more than any other venues in the area. Most of our customers are very respectful, which our brilliant security staff always ensures. I have been a victim and a witness of more incidents while walking down the street and being on a night out in a regular club than I ever have at Urban Tiger. Our amazing management and security staff have always made me feel safe.

I moved to Bristol six and a half years ago. I always viewed this city as very progressive, open minded and accepting. In my opinion, closing our venues would send out a negative message to your constituents, especially female constituents. You would be once again blaming women for problems caused by men and in no way solving them, if anything you would be contributing to them. If Bristol SEVs were to close, you would be once again taking freedom away from honest, hard working women by policing and censoring our bodies, our voices and the way we chose to make a living.

Thank you for listening,

Margot [REDACTED]

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Thank you from Bristol Fawcett

Thank you for carefully listening to the evidence that was submitted to you about the impact of SEVs on all women and girls in Bristol during your previous consultation period. The councils that still give licenses to SEVs are sending powerful signals that sexism is something they are willing to tolerate and support. **Thank you** for supporting Bristol City Council to join others in embracing its duties under national and international legislation and frameworks. Domestic and sexual violence, and other forms of inequality between the sexes such as persistent unequal pay are not inevitable, but preventable with the right approach to tackling harmful outdated ideas and social norms.

Thank you for seeing the bigger picture and restoring our faith in politicians of all parties. **Thank you** for making a change that will create more inclusive, safer and more welcoming public spaces for women in our city centre, and safer homes for women and girls. **Thank you** for helping to create a city where men and boys are encouraged to move on from old-fashioned and harmful attitudes towards the women and girls in their lives.

Bristol Fawcett members are longstanding Bristol-based members of the Fawcett Society, the UK's leading campaigning organisation for equality between women and men. We have been involved with Bristol City Council and engaged with its Equality work for over twenty years, bringing an evidence-based approach to all the issues that affect women and girls in Bristol from equal pay and pensions to representation in public life to safety and protection from violence. We include among our members business people, survivors of gender-based violence, women who have worked in domestic violence refuges, women who have worked supporting sex workers, academics who research gender equality and violence, public sector workers, private sector workers, those who have worked as medical professionals, social workers and policy specialists. We all care very much about equality and fairness for men and women in our city and we thank you for showing that Bristol City Council does too.

Helen Mott

8th March Lic Committee SEV

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to respond to the upcoming policy consultation with regards to SEVs in Bristol. I think that the question of banning the presence of SEVs coming up is a worrying development and I implore you not to carry out this damaging action. These venues exist for a reason, are part of our community, and provide jobs for a lot of people. predominantly women.

The targeting of this industry feels out of touch with current conversation and sociopolitical issues around feminism and sexuality. So far as I can tell the presence of these establishments has no negative effect on the safety and wellbeing of the community, which raises the question of whether there is some other agenda governing the raising of this consultation.

As someone who doesn't use venues like this, but has sex workers in my social network, I feel that it is my responsibility to protect their industry and their places of work, as I know they would do for me if it was my industry under fire. The people who work at these venues are providing a service not dissimilar to many other jobs which might be considered more 'reputable' by people with more puritanical views, however I don't feel that these values reflect the attitude of our wider community and I hope that you will do the right thing and allow these venues and their workers to continue their careers, perhaps with better support from their council.

Yours faithfully

Charles Sherratt

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to express my support for the two sexual entertainment venues (SEV's) in Bristol. There is a licencing committee meeting on monday the 8th of March, where councillors will discuss the future of SEV's.

I would like to give my support to the two venues currently in Bristol, Urban tiger and Central chambers. I have worked at the clubs for the past five years and can honestly tell you that both clubs are run to an exceedingly high standard, all the women who work there are completely there out of their own choices to work in an industry which they truly love. There is nothing illegal or unlawful about nude dancing, it is a form of entertainment of which there is a very high demand for in the Bristol area, Both clubs are perfectly situated in the town centre near other bars, clubs and are a huge part of the night time economy.

All the women who work at the clubs rely on these safe regulated environments in order to be able to do our jobs, at both clubs there are very strict safety rules and protocols, which all members of staff abide by. All the management and owners are very professional and make them the most well run strips clubs i have ever worked at.

The men and women customers treat the dancers with the utmost respect and enjoy visiting the clubs as they are a place to have a great night out, where the customers and dancers feel safe, looked after and there is very little to no trouble at the venues at all, the security staff are some of the best in bristol and any customers behaving inappropriately are removed from the venue immediately. I have never once felt disrespected whilst working there, i always feel like the customers, managers and owners treat me with more respect than I have ever felt in any other job role I have ever done. I have worked in other jobs where I have felt a lot more disrespected as a woman than I have ever felt working as a dancer.

There is no violence or trouble at the venues, most people come in there so they can have a brilliant night out in a safe and controlled environment.

The renewal of the licences means everything to myself and the other dancers, we believe that women should have the choice to work in the legal and regulated industry in which they choose, not be forced in to unemployment by the minority of people's beliefs who simply don't like strip clubs, who find any excuse under the sun in order to try and justify their negative beliefs about strip clubs. The majority of Bristol are very supportive of strip clubs and dont have any objections to us being there, which has been proved by surveys and research. Working at the clubs has enabled me to live an amazing and fulfilling life where i can fully support myself financially, get a mortgage by myself and has given me the time to put work in to my bespoke dressmaking business. I can honestly say that being a dancer at the clubs is my dream job. I look forward to going to work and feel safe, respected and grateful that myself and other dancers have such a well run establishment to work at.

Without the licenced clubs, all the people who rely on the clubs for work would be threatened with unemployment, and lose their entire careers, the impact of this would be detrimental to all staff and customers of the clubs.

There is countless evidence from the police that the clubs are safe and cause minimal to no trouble compared to other city centre bars and clubs. There is no evidence of violence related to the clubs or the way in which male or female customers view women inside or outside of the clubs, and there is no evidence that strip clubs cause wider inequality towards women. There are far worse problems in Bristol and the strip clubs are not one of them.

I fully support the renewal of both Urban tiger and Central chambers licences.

Yours sincerely Laura.

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Dear all,

I am writing in regards to the to the council's plan to bring in a nil cap for SEVs (strip clubs) in Bristol.

This will will be hugely damaging for the many people who work in these clubs, the majority of whom are vulnerable, self employed and have not been able to work all year, and do not expect to be able to return to work for some time.

The council has already had a pre consultation survey, this found the majority of people were supportive of the existence of SEVs within Bristol at the right locations.

I am dissappointed that the council is ignoring this with the plan of a ban on strip clubs in Bristol.

By banning SEV clubs there is a real danger of danger of driving industry underground and it is much safer to work in a licenced club than a venue that is unlicenced and underground.

There would be a large loss of jobs that are predominantly held by women, many of them parents and students who rely on the money to fund their education, food and rent.

Best wishes Claire Thomas

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Dear Committee members,

I submit the following statement to urge you to vote against the proposal to ban strip clubs in Bristol. This is in solidarity with women who are dancers in these places, including several personal friends. Banning strip clubs will have a huge negative impact for these people, the majority of whom are self employed and have not been able to work for nearly all of the past year.

The material, negative consequences of a ban would disproportionately fall on women working in the industry. Many are parents and students, and those that I know consider their work as skilled performance art, a career of their own choice. Many enjoy the work, or at least would say that it is no more or less enjoyable than other work they have had. With the night-time economy shattered by a year of Covid, alternative employment for many of these people will be hard to find.

