

stations have focussed on ending the use of portacabins which has seen a reduction of approximately 15 stations citywide.

- Members were interested in the possibility of attestation or vouching being used for voter ID. It was noted that the Electoral Commission have recommended that as a possible change in the process, but the Government would be the final decision maker.
- The Board noted that Leeds has the largest number of postal voters nationwide. This resulted from a write out to all voters during the pandemic which received a large number of applications in Leeds. It is expected that this will reduce over time with voters gradually opting to return to voting in person, particularly in light of the planned postal voter re-application process.
- A query was made around postal votes and problems with mail delivery impacting the ability of electors to vote. This is being looked at by the Electoral Commission, Government and the Association of Electoral Administrators working with Royal Mail to improve the level of service received linked to the postal voting process. It was noted that in the July 2024 election service did improve with the lowest number of applications for re-issue of postal vote for a number of years.
- In terms of resourcing for the postal voter re-application the board were informed that with it being a fallow election year in 2025 the process can be managed through existing resources within the Elections Team.
- On proxy voting the Board were informed that this is captured in the data through the in person statistics. Leeds has a low level of proxy voting arrangements at around 300 citywide.

**Resolved** - The Board noted the content of the Election Update report and thanked the Elections Team for their hard work on the May and July 2024 elections.

### **32 The Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy**

The Board considered The Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy which is being reviewed and approved/adopted in the current municipal year and is brought before scrutiny as part of the authority's Budget and Policy Framework.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Debra Coupar, Executive Member for Resources
- John Mulcahy, Chief Officer Elections and Regulatory
- Sue Duckworth, Principal Licensing officer

The Principal Licensing Officer introduced the report setting out the statutory requirement to review the statement of licensing policy on a three yearly basis and the requirement to consult scrutiny under the budget and policy framework of the authority.

Following the Gambling Act Review being undertaken by Government all councils have been recommended to conduct a brief review of their licensing policy in relation the Act by the Gambling Commission.

In Leeds, a fuller review has taken place to future proof the statement in terms of language used and more broadly to prevent the need for further review next year which was part of the Gambling Commission recommendation.

Details on the changes being made to the Statement and the three consultation responses received were also highlighted to board members.

In response to questions and comments from members the following issues were discussed:

- The Board raised a query around past activity and breaches of the operating license related to Victoria Casino and communication links between the Council, Gambling Commission and the casino operator. The Board were informed that the Council has corresponded with the Gambling Commission on that issue setting out concerns about not being informed of the investigation taking place. The view of the Gambling Commission was that the issue was linked to the operating license and the license conditions and codes of practice and were therefore not a matter for the local authority.
- Members raised a query in relation to training of staff who are involved in smaller gambling venues where fruit machines and other such devices offer a secondary revenue stream to a business rather than major gambling firms with staff who are trained. In response the Board heard that in large part the gambling trade in Leeds is operated by large operators. In relation to pubs and clubs gambling products in them are dealt with through the Licensing Act (alcohol licensing) which sees regular visits to premises with a focus on supervision of gambling products in those venues and preventing access to children. New technology is in development around having machines that indicate when it is in operation to staff which should assist with enhanced supervision capability.
- The Chair asked about the work of the Environment, Housing and Communities Board on gambling harm and how that has impacted the statement of licensing policy. In response the Board heard about the rigorous measures taken in Leeds, and in partnership across the region, to prevent gambling harm with reports going back to the council's licensing committee on an annual basis on that subject.
- The Board inquired about online gambling and whether that means that in person or on street gambling is reducing. In response, the board heard it was approximately 50-50 in terms of how customers access gambling between online and on street gambling, though the latter is reducing. There are links between on street shops and online products as customers will be notified if they pass a gambling shop with offers and other such incentives.
- Test visits to book makers does focus on test purchasing and preventing young people accessing gambling through the high street. The board

heard that there is a thorough inspection regime focussed at on street book makers.

- In relation to the accessibility to children of gambling the board heard this is a concern and the My School survey covers the issue, the financial inclusion team also works on this along with colleagues in education to provide teaching and learning on the harms of gambling to young people.
- Members asked about the cumulative impact of book makers located on streets in certain areas of the city, Queen Street in Morley was cited as an example. In response the Board heard that under current legislation refusal of gambling applications is difficult, but the recent White Paper could include provision on cumulative impact to prevent the proliferation of book makers in one street and in the future cumulative impact policies could therefore be introduced assuming the White Paper passes into legislation. Under the current legislation demand cannot be taken into consideration when considering new premise applications.
- The Board asked about available resources in the Council to carry out community engagement on communities that are considered vulnerable to gambling products. Members were informed of the work of the Leeds Gambling Harm Group which includes colleagues from financial inclusion and public health, and this does involve engagement with communities. The Board also heard about the shame associated with gambling and the dangers that can pose in terms of people talking about their problems. It was noted that Leeds has been active in this area and over a period of years have worked with the NHS to get the Gambling Clinic sited in Leeds along with the GamCare Community Gambling clinic in Leeds.
- The Board briefly touched on youth vaping and were informed that this has been and continues to be a work item at the Children and Families Scrutiny Board along with the work undertaken by West Yorkshire Joint Services on visits and test purchasing done to prevent the sale of vapes to young people. In addition, it was noted that vaping is covered in planned Government legislation through the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.
- The Executive Member for Resources summed up by thanking the team for their work on reviewing and updating the statement of licencing policy which has become a significant piece of work. The Executive Member also referred to the work done in Leeds on gambling harm noting the establishment of the gambling clinic in the Merrion Centre which was the first of its kind. Leeds has been ahead of the game in provision of support for gambling harm.

**Resolved** - The Scrutiny Board noted the report and appendices and provided comments as required under the Budget and Policy Framework to Executive Board before it is referred to Council for adoption.

### **33 Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment 2024**

The Board considered a report from the Director of Strategy and Resources which outlined the purpose of the Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) to assess current and future health and social care needs in Leeds to inform the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, specifically to shape priorities, inform commissioners