

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1	Charlotte Lipscomb to ask Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward, the Executive Member for Member for Planning and Growth
<p>The AMA festival took place at The Silver Leys Polo Club in Bury Green on Saturday 2nd September, having been granted a licence by East Herts Council at a hearing on 14th August. The festival left a trail of disruption in its wake, affecting all our local roads through Bury Green and our neighbouring hamlets and blocked the designated route for emergency vehicles. Local residents experienced not only gridlocked traffic which left us trapped in our homes but also indiscriminate parking on roads and verges, along with issues related to noise, litter, and anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Residents endured a weekend of mayhem. Examples include an eighty four year old resident directing traffic in order to try and mitigate the gridlock, a 93 year old man terrified in his house and surrounded by festival goers trying to retrieve abandoned vehicles, an elderly and confused lady in her last weeks of life who was moved to residential care for 2 weeks in anticipation of the event and children aged 10 and 12 too terrified to pick blackberries on the green, even with adult supervision. Young and old were profoundly and adversely affected.</p> <p>Can the Executive Member responsible for licensing please explain how the decision was made to allow the festival to take place, despite the strong objections from residents, the parish Council, our local councillor, the County Council Highways Dept and the police, all of whom were all able to accurately foresee the havoc the festival would create.</p>	

Response from Councillor Glover-Ward

I would like to thank Charlotte Lipscomb for raising this important question about the recent AMA Fest event.

First, I'd like to assure everyone that the council has followed the right process when considering the AMA Fest application. While I have responsibility for licensing policies, the national legislation and guidance does not allow me, as an Executive member, to be involved in decisions on individual applications. So, because there were representations *against* the application, a hearing led by a sub-committee of the council's Licensing Committee was convened. Please do not think I am trying to distance myself from the sub-committee's decision to grant the licence; I am simply pointing out that if the council had failed to follow the processes set out in law, we could have been taken to court for incorrectly dealing with the application.

That said, I have spoken with my colleague, the Chair of the Licensing Committee, and I am very happy to explain the council's position.

The Licensing Act 2003 dictates the broad range of issues the council must take into account when deciding whether to issue a licence for an event. When looking at the AMA Fest application, just like the five local residents, the local parish council, the police and others who raised objections, East Herts Council had considerable concerns about the traffic and parking arrangements put forward.

The organisers gave assurances both in writing and verbally at the Licensing Sub-Committee hearing that adequate arrangements would be put in place but, of course, the council did not simply take the organiser's word at face value. So, the sub-committee stipulated that the event could only go ahead *if* the organisers demonstrated the robustness of their plans by gaining, at their own expense, a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (a TTRO) from the Highways team at Hertfordshire County Council.

The organisers made the application and, although the notice period for submitting this was far shorter than usual, Hertfordshire County Council felt able to issue the TTRO. To be absolutely clear, had the county council *not* issued the TTRO, the conditions placed on the licence by East Herts Council

would not have been met and so the East Herts Council would have been enabled to halt the festival before it had even begun; this action would have been taken irrespective of the number of tickets that had been sold and entertainment arranged.

Unfortunately, the day of the festival saw very considerable disruption on the roads just as Ms Lipscombe has described and East Herts Council immediately launched an investigation. This includes looking at what information the organisers provided in support of their TTRO application to the county council and how this compared with the actual traffic management arrangements they put in place. Until we have concluded the investigation we are unable to comment on the details as this might prejudice any potential action that the council may deem appropriate.

Please be assured, however, that East Herts Council is ready to take action against any event organiser that commits offences under the Licensing Act 2003 which may include not complying with the terms of a licence. Regarding AMA Fest, we have gathered information and data from various sources, all of which has now been reviewed but we agreed to a request from Little Hadham Parish Council to hold off completing our investigation until local residents had time to respond to a request for evidence published in the October edition of the parish council magazine. As we are striving to be a listening council and in the spirit of partnership we respect the parish council's wish to enable as many residents as possible to have their say.

Finally, just as we must follow the legal processes when considering granting a licence, we must do the same when considering taking action *after* an event. We will weigh all the evidence received, including the information that may come in as a result of the Parish Council appeal, against the Licensing Act 2003 and the public interest to determine the appropriate action to take in relation to AMA Fest and its organisers.

Supplementary question from Charlotte Lipscombe

The terms of the licence restricted the number of attendees to 5,000 and tickets were on sale long before the hearing in August. She asked the Executive Member if the council knew how many tickets were sold or how the number of attendees at the event was controlled.

Response from Councillor Glover-Ward

Councillor Glover-Ward said she could not comment on this specific point as it was part of the investigation.