

Licensing Committee

Monday, 8th July, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor J Gibson in the Chair

Councillors A Ali, J Bowden, E Carlisle,
R Downes, L Farley, K Haigh, S Hamilton,
T Hinchcliffe and L Martin

10 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

11 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

The agenda did not contain any exempt information.

12 Late Items

No late items of business were added to the agenda.

13 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Buckley, Holroyd-Case, D Seary and Senior.

15 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held 24th May 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

16 Triennial Review of Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Policy 2025-2027

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer Elections and Regulatory which presented the draft Statement of Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005 prior to a 6 week consultation with the public and interested parties, as required by the Act.

The report included a copy of the Draft Statement of Licensing Policy at Appendix 1 with a Summary of the proposed changes attached as Appendix 2.

The Principal Licensing Officer presented the report, highlighting the requirement for a triennial review of the Policy which formed part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. The draft Policy was presented to provide an opportunity for the Committee to provide comment or identify any amendments prior to it being released for consultation with the people and organisations affected by the proposals. The outcome of the consultation will be presented to