

## **Item 6b. Petitioner Report**

### **Introduction:**

The Community Food Champions campaign sprang from [Bite Back 2030](#), a national youth-led campaign against food injustice. In November 2022, Peterborough Youth Council pitched a campaign to reduce the presence of junk food advertising in Peterborough to a panel, who agreed to fund the project.

It was decided in June 2023 that the team would submit a petition asking Peterborough City Council to restrict the advertisement of foods High in Fats, Salts and Sugars on their own land and advertising space, in acknowledgement of the fact that whilst the council in its own words “has no history in advertising food high in fat, salt and sugar and does not intend to start doing so”, there is no legal policy preventing this from occurring in the future.

For this reason, the Youth Council have requested the petition be brought to scrutiny, and a policy to securely prevent this be proposed.

### **Why limit junk food?**

Reducing obesity is a key national and local public health priority<sup>1</sup>, with the link between junk food consumption and various poor health outcomes including some cancers being clearly demonstrated.<sup>2</sup> Peterborough’s largely low-income population is especially vulnerable to poorer health caused by obesity<sup>3</sup> and this is having a direct impact on our young people.

### **Why advertising?**

With 60% of adults in Peterborough classed as overweight or obese and understanding the consequences of this on long-term health outcomes, the Youth Council seeks to empower residents to make healthier choices about food. Evidence demonstrates the impact of excessive advertisement on the decisions consumers make<sup>4</sup> and research conducted as

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<sup>1</sup> [Health-and-wellbeing-integrated-care-strategy \(peterborough.gov.uk\)](#) Page 15: Targets to reduce childhood obesity.

<sup>2</sup> [https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2022/12/15/junk-food-marketing-restrictions-so-near-and-yet-not-quite/?\\_adal\\_sd=find.cancerresearchuk.org.1521040010557&\\_adal\\_ca=s0%3DGoogle%26me%3Dorganic%26c\\_a%3D%28not%2520set%29%26co%3D%28not%2520set%29%26ke%3D%28not%2520set%29.1521040010557&\\_adal\\_cw=1520515318456.1521040010557&\\_adal\\_id=ac35c2c3-252c-4477-93df-732ef06c1d48.1512405729.94.1521040003.1520961264.556e88a3-b248-4831-8653-47a7db2d0592.1521040010557&\\_ga=2.17484089.1249157482.1520853638-1999066222.1518452308](https://news.cancerresearchuk.org/2022/12/15/junk-food-marketing-restrictions-so-near-and-yet-not-quite/?_adal_sd=find.cancerresearchuk.org.1521040010557&_adal_ca=s0%3DGoogle%26me%3Dorganic%26c_a%3D%28not%2520set%29%26co%3D%28not%2520set%29%26ke%3D%28not%2520set%29.1521040010557&_adal_cw=1520515318456.1521040010557&_adal_id=ac35c2c3-252c-4477-93df-732ef06c1d48.1512405729.94.1521040003.1520961264.556e88a3-b248-4831-8653-47a7db2d0592.1521040010557&_ga=2.17484089.1249157482.1520853638-1999066222.1518452308)

<sup>3</sup> [Recent origin and evolution of obesity-income correlation across the United States | Humanities and Social Sciences Communications \(nature.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Assessing the impact of online junk food advertising on teenagers | Nesta](#)

part of the project demonstrates the vulnerability of young people to these marketing techniques:

A significant proportion of advertising space consists of bus stops, with young people being one of the primary user groups of the bus service

Low prices are a key selling point of these ads, which particularly attract young people who are more likely to have access to low incomes

With TfL's 2019 ban on HFSS food advertisement leading to a significant reduction in obesity rates<sup>5</sup>, it is clear tackling junk food advertising to the Council's full capacity will have a positive impact on the health outcomes of all Peterborough's residents, and on those of our young people specifically too.

### **Consultation so far:**

The campaign has seen governance throughout by the wider Peterborough Youth Council, made up of representatives from schools in the city, who have consistently highlighted the negative impact of junk food advertising and the lack of visibility for healthier alternatives on young communities.

In March 2023, a meeting was held with stakeholders including Flourish, Cambridge City Councillors, leaders in education, Peterborough's Director of Public Health and the Peterborough City Council Environmental Health team to scrutinise the idea of launching a youth-led campaign against such advertisements.

It became apparent in this forum that working to restrict advertisers through the Council's powers would likely be more effective than working collaboratively with them, and that local authorities across the nation have enjoyed success in similar campaigns, including Barnsley, Bristol, several London boroughs and Cambridge.

Under the guidance of Bite Back 2030, a Freedom of Information Request made in early 2023 revealed the advertising space the Council owns and the Council's ability to regulate what is advertised on these.

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<sup>5</sup> [Changes in household food and drink purchases following restrictions on the advertisement of high fat, salt, and sugar products across the Transport for London network: A controlled interrupted time series analysis | PLOS Medicine](#)

With the petition acting as evidence that residents across the city support this campaign, it has also enjoyed political support, acknowledged by Cllr Wayne Fitzgerald as part of the 'Ask the Leader' series.

### **Response to criticism:**

The primary query raised by political stakeholders has related to the impact this change could have on the Council's income. In the case of Transport for London's ban, despite forecast losses of up to £35 million before implementation, a negative impact was not observed.<sup>6</sup>

The proposed policy for Peterborough would still enable the council to take advertising revenues from major food and drinks companies., however they would simply need to swap out their unhealthy foods and drinks for healthier ones in the advertising copy. In the case of TfL, this has been seen to be the case, with companies switching to advertising healthier foods and drinks to comply with the policy.

Furthermore, officers' response to the petition highlights that such products are not currently being advertised in council spaces, suggesting no dependence on income from this avenue.

The petitioners are mindful that although Peterborough City Council's response to the petition makes clear that it "has no history in advertising food high in fat, salt and sugar and does not intend to start doing so".

However, we question why, given there appears to be no financial implications and significant will from a public health perspective to securing this commitment in policy, the Council would oppose this move.

### **Petitioners' recommendation to the Adults and Health Scrutiny Committee:**

The petitioners, Peterborough Youth Council, therefore request that a policy be approved to restrict the advertisement of such products on council-owned land and spaces, to include roundabout sponsorships, lamppost banners and third-party managed digital boards.

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<sup>6</sup> [Transport for London declares junk food ad ban a success as revenues announced | Sustain \(sustainweb.org\)](https://sustainweb.org/transport-for-london-declares-junk-food-ad-ban-a-success-as-revenues-announced/)

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