

Agenda Item 23.

TITLE	An approach for tackling gambling related harm
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Licensing and Appeals Committee on 23 January 2024
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Place and Growth - Giorgio Framalicco

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Local Authorities are responsible for issuing gambling premises licenses, monitoring compliance with the terms of these licenses and the wider Gambling Act 2005, and taking enforcement action if necessary, and are required to have regard to the Gambling Act's licensing objectives, one of which is protecting children and other people from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the Statement of Gambling Principles and results of an underage test purchase operation, including compliance inspections of betting premises in the borough alongside Local Government Association guidance.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Licensing Authority has a policy which is an overarching statement of principles setting out how they will approach gambling regulation.

To help tackle gambling related harm, it is recommended by the Local Government Association to:

- undertake an up to date local area profile in relation to gambling related harms
- set out expectations of local gambling operators and risk assessment processes
- undertake compliance visits and use enforcement tools appropriately
- undertake underage sales testing
- encourage local gambling businesses to apply for Gamcare certification for best in class player protection policies and undertake the Gamcare training courses

Appendix A [Gambling regulation: Councillor handbook \(England and Wales\) | Local Government Association](#)

Appendix B [Tackling gambling related harm a whole council approach \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix C [Wokingham Borough Council Statement of Gambling Principles](#)

Background

1. At a meeting of the Licensing and Appeals Committee on 30 January 2023, gambling related harm was discussed with a view to consider the Council policy on gambling, and take steps towards a full Council approach.
2. The Local Government Association (LGA) has provided a Councillor Handbook which is a comprehensive guide to Licensing Authority functions in respect of gambling. A link is provided at **Appendix A**.
3. The LGA has also produced a guide to Local Authorities on tackling gambling related harm. This guide is a whole Council approach including planning, social services, and public health. A link is provided at **Appendix B**. Attention is drawn to pages 15-20 in that document “How councils’ regulatory tools can help tackle gambling-related harm” which includes the role of the Licensing Authority and the Planning Authority.
4. The Licensing Authority has issued a Statement of Gambling Principles which was adopted on 18 November 2022, and is in effect until 2025. A link is provided at **Appendix C**.
5. The committee was invited to direct officers to take steps towards the best practice identified by the LGA and to receive a report back of findings from the operation at a later committee meeting.

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6. Officers completed an underage test purchasing operation on all betting shop premises in the borough during December 2023. All operators passed with a challenge to age verification of the young person.
7. A test purchase was also carried out on an Adult Gaming Centre in Wokingham, which resulted in a failure. Licensing Officers are currently working with management to help rectify issues and discuss training needs. A further test purchase on this Adult Gaming Centre will be completed within the next 6 months.
8. Licensing Officers also carried out compliance inspections of betting shop premises and found that they had local risk assessments to hand and were aware of Gamcare. They had advice leaflets available and posters on display for sensible gaming.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
There were no financial implications from this report.

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
Gambling related harms to individuals and families may have impact on several Council services, such as Children’s Safeguarding, Public Health, Offender Management, Development Control.

Public Sector Equality Duty
Due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030
There is no identifiable impact on the Council’s carbon neutral objective.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
n/a

List of Background Papers
None

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