From talking to my friends employed in strip clubs, I know there is a real concern that the industry will simply be driven underground, and they will be obliged to continue the same work but in less safe conditions. Surrounded by CCTV and security staff in their workplace, and with very strictly enforced rules for everyone present, legal strip clubs are considered very safe places to work.

I will also note that Bristol council's own pre-consultation survey found that a majority of people were supportive of the existence of these establishments, in appropriate locations. This is not a priority for the people of Bristol.

I would add one last thing: I applaud attempts to take a hard regulatory line on businesses that exploit their workers, but legal strip clubs are no more exploitative than many other businesses employing ordinary people. If that is a motivating factor for the proponents of a strip club ban, could we not focus on genuinely exploitative businesses? Workers in the gig economy, like Deliveroo riders and Uber drivers, have their rights as employees denied to them by legal loopholes. A vast quantity of the products we consume come from factories overseas with appalling working conditions. We could demonstrate real solidarity with workers in these industries by taking bold action to protect working conditions here and abroad.

Many thanks for your time and consideration,

James Hitch

xxxxx Bristol

Councillors of Bristol City Council

The first thing I wanted to express is my concern at the timing of this policy review. To be doing this right now during a pandemic when the women who work in these venues are already vulnerable and deeply concerned about not being able to work is horrendous timing. This whole circus has been going on for years and it wouldn't have caused any serious issues to delay this due to the circumstances. I think everyone would have totally understood that due to the Covid circumstances the right thing to do would be to push this back a year. If there was an ounce of compassion and concern for these women this would not have happened now. These women are now clearly distressed and terrified that people are trying to close their venues during an already difficult time. This just proves to me that the welfare of these women is not the top priority at all and this is yet again a political move and we are once again just pawns in this whole thing and it's so wrong it makes my blood boil! What these women are subjected to and put through every year is so wrong on so many levels. They are working a legitimate and legal job and shouldn't have to explain and justify their reasons for these choices time and time again. To even contemplate putting 100's of people out of work during this time in the middle of pandemic is totally immoral. These women need your support now more than ever and do not deserve to be put through this again right now. I'm totally outraged at this timing.

On one hand the venues are being given grants to protect the business from closing and we are being begged by the government to protect jobs and keep all our staff that are employed on furlough. Yet at the same time the council are discussing the option of a nil cap and possibly trying to force closure of these businesses! The hospitality/nighttime industry is going through the most hardest time its ever faced along with many other businesses right now and we should be being supported right now if anything, not trying to force a nil cap through. Talk about kicking someone while they are down! Words really do fail me right now and I can only say that I'm just deeply saddened and disgusted that this has been allowed to happen. I have staff and dancers literally ringing me in tears, distressed asking why would they do this to us right now as if things aren't hard enough right now. They have literally just been given some hope by the government about the venues being able to reopen in June so they can return to their jobs and then they get this bombshell. All I can do to comfort them right now is tell them that hopefully the people that ultimately make the decisions on this will see sense and come through for them by making the right decision and I that I'll personally never stop fighting for them. I made these women a promise and I'll do everything in my power to fight for them. To even discuss the idea of nil cap without even speaking to the women this actually effects is not right. It's like they are just classed as insignificant and pushed to the side every year. The women that dance in these venues are totally horrified at their treatment during this whole process.

Whilst recommending a nil cap policy I want to make sure that every councillor is aware of what that actually means. The two clubs will not just disappear. They will still be there and they will still be offering similar entertainment in some way. The only difference will be that the whole industry will be totally unregulated. So all that work that everyone has done to keep these types of venues regulated and safe will be just be thrown away. This in itself baffles me why anyone would think this is a good idea! On top of that by implementing a nil cap you will not reduce numbers of these types of venues but actually increase them! Every venue will be able to apply for TEN and provide these services and with no SEV venues in the city the demand will be higher than ever so all these bars, restaurants and nightclubs will want to put on these events 7 days a week. As the hospitality industry struggles to survive right now putting on SEV nights is a very viable option for venues right now looking to survive. I've already been approached several times since the last evening post article by venues effectively asking me to provide an SEV entertainment in the same way club promoters run events all over the city should the my own venues not be able to operate. What needs to be made clear is that by stopping 2 extremely regulated venues from providing SEV entertainment has the complete opposite effect of what is trying to be achieved as every licensed venue in the city could offer the same entertainment meaning there could SEV nights every weekend in multiple locations all over the city and totally unregulated! This activity is not going to just go away it will merely just move location, increase the number of locations and become totally unregulated and driven underground. There are people already making plans to make this happen. This is not scaremongering but exactly what the industry plans to do should there be a nil cap. I personally feel these venues need to be kept regulated and hence I campaign every year to keep these venues just that, safe and regulated. A nil cap will just open the flood gates and destroy years of hard work to get these venues regulated in the first place.

Myself and the women that work in these venues have worked tirelessly with every authority to make sure every licence condition is adhered to and that we operate some of the best venues in the UK. We have proved this year on year and yet still this seems to go unnoticed and this fact is just deemed as totally irrelevant. If these venues had a long running issue with licence breaches I'd understand the review but they are actually a shining example of how run properly these venues can work and are actually an asset to a thriving nighttime economy. There is no direct evidence that these venues increase sexual assaults, domestic violence or any other horrendous crimes against women. In fact the recent lock down has proved this with the clubs being closed and domestic violence stats going through the roof. These horrendous crimes do happen and everything needs to be done to prevent this but closing 2 very well run SEV venues is not going to solve this. We are just being used as scape goats. It's too easy to blame this on the SEV venues rather than looking in too the real cause of these issues. Every year we ask to be shown the evidence that can clearly show a direct link from these venues to the crimes mentioned. Every year without fail this is not produced because there is no direct link. Unfortunately every big city, city centres and night time economies have these issues with or without our SEV venues. Doesn't make it acceptable but it's certainly not the SEVs that cause this either.

The other thing that also needs answers is why we as women are subjected to this every year but male strippers are not? We as women are attacked for our choices every year and put through a horrendous and extremely stressful experience every year. This has become a witch-hunt towards the women in this industry. Our male counterparts escape this every year because it seems no one cares about the numerous unregulated male strip club nights that happen all over the city centre. It seems men can make a decision to take their clothes off to earn a living and that's fine but if we as women decided to do the same we must be exploited or deemed not capable to make right decisions for ourselves. So my question is where is the equality in this? Why are only women being victimised? Equality is us as women being able to make our own choices and not having to justify them every year. Equality is

being supported by other women not a group of radical feminists thinking they know best and what is right for all women. We can not make this any clearer that they do not speak for all women and they certainly do not speak for us! My other question as a venue owner and someone who spends a lot of money to get the correct licences to operate these venues is why I have to do this for female performers but its not needed for male performers? How can we be discussing a potential nil cap on regulated strip clubs when there are hundreds of brothels operating freely in the city? It's like there is big white elephant in the room that no one is taking about! Again the mind boggles to why a council would be even entertaining the idea the of nil cap on SEV venues when it happily allows hundreds of Brothels to operate? When are we going to start discussing this problem in the city? Surely this should be addressed first before attacking LEGAL, LEGITIMATE businesses.

Every year the people of Bristol make their views known and we have proved time and time again that we have the backing and support of the majority of the public. I think people will be horrified to know that this is actually being considered during this time and that you are seriously thinking of putting hundreds of people out of work. We have an SEV policy and it works extremely well. Please understand what the de regulation of the industry will actually do and I urge you all to keep the current policy as it is. We want this type of industry regulated. The current policy is proven to work and be successful. We have proved to you time and time again that we are responsible and good operators. The outcome is Bristol has 2 very well run run SEV venues and it should stay this way.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and if you need any further information from myself or the women that work in these venues we would be more than happy to provide this.

Yours Sincerely

Carrie Hale
Director of Central Chambers & Urban Tiger

To Whom it May Concern,

In light of the most recent threats of closure for Central Chambers and Urban Tiger, I wanted to write to describe my own experiences of working within the strip club industry.

I've worked as a stripper for twelve years.

"I don't understand how you can say you're a feminist when you're encouraging men to objectify you" is something I've heard a fair few times over those years, both directly and indirectly.

My question in response to this is, is it still objectification if I have given my consent to be viewed as a sexual being or does it become something else?

A strip club is a place where consent is a must, respect is vital, and where there are actionable consequences when a boundary has been crossed. I have found the majority of strip clubs I've worked in to be excellent safe spaces where I have been free to explore, celebrate, and enjoy sexuality in all its various forms - my own and other people's. Central Chambers and Urban Tiger have been exemplary establishments in this regard (I have worked in both).

This is contrary to what I have experienced in places that are not strip clubs, i.e. bars, nightclubs, or just walking down the street. In these places I have been grabbed, leered at, cat called, beeped at, with absolutely no consequence for the perpetrators of these actions. I am cautious in the summer with regard to what clothes I wear, knowing that if I wear a little dress or shorts I will likely draw unwanted attention to myself, when actually, I should feel able to wear whatever I want without worrying about it. If I go out dancing with my friends and I move my body in a way that could be seen as 'sexy' or 'provocative', I am acutely aware that some men may see this as an invitation, thinking that I'm 'clearly up for it', when actually, I just enjoy moving my body that way as part of expressing myself. If a guy pinches my ass in a bar, there are no repercussions for his actions. In the past I've had thoughts like 'It's my fault, I shouldn't have worn this outfit, it's too revealing, I was asking for it', when actually, that guy should know he has absolutely no right to touch someone else's body without first getting permission.

There is no consent or respect in these scenarios. I am being objectified, purely because I am a woman.

Is wearing a little dress in summer or moving my body in the way I like 'encouraging men to objectify' me? Or, do men need to be taught more about consent, respect, boundaries, and a woman's right to express her sexuality without it being seen as an invitation?

Female sexuality has been kept in the hands of those outside of us for centuries. Women have been burned at the stake, locked up in mental asylums, raped, assaulted, and publicly and privately shamed for daring to express this innate part of ourselves, and even when we haven't.

The fear runs deep.

We are taught not to walk alone at night, to carry keys in our hands as weapons, not to get too drunk, to watch our drinks in case they get spiked, to please and appease men in case they get angry.

When I'm walking by myself and a man in a white van beeps at me, for a moment, I am scared for my life. An image of being bundled into the back of his vehicle never to be seen again briefly flashes up in my mind.

This is objectification.

That man has no regard for my human experience when he takes that action. It's all about him. It's completely one-sided. He hasn't asked for permission. I haven't given my consent. He hasn't taken into consideration the fleeting fear it instills. He has never experienced it. He is not a woman.

In a strip club it is different.

I have *chosen* to be there, in a Sexual Entertainment Venue. I am *making the decision* to be in 'sexually expressive' mode. I am *taking back the reins* of my sexuality and *giving permission* for others to enjoy it *with me*.

Before I dance for a customer there is a conversation. The customer asks me for a dance, I say 'yes' or 'no', or, I ask the customer if they'd like a dance and wait for their answer. This is a conversation about consent. The consent is mutual and honours the experiences of both parties equally.

If we go for a dance I then state my boundaries - 'You must keep your hands by your side at all times. If you touch me, the dance will end.' These boundaries are, on the most part, respected, and when they're not, I finish the dance. If a customer becomes unmanageable I have a team of door staff I can speak to who then tell the customer they must leave the premises.

Within this container of safety and protection I feel completely free to be my fullest, sexy self. I can wear what I like, move my body how I like, crack dirty jokes, make sexual innuendos, and flirt to my heart's content, with no underlying worry that something bad might happen to me. It is a joyful, fun, playful, liberating, empowering, and expansive experience. I do not feel objectified because *I* am in control of my sexuality, it's on my terms and it isn't being dictated (couldn't help myself!) to me.

Since Covid-19 hit, I haven't danced. The strip clubs in the UK have been closed and I have grieved the loss of this space - a space where I have felt fully aligned, alive, myself. I miss the community of like-minded women, so comfortable in their nakedness, not hiding their bodies but fully embracing them for the magical vessels they truly are.

To circle back to my original question - in giving my consent to being viewed as a sexual being is it still objectification or does it become something else?

In my opinion, I believe the latter. It becomes a celebration. A celebration of sexuality liberated from shame. A celebration of empowered consent and respect. A celebration of our true human nature.

Consent and respect are everything - they create a container of safety within which we can all be set free.

Kind regards,

Abbie [REDACTED]

Dear councillors present,

As a concerned member of the public I am writing to you to urge you to protect the SEV premises in Bristol.

Closure or a ban on such premises may endanger people who work in the industry, as it will be driven underground and subject to no regulations. Workers will be unprotected and this may lead to various issues that are a concern to public safety.

These venues are work places that provide livelihoods for hard working people and families in our community. It is imperative that these work places stay open in order for people to be able to support their families. The COVID 19 pandemic has driven more families into poverty. Many people are working multiple jobs to survive, and with the loss of a nighttime economy in SEVs many people, primarily women and mothers will lose the ability to provide for themselves.

Results of the council's consultation survey, have demonstrated that many local people supported SEVs existing within Bristol at the right locations. As a member of the public I urge the councillors to listen to the consultation results and bear in mind that by closing these venues they will be taking away people's livelihoods at a time of worldwide economic struggle.

I hope you consider this statement,

All the best,

P Pascual

8th March Lic Committee SEV

Hello,

I'm a Bristol resident, just wanted to comment on the Sex Establishments Policy Consultation that's happening on Monday. I've never been to one and I don't intend to visit but I don't believe it's in the general interest of the city to close any of these down. It may solve very specific problems but it will create others that are worse, unemployment and driving this kind of trade underground being the two obvious ones.

Many thanks,

Ben Sollars

Bristol Resident Address provided

Hello

I am writing to express my concern about the potential damaging effect on some of Bristol's women with the proposal to close the only two *LICENSED* SEV's in Bristol.

Firstly, I note that the title of the agenda item: "'Sex Establishments' Policy Consultation" is incorrect. The license is for "Sexual Entertainment Venues" (SEV).

I am a dance teacher based in N.Somerset/Bristol, who has worked closely with the clubs, and more importantly the women who work there, since 2006.

Not only would this be a terrible blow to the already dwindling night life in Bristol but also (and more importantly) a huge risk for the women working in these venues, who have already been financially hit the hardest due to the pandemic. Women deserve the right to work in any way that is legal and fits around their current family, study, and life commitments (as many are also mothers and students). Women are already unfairly compensated in many areas of work and home life, and it seems that placing undue pressure on an industry predominantly inhabited by women, is also an attack on job equality as a whole.

In 2011 the SEV licences (previously known as SEEL licences) were introduced as a method to regulate the industry across the country, to make it safe for all the people who work in the industry (when previous to this, strip clubs were only required to have an enhanced bar/café licence). These licensed venues offer a safe space for the workers to perform and earn a living. Closure of these venues could put some women in a vulnerable place, unable to balance work/studies/childcare, they could be forced onto the streets and being exposed to problems such as addiction and homelessness, issues which your council are already severely neglecting. The club model could be driven underground, removing the safety of the rules and regulations of the SEVs, undermining the very point of why they were introduced.

Have you personally been in contact with any of the workers from Central Chambers and Urban Tiger and asked them if the issues that you propose these venues create are affecting them so much that they believe their workplaces should close, or that they feel unsafe? Have you got a proposed plan to fully support the workers if you do close their work place?

It should also be noted that in the most recent public consultation on this topic, that the majority of people were supportive of the existence of SEVs within Bristol at the right locations. And also that in recent police reports, there have been next to no notices regarding antisocial behaviour in the vicinity or linked to these clubs at all.

The night-time economy has already been hit really hard with the pandemic, and these clubs provide work places not just for the dancers, but also the staff, security, bartenders, party facilitators, cleaners and more. While the 2 Strip Clubs with SEV licenses fight every year for their right to continue with rules and regulations in place, it's interesting to note that full nude male stripper nights, with dancer-to-customer contact, are able to go ahead at fancy hotels in Bristol city centre.

The women I have met through this industry are the most independent, interesting, and diverse group of people, and they deserve better than having their work, their lifelines, their artistic release, their bodily confidence, and their income, shut down by people who have never walked in their shoes.

I urge you to consider the repercussions of voting for a nil-cap and the larger impact of your decision.

I look forward to your response,

Robyn Rooke

Dear councillors and officers,

As a concerned member of the public I am writing to you to urge you to protect the SEV premises in Bristol.

Closure or a ban on such premises may endanger people who work in the industry, as it will be driven underground and subject to no regulations. Workers will be unprotected and this may lead to various issues that are a concern to public safety.

These venues are work places that provide livelihoods for hard working people and families in our community. It is imperative that these work places stay open in order for people to be able to support their families. The COVID 19 pandemic has driven more families into poverty. Many people are working multiple jobs to survive, and with the loss of a nighttime economy in SEVs many people, primarily women and mothers will lose the ability to provide for themselves.

Results of the council's consultation survey, have demonstrated that many local people supported SEVs existing within Bristol at the right locations. As a member of the public I urge the councillors to listen to the consultation results and bear in mind that by closing these venues they will be taking away people's livelihoods at a time of worldwide economic struggle.

I hope you consider this statement as evidence to keep open SEVs in Bristol
All the best,

Cheryl sellwood

I am writing to you to express my concern with your proposal to close the only two LICENSED SEV's in Bristol.

If the venues were to be forced to close it would make many women out of work. At a time when they have been unable to work for a year due to the pandemic. The closure of these venues would mainly impact women. All women should have a right to work in whatever job they want provided it is legal (which this is). These venues are not causing any harm and are an important part of Bristol's nightlife.

These licensed venues offer a safe space for the workers to perform and earn a living.

Have you been in contact with the workers from Central Chambers and Urban Tiger and asked them if the issues that you propose these venues create is effecting them so much that they believe their work places should close? Have you got a proposed plan to fully support the workers if you do close their work place?

I urge you to reconsider your actions and think about the larger impact of your decision.

I look forward to your response.

Lucie Tutton

To Whom it May Concern

I wish to submit the following statement for the Licencing Committee 8th March 2021 for Agenda Item 6 - Sex Establishments Policy Consultation

I am dismayed to hear of recent reports in the press of a move to enforce a 'nil cap' for sexual entertainment venues in Bristol. The illiberal move of closing venues which operate legally and under current licencing laws for moral reasons is not a precedent the licensing committee should be setting in Bristol.

Bristol's night time economy has already been dealt a huge blow by the pandemic and the workforce of both clubs - mainly women - have been hit especially hard, it seems counter to any supposed attempt at gender equality in the city to then take away their employment permanently. Added to that closing the SEVs could have the impact of driving these women into jobs in unlicensed premises which are not subject to the same strict checks that the current SEV clubs are putting at them at far greater risk. These women are working in these legal jobs out of choice - for many this line of work offers a level of flexibility to be able to afford to study or manage a family without being bound by traditional 9-5 hours.

I note that the consultations put out to the public both returned with a majority supporting the existing licensing of 2 SEVs within the central Bristol area however the licensing committee is now seeing fit to disregard this consultation as a wasted exercise in favour of their own ideological judgement on an industry they have not seen to engage with in any meaningful way.

Every year the two current premises have to defend their license and every year it is evidenced that the clubs do not draw complaints of anti-social behaviour, do not nuisance their neighbours and abide by their licensing terms - how many night time venues in Bristol cannot say the same and yet they are not under the same pressure to close as the two SEVs.

Setting a nil cap in Bristol would cause women in Bristol to lose jobs and potentially end up in far less safe employment while having no real net benefit to Bristol. This motion is rooted in misogyny and ideology rather than evidence based policy and I hope the licensing committee will seriously consider the impact this would have when making a final decision.

Sarah Classick

Liberal Democrat Council Candidate - Hengrove and Whitchurch Park

Personal Statement
Charlotte Greenstock

I have been a dancer at Urban Tiger for three years, I am a feminist. I am also a recent graduate from Circomedia. As I had already completed a degree in english literature and creative writing (in which I studied feminism and feminist literature), I was not able to apply for a student loan to fund another three years of study.

Fortunately for me I was able to apply to Circomedia's private course. This was entirely self funded through my work at Urban Tiger.

To get to a high skill level as a circus artist, hours of frequent training is required weekly. I tend to train five full days a week. Any other work I do needs to be flexible and fit around training and performance opportunities. Again Urban Tiger has been absolutely perfect. The managers are incredibly supportive about my creative work and the money I earn at the club is stable enough for me to fully focus on circus and not compromise my time to keep myself afloat.

I now am able to create work that I love, combining the unique skills and knowledge I have gained through my various studies. I am so grateful for my life and am fully aware none of it would have been possible without sex work or a ridiculous amount of debt.

Sex work is nothing to be ashamed of. Dancing has been liberating, not only financially but physically. I have learnt to appreciate my form and physicality in a way I never would have been able to achieve if I had not worked as a dancer.

There is absolutely no evidence to show that the presence of erotic venues in a city increases violence against women. The importance of consent and respect in Urban Tiger is paramount. I have never felt unsafe as a result of my work, the only people who have made me feel unsafe are the individuals who repeatedly try to close us down and take away opportunities without consulting us. Taking away another individual's body autonomy is not feminist. It is misogyny under the guise of feminism.

I began dancing in strip clubs in 2007, aged 20. Back then it was a job that seemed a bit crazy, late nights, loud music, meeting so many different types of people - the customers and my fellow dancers. I thought I'd do it for a year, save up enough for a deposit to buy a flat, by which time I would've finished university and would get a 'real job'.

I bought my flat, I finished my degree and got a job in the corporate world. Nine months in and I quit, with an apparent 'excellent' future career ahead of me. I discovered that I am not designed for a 9 to 5, office job - it was killing me, and had I continued I would have had to shut down something inside me. I happily left that job and went back to dancing.

Being a stripper gives me so much. I have had 14 years of working as many shifts a week as I choose, depending on what my life looks like; I took time off to travel for months at a time, I took time off to have my children, to care for my dying Grandpa and support my Grandma. I can flexibly work around my family and our needs. Instead of devoting my life to my work and fitting in the people and things I love around work, I have done the opposite - I fit work around my life, and around my people. I live in the countryside because it makes me feel good, it's my home, however there are very few jobs - so instead I drive to Bristol and stay in a hotel for the weekend, earn my money and come home

I don't want a career that takes up my life. I want to dance; even though there is a stigma that comes along with it, even though people try to shut the clubs down every year and blame the club's existence for despicable violent crimes. I never wanted to be an activist for strippers and the industry, I just want to work, but I am forced into defending my right to be a stripper. This may sound ridiculous, but it wouldn't if I replaced 'stripper' with say 'ballerina' - why is that? I pay my taxes, I contribute to society, I have a skill set related to my job; why can I not receive the respect for my job that other roles attract?

If you shut the clubs down, my first plan would be to work in another club. As the two Bristol clubs are the best run clubs that I have found (and I have worked in many), this would inevitably mean me working in less safe environments. It would mean finding new accommodation in cities I don't know, parking in a city centre that I'm unfamiliar with and walking to the club at night and alone. These are frightening things to do. If this plan didn't work, I would have to get a 35/40 hour a week job either locally (unlikely, as I live in the middle of nowhere), or I'd have to stay away all week. Needless to say, the impact on my family would be unbearable. My husband's work would be affected as I would not be as available to care for our children as I am when dancing. Also, try getting a good job with 'stripper' on your CV! I have and it is almost impossible.

Strip clubs are a symptom not a cause of the patriarchy. If you alleviate a symptom it makes you feel better for a bit, but doesn't address the problem, the root cause. To blame strip clubs, and by association, strippers, for male violence and rape against women and girls makes me feel sick. What a disgusting claim. I demand you move your focus from us and instead towards these criminals, these abusive, violent, dangerous men. I want to be part of THIS movement; if there is anyway I can help with ending violent crimes and rape I want to be involved. You shut our clubs down - these men will continue to be dangerous violent criminals. Shift your focus and your immense resources and power, please.

To whom it may concern,

I understand licensing committee is meeting to discuss the possibility of a 'nil cap' on SEV licences in Bristol.

I would be hugely affected by the closure of these clubs. Dancing is not a hobby for me, is my career. If these clubs were closed, I would need to find another venue to work in, the closest being Cardiff. I would have to drive over an hour and have increased transport costs. I would also have to apprehensively navigate a new city alone at night.

As a mother with two young children, my whole family would be affected. The operating hours in other venues are often less flexible and longer than the two Bristol clubs. This has the knock on effect that either I, or my partner' ability to work, would need to be reorganised to accommodate more childcare. It ultimately means I would have to choose to either spend less time with my children or reduce my financial contribution to my household.

I have worked in these venues in Bristol for over ten years. I have settled in Bristol because I love working in these particular clubs. They are places where the people working within them are both colleagues and friends. There is an established support network that has taken time and effort to build, for which the owners, managers and dancers should be commended. I am proud to be part of this Bristol community supporting the continued licensing of Urban Tiger and Central Chambers.

Thank you,
Nicola

[BARBIE](#) – The Bristol Association of Restaurants, Bars and Independent Establishments – urge the council to vote AGAINST a NIL CAP on SEV's on Monday 8th March 2021.

We are extremely concerned that yet again a small number of people are looking to close down 2 extremely well run venues in Bristol City Centre as part of a Nil Cap SEV policy. The venues in question, Central Chambers and Urban Tiger, are extremely well run and owned by females and give employment to a huge number of dancers as well as the ecosystem of supported jobs such as bar tenders, security, cleaners, delivery drivers and more.

Having been closed for nearly a year, the venues will now be presented with yet another large legal bill and the mental health and wellbeing of the owners and workers seem of little, if any, importance to Bristol City Council. This is not a way to support hospitality and help it recover from the pandemic. For a thriving nighttime economy both residents of and visitors to the city need to have a choice of destination rather than being dictated as to what and where they can visit.

BARBIE cannot understand why Bristol City Council would want to deregulate SEVs. These venues, aside from employment, are frequented by both males and females and the workers have already made you aware of how well run and safe the venues are. There are other areas of the city that need to be concentrated on if Safety is an issue. It is not at these venues.

We urge you to vote against the Nil Cap policy.

Best regards,

Brendan Murphy and Andy Dodd

Founders of BARBIE – Bristol Association of Restaurants, Bars and Independent Establishments

Dear Licencing Committee

On the 8th March 2021 (international women's day) The licencing Committee will vote on whether or not to back the NIL Cap Draft Policy proposed by the Licencing Working group.

Nightlife has the following view:

Point 1 Timing

Hospitality especially nightclub venues have been forced to close due to the pandemic, placing hardship and stress on all who work in the industry. At a time when thousands of people have lost their jobs and are facing losing their jobs, having Councillors vote on a draft policy which will put people out of work in the hospitality industry at a time of economic recession is horrific.

Point 2 Equalities

Bristol is a signed up member of the European charter for equality of women and men in local life which seeks to do the following:

The six fundamental principles

1. Equality of women and men is a fundamental right
2. In order to ensure the equality of women and men, multiple discriminations based on ethnic origin, [disability](#), [sexual orientation](#), religion, socio economic status... must also be addressed
3. The balanced participation of women and men in [decision-making](#) is necessary for a democratic society
4. [Gender stereotypes](#) and the attitudes and assumptions that arise from them must be eliminated
5. A gender perspective must be taken into account in all activities of local and regional government
6. Properly resourced action plans need to be drawn up and implemented.

A Nil cap policy goes against the above and other equalities policies as it reinforces gender stereotypes and a dangerous move backwards for LGBTQ+ communities by:

- Creating a policy which closes two female owned and operated venues
- Creating a policy which creates gender inequality by permitting male strip to be empowered and female strip venues to be closed which re enforces the gender stereotype of women cannot have the same freedoms as men
- Reinforcing hetronormative queerphobic policies where in two LGBTQ+ safe venues are closed down due to councillors assumptions that these venues are just for hetrosexual men and making moral decisions of what LGBTQ+ communities should be allowed to do for work and entertainment (Bristol councillors going back to the days of section 28).
- NIL Cap is a LGBTQ+ phobic policy as it discriminates against Queer people who go to these venues and promotes Lesbian, Bi and Queer erasure.
- Removing women from participation in decision making in the industry by creating a policy which closes two female owned and operated venues which will leave the door open for the out of town male only operated lap dancing event promoters to run events in Bristol which places the power back only to men over women.
- Women and Queer people's rights to freedom of Employment and beliefs

Point 3 Equality Impact Assessment and process.

We find it concerning that the whole assessment process has been from a hetronormative stance. The consultation has responses from 19% LGB and 2% transgender responses yet the rest of the Queer plus communities option was excluded in this consultation. Bristol is a signatory to the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in local Life in order to ensure the equality of women and men, multiple discriminations based on ethnic origin, [disability](#), [sexual orientation](#), religion, socio economic status... must also be addressed. The working groups response and that of the hetronormative thread throughout the whole

documentation has demonstrated a serious lack of due regard for the multiple discrimination of LGBTQ+ communities both on sexual orientation, gender and socio economic status.

Point 4 Deregulation

A NIL Cap policy is deregulating the industry in the city by removing two heavily regulated safe and female owned and operated venues. This will allow via market demand, outside operators to do pop up lapdancing and sex events throughout the city with little regulation, very little worker protection and no control on the location and times of the events. Nil Cap is not about stopping Lap Dancing events but about deregulation of the industry. Bristol has worked very hard on an SEV policy which has been publicly supported via large consultations and which the Licencing working group has chosen to vote against. The will of the last few consultations was supportive of the SEV Policy as it is, as well as the venues concerned and their locations.

With regards to the two city centre venues affected by the proposed NIL Cap policy.

Point 1

As part of the venue's efforts to uphold the licencing objectives the venue has been a regular attendee and active participant of Night Watch meetings.

Point 2

The venues active participation with the NightWatch meetings has lead to the following :

1. Charlotte Gage from Bristol Zero Tolerance Campaign presented at Night Watch to highlight the initiative working towards Bristol becoming a city free from gender-based violence, abuse, harassment and exploitation and the training available through Good Night Out. The Venue signed up for training immediately.
2. Bristol City Council launched Bristol's Equalities Charter and this was presented at Night Watch as an initiative for venues to sign up it. The Venue has long been an advocate for the advancement of equality of opportunity through the adjustments made in their venue before the law required those changes, especially in relation to their welcoming environment to LGBTQ+ communities and adjustments for other protected characteristics. Our view of the venue is that as it is an independent women led venue this has had a huge impact on its approach to equality of opportunity and the women who own and operate the venue have created a safe and welcoming space. The Venue signed up to the Equalities Charter like many others from Night Watch.
3. During the Summer of 2018 The Police Topaz Child Exploitation Team (Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation) had a two week operation in Castle Park and surrounding area to raise awareness of this issue. The Venue took time out in the evening to meet with the Officer and discuss the issues and take leaflets to enable signposting of the issue.

Point 3

The Venue has been in operation for years with no breaches to date and are a credit to Bristol Night Time culture as the venue shows how an SEV venue should be operated. The venue's good management is a credit to the owners and their strong belief in regulation of their sector with the SEV Policy. Our view is that Bristol's SEV policy has been very effective in getting Bristol to the point we are now with good independent operators who support the SEV policy, who have a good record of engagement with the regulatory authorities and where breaches have happened or bad operators have moved into the city the SEV policy has empowered the regulators to remove those businesses from the city.

Closing

I would like to thank the licencing committee and regulators for creating the original SEV policy which has for years empowered good operators such as these venues and the city to create safe and welcoming places. The policy has empowered these venues to offer equality of opportunity and enabled a space for independent female led owners to operate in an industry which in other places has been male dominated. The SEV Policy has made Bristol a safer and more equal city to be in.

We would urge the Licencing committee to VOTE NO TO NIL CAP and keep the existing policy which has served Bristol well for many years Please protect jobs in this time of need.

Thank you for your time in reading our thoughts

Best Wishes

24 Hour Bristol Commission

Nightwatch

Save Bristol Nightlife

Barbie

Out Bristol

Dear councillors present,

As a concerned member of the public, I am writing to you to urge you to protect the SEV premises in Bristol.

Closure or a ban on such premises may endanger people who work in the industry, as it will be driven underground and subject to no regulations. Workers will be unprotected and this may lead to various issues that are a concern to public safety.

These venues are work places that provide livelihoods for hard working people and families in our community. It is imperative that these work places stay open in order for people to be able to support their families. The COVID 19 pandemic has driven more families into poverty. Many people are working multiple jobs to survive, and with the loss of a nighttime economy in SEVs many people, primarily women and mothers will lose the ability to provide for themselves.

Results of the council's consultation survey, have demonstrated that many local people supported SEVs existing within Bristol at the right locations. As a member of the public, I urge the councillors to listen to the consultation results and bear in mind that by closing these venues down they will be taking away people's livelihoods at a time of worldwide economic struggle.

I believe the councillors should really consider the protection and support of sex workers, and look to continue working with SEV's and local businesses in regards to this. It should be taken into account that sex entertainment is a lawful activity and can be a safe place for workers in SEVs and for the public, to repeat from earlier, putting the industry underground in Bristol will make it more unsafe for both workers and the public.

I hope you consider this statement,

All the best,

Florrie Adamson Leggett

PS 30

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to express my support of the two Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) in Bristol. I understand that the Licensing Committee is meeting on Monday 8th March to discuss the Sex Establishments Policy Consultations and the City Centre Cumulative Impact Assessment, and there is a chance that the 'nil-cap' available to councils may be considered.

Shutting the strip clubs would lead to many workers being made unemployed and having their livelihoods taken from them; including the dancers, the security staff, bar staff and managers. The knock-on effect on the SEVs suppliers and business networks would impact negatively on the wider economy.

The two SEVs in Bristol are known to the police and the council for being law abiding, well-run clubs, actually causing far fewer problems than the other non-SEV establishments in the area (according to the 'red, amber, green' system that the police use).

The (unfounded) claim that the strip clubs cause city centre assaults is effectively punishing and blaming a majority of female workers for violence against women. The focus should always be on the perpetrators. It is never the women's fault that men assault women. Women blaming other women for these crimes is a disgrace and with no current accurate evidence to back it up. Why is it the majority of elected councilors choose to listen to this mis information every year. The views and opinions of anybody working or associated with these venues are never seriously taken on board and are quite frankly swept aside. How is that equality? How many more consultations do we have to have before the council accepts what is always the same outcome that the majority of Bristolians have no problem with the well regulated and properly run venues we have. The regulation in place works and works well. De regulate and the council will have no control and put a lot of women in a serious amount of danger when their safe and secure workplace is taken away from them. These are our choices and we should be supported by the elected bodies in power not used as a vehicle to harass a legal well run business by a small group of ill informed women who wont even talk to any of the dancers. Male performers don't have to go through any of this to do the job they choose to do so why as women do we have to. Equality is a two way street but from where I stand I see no equality and that's a disgrace.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Yours sincerely,

Tracy Hale

Financial Director

Central Chambers (Reedbed Ltd)

As a dancer I'm extremely saddened to hear that once again that the council is proposing a change in policy for SEVs and jeopardising the livelihoods of our predominantly female work force in a time of such instability, uncertainty and anxiety. Unemployment has doubled in Bristol and the nightlife industry has been completely decimated by the pandemic.

The clubs that I work in are safe and regulated, a great deal of care is taken to make sure we are safe. There is no tolerance for inappropriate behaviour of any kind towards the dancers and many women, including myself, feel safer in these particular strip clubs than they would in a regular nightclub or bar or even walking in the street. I would even say there is even an environment of consent fostered in strip clubs, dancers are allowed to choose who to dance for and there is a negotiation and agreement that is come to. I greatly value having a place like this to do the job I enjoy and take great pride in. There is a danger of driving the industry underground and putting our safety at risk.

I would also add that the (unfounded) claim that it is the strip clubs causing city centre assaults is effectively punishing and blaming a majority of female workers for male violence against women. The focus should always be on the perpetrators and no blame should EVER be taken away from them.

If you don't like strip clubs that is perfectly fine. But ridding someone of their choice to do as they please with their own body is unjust. We are not exploited, we are choosing to work here (and fighting to keep doing so) because we WANT to and we enjoy our work.

Chloe, dancer at Urban Tiger

Please could you include the below statement in the meeting

I support the SEV'S staying open in Bristol for the following:

I am a Woman that has on regular occasions frequented the 2 only legal licenced SEV's in Bristol on nights out with Female friends and Male friends alike, to close the venues would lead to a significant loss to the Diverse Bristol Nightlife scene that has already been ravaged by the current enforced closure due to the pandemic.

Closing the Venues will only serve to drive this Sector of the Sexual Entertainment industry completely underground that in its self will pose a huge risk for the women working in these venues, They will ultimately lose their lively hoods and chosen careers. The performers / Dancers that work in the venues have already been financially hit the hardest due to the pandemic.

In respect of the ethical and Sexist aspect of the proposal I would express that, Women deserve the right to work in any way that is legal and how they choose to do so, if fits around their current family, study, and life commitments then that choice should remain in place. (We don't hear of any of the Male Strip acts being Banned they are currently free to perform in the local hotels with no regulation). It would cause rather a disparity in Bristol City Councils standards between the Gender of performers if the Council votes to impose a Nil Cap on the venues that are predominantly run by women for women performers.

Placing undue pressure on an industry predominantly inhabited by women, is also an attack on job equality as a whole by the Council.

In 2011 the SEV licences (previously known as SEEL licences) were introduced as a method to regulate the industry across the country, to make it safe for all the people who work in the industry (when previous to this, strip clubs were only required to have an enhanced bar/café licence). These licensed venues offer a safe space for the workers to perform and earn a living. Closure of these venues could put some women in a vulnerable place, unable to balance work/studies/childcare.

The SEV club model will be driven underground, removing the safety of the rules and regulations of the SEVs, undermining the very point of why they were introduced.

I would ask whether you personally been in contact with any of the Performers from Central Chambers and Urban Tiger and asked them What their working conditions are and how the career they have chosen would be effected if the venues were to close? There have been wider opinions voiced in the past particularly by certain Bristol MP's that there is a direct link to the clubs for sexual violence in and around the city centre. I would like to see this statistic evidence as this I believe is an unfounded allegation as there is no such evidence available to support these assumptions.

The clubs are well known to the police through the "Traffic Light System" that they operate for all of the Late Night venues in the Bristol city centre and the clubs have been trouble free and cause less issues than many of the other late night establishments in the area.

The most recent public consultation on this topic, The majority of people were supportive of the existence of SEVs within Bristol at the right locations. This is an example of a Democratic consultation supporting an industry in this diverse city. In recent police reports, there have been next to no notices regarding antisocial behaviour in the vicinity or linked to these clubs at all.

The proposal for a Nil Cap in Bristol is not being based on “Fact’s”. It is rather more a Political Agenda from the current lord Mayor of Bristol and a small number of “feminist activists” that do not represent the wider Female population in Bristol. It is for this reason and those above that I find the whole proposal for a Nil cap to be unreasonable and against the most common sense approach which is to allow these Venues to remain and continue to provide a safe and diverse environment for Women to continue their careers.

The women I have met through the clubs in question are the most independent females , both in their domestic set up and also in their financial ability to support themselves, If these Venues are shut, then they have little choice than to become unemployed or worse continue in an unregulated and unlawful environment which will bring further burden to the Police and the wider communities with the social burdens unregulated unlawful activities bring with them.

I urge you to consider the repercussions of voting for a nil-cap and the impact of your decision on the wider Night time economy and would ask that you all do the sensible thing and use a common sense approach to keep these Venues open, Regulated and licenced so they can continue to operate lawfully.

Kind Regards

Claire

I am writing to express my support for the two venues that currently hold S.E.V licenses. These are clubs that work closely with the police and the council to ensure the safety of all involved by closing them you risk pushing workers underground into unregulated environments.

In having a nil cap you are taking away the women's rights to choose how they wish to work. In these already hard times you will be pushing people into more uncertainty, worry and potential poverty.

The claims against these clubs are unfounded and moralistic. These venues are just as much a part of Bristol's thriving nightlife and should continue to contribute to this, having worked for many years at both clubs I can assure you they are safe well ran places of work, they provide fun and entertainment for consenting adults which at the end of these trying times is the light relief we are all going to need.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email,

Kind regards

Kayleigh Hide

Dear Councillors,

I am writing to express my support of the two Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) in Bristol. I understand that the Licensing Committee is meeting on Monday 8th March to discuss the Sex Establishments Policy Consultations and the City Centre Cumulative Impact Assessment, and there is a chance that the 'nil-cap' available to councils may be considered.

Shutting the strip clubs would lead to many workers being made unemployed and having their livelihoods taken from them; including the dancers, the security staff, bar staff and managers. The knock-on effect on the SEVs suppliers and business networks would impact negatively on the wider economy.

The two SEVs in Bristol are known to the police and the council for being law abiding, well-run clubs, actually causing far fewer problems than the other non-SEV establishments in the area (according to the 'red, amber, green' system that the police use).

The (unfounded) claim that the strip clubs cause city centre assaults is effectively punishing and blaming a majority of female workers for violence against women. The focus should always be on the perpetrators and no blame should be taken away from them. This seems like 'slut-shaming' on the highest level.

This 'debate' raises its head time and time again. The club is well run, the workers are safe. Some men commit unforgivable, horrendous crimes against women and girls – these violent criminals are where those behind this debate need to focus their wonderfully impressive amounts of time and energy NOT towards the nil-cap. That will not solve violence against women and girls; I wish it were that simple.

Speaking as a Bristolian woman I have personally experienced far more violence, sexual harassment, slut shaming and victim blaming at standard night clubs, bars, and pubs than I ever have near or in the two SEVs. I have always felt safe, protected, and empowered at the two SEV establishments, which is something I can't say about other Bristol night-life venues. If the real goal here is to reduce cases of harassment and violence, then the nil-cap would be like putting a plaster on a bullet wound - it might look like you're doing something but in reality it's totally ineffective. Instead of forcing people out of work and telling women what they can and can't do with their bodies I ask you to please consider other options such as funding anti-harassment campaigns and increasing the police force budget so that the perpetrators are caught and punished rather than the victims. This would of course take more time and effort on your part however it would create jobs instead of end them and would help to decrease crime rather than just move it elsewhere.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Ms V Brant

8th Nov Lic Committee SEV

Jeanette Plumb

Dear Councillors

I am so pleased that the principle of a nil cap for SEVs is being considered seriously again.

I'm writing from two perspectives:

- one as a woman living in the city with a daughter who grew up here and as a woman who taught for many years in a city school meeting many girls who felt that they were undervalued and treated as second class citizens, viewed by many males only as sexual beings.

- to as a representative of St Stephen's Church in the City centre - opposite Central Chambers. We have sent in submissions over the past few years highlighted how the proximity to a faith community is a stated relevant factor and yet it never seems to have an impact on the decision making.

We will again after restrictions end have a number of activities on different days of the week including evenings, some of which will be aimed specifically at people in vulnerable circumstances. We want to be a church that stands for equality and dignity and feel that the SEV illustrates precisely the opposite.

We do hope that the council takes heart from the Sheffield example and others that show it is possible for this to be implemented and to meet the aspirations of being a White Ribbon city. With all the ongoing work of opening the Old City area and making it more tourist friendly it is so clearly the right time to change the use of that building. We have supported the city plans for the rejuvenation of St John's church garden/churchyard area and indeed the pedestrianisation which actually is not very helpful to us and yet we see its value for the whole city area.

We do hope that a forward looking, courageous decision is made this time at a time when we are all looking for new ways of being positive for the future.

Thanks you all so much for your work on this and the time given to considering all views.

Yours sincerely

Jeanette Plumb

I am writing to express my support of the two Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) in Bristol. I believe that the Licensing Committee is meeting on Monday 8th March to discuss the Sex Establishments Policy Consultations and the City Centre Cumulative Impact Assessment, and there is a chance that the 'nil-cap' available to councils may be considered.

As a single mother of two girls, I have always been open minded and educated my girls, that there should be no boundaries to any jobs they wish to do. I also identify as a strong feminist and life long labour supporter.

However I cannot support the 'nil-cap' policy.

As a self employed visual artist, one of my income streams was to teach life drawing to Hen and Stag Parties. I have been teaching these for over 12 years. This has given me the opportunity of working in a lot of clubs in Bristol and a lot of experience with large groups of males and females, who before the pandemic would bring a lot of capital into Bristol and bolster the night time economy.

I never knew that strip clubs existed or where they were in Bristol and to me they have never been overtly advertised.

However my work brought me to the doors of Central Chambers and since then, I have worked within both clubs, Urban Tiger and Central Chambers, for the last 6 years, been totally, supported by the owners, including sponsoring an art show, which I had in the Arcade in Bristol.

Educating myself and opening my eyes to the working environment and safe conditions of both the dancers who work within both clubs and the staff, a lot of whom, including the extremely hard working owner, who is a women.

I have got to know the dancers who are educated, motivated and charming, usually studying for degrees or have family to support. They are highly skilled in pole, which is indeed amazing to watch and is true art form in itself. They choose to work in this very safe environment and I think that is the key word here, 'choose' their right, their choice and not exploitative at all.

There is a no contact rule, which you will never find in any other club in Bristol. It is a safe environment with additions to security and CCTV and the rules laid out by the SEV licence are strictly adhered to and go above and beyond. These are not your 'exploited' or 'weak minded' women, as indicated by sensational headlines in local papers and tweets from my local MP. They are strong and independent, who support their families, who pay their way through college, who pay their mortgages. I have had the opportunity to run my own life drawing classes from the clubs and the dancers are very enthusiastic in participating and show-casing their skills.

Therefore, I cannot understand, why in this current economic turmoil after a year of closures, job losses, mental health issues, especially within the arts, theatrical and hospitality sector, Bristol City Council and the mayor want to bring in a nil cap policy on strip clubs.

This is a good job, where women can work for themselves and make a good living, they may not have the public school education or privilege, to propel them into high paid employment but this enables them to pay off student loans and support their families and have a good lifestyle. For

many of the dancers, the closures of the clubs have been devastating and this has not only effected them but the staff, the security, the cleaners, not to mention the many other business's connected to the clubs, which all bring a huge revenue stream into the City.

We have already been through so much.

The (unfounded) claim that the strip clubs cause city centre assaults is effectively punishing and blaming a majority of female workers for violence against women. My daughter in fact noticed that their were more incidents of violence during the summer months in the town centre over lockdown than before lockdown. This cannot be blamed on the clubs because they were not open. The focus should always be on the perpetrators and no blame should be taken away from them. This seems like 'slut-shaming' on the highest level.

As a victim of sexual assault myself. I understand more than many that men do commit these crimes against women and girls, but this has no correlation to licensed strip clubs.

Educate your men first before blaming women.

In conclusion, I apologise for my rambling email but its my opinion.

I do not support the nil cap policy being discussed on Monday.

I also will not vote for Thangam Debonnaire, she does not represent me as a labour supporter and neither does the overdue 'mayor'. I'm very disappointed.

This is not the type of feminism I want to see, which uses its mandate to further its own personal and political ideologies and agendas and pitches women against women. I don't want to support that. You cannot make a decision purely based on hearsay.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Rebekah wills
Artist
Clifton

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to express my support of the two Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEVs) in Bristol. I understand that the Licensing Committee is meeting on Monday 8th March to discuss the Sex Establishments Policy Consultations and the City Centre Cumulative Impact Assessment, and there is a chance that the 'nil-cap' available to councils may be considered. I myself am a worker at Urban Tiger and have worked there for two years now.

Shutting the strip clubs would lead to myself and many other workers being made unemployed and having our livelihoods taken from us; including the dancers, the security staff, bar staff and managers. The knock-on effect on the SEVs suppliers and business networks would impact negatively on the wider economy.

On a personal note, I am a young carer and student. My work at Urban Tiger allows me to study and take care of my sick mother - I would not be able to afford to do this on regular 9-5 or the minimum wage of a zero hours contract, and I wouldn't have the time to do both as caring is a very time consuming duty. Taking my job away from me would mean that I would have to stop studying or try rely on government care services, and be significantly worse off financially. I don't want to have to do this. I also enjoy my job a lot, I love the girls who I work with and it is such a fun, empowering experience that I have not experienced when working as a waitress or as bar staff or as a cleaner. In fact, I would argue that the ability to have any man/customer who is rude to me or harassing me removed from the building by a bouncer is not a perk that many jobs can say they can do for women. I do identify as a feminist and I do not in any way feel like my job affects my ability to be a feminist - I think the right to bodily autonomy and the right to choose is what feminism is about.

The two SEVs in Bristol are known to the police and the council for being law abiding, well-run clubs, actually causing far fewer problems than the other non-SEV establishments in the area (according to the 'red, amber, green' system that the police use).

The (unfounded) claim that the strip clubs cause city centre assaults is effectively punishing and blaming a majority of female workers for violence against women. The focus should always be on the perpetrators and no blame should be taken away from them. This seems like 'slut-shaming' on the highest level.

This 'debate' raises its head time and time again. The club is well run, the workers are safe. Some men commit unforgivable, horrendous crimes against women and girls – these violent criminals are where those behind this debate need to focus their time and energy NOT towards the nil-cap. That will not solve violence against women and girls; I wish it were that simple, instead it punishes those who are just trying to earn a living.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email.

Yours sincerely,

Sophie Roberts

Dear Councillors and Officers,

We, the Bristol Sex Workers' Collective, were saddened and surprised to hear that the council is once again proposing a new policy change regarding SEVs in Bristol.

We would like to first express our deepest condolences for all those who have been adversely affected by the recent novel coronavirus, and our thoughts are with all who are grieving the loss of a loved one. This past year has affected our city in many ways; Bristol's nightlife has been decimated and many businesses have not survived, and furthermore it is not over yet. The government's spending watchdog the Office for Budget Responsibility expects 2.2 million people to be unemployed by the end of the year, an estimated 6.5% of all workers (King, 2021), and in Bristol unemployment has more than doubled. Under these circumstances, it seems unusually cruel to consider closing Bristol's two lap dancing clubs when more than one hundred women from Bristol and the surrounding areas rely on these clubs for income. Not only that, but many will be in a more desperate situation than ever and will be relying on flexible work hours and a steady source of income. When such options are already scarce, does the council really want to take one more out of the hands of an almost entirely female workforce, many of whom have dependents and have been unable to work for over a year?

In 2018, the council wished to review their SEV policy and so carried out a survey, with the intention of using its results to inform the proposed changes. These results found that two-thirds of responders were comfortable with the presence of SEVs, provided that they were away from schools and places of worship. Not only that, another survey failed to find a link between increased crime and the presence of SEVs, as was suggested previously in 2018. The proposal to place a nil-cap in Bristol is clearly not coming from an objective standpoint, when the evidence clearly suggests that the clubs should remain open, and so the Bristol Sex Workers' Collective would like to know what evidence is there suggesting that closing the clubs would in fact help us towards our collective goal of gender equality? If that is the argument being made by a minority of people from pressure groups, why is the onus on us, as workers, to prove that we deserve to exist and that our choices are our own? Even so, we *have* proved again and again with primary evidence that clubs should and must remain open. We have proved from a democratic perspective that clubs should remain open. We have done the work and we have found clear objective evidence that clubs should remain open. We are tired.

So now we ask of these groups, what and where is the evidence for clubs to close?

Finally, as feminists, we believe that the sisterhood depends on all factions coming together to support one another. Sex workers are feminists as well. Often, our voices can go unheard due to the stigma which surrounds our work. But now, as we have in the past, we are raising our voices and imploring you not to ignore us. But to stand by us. Please don't take away our livelihoods. We rely on these jobs to eat, for shelter and to survive. In many cases, we rely on these jobs so that our loved ones can eat, shelter and live as well.

Signed,
Bristol Sex Workers' Collective (BSWC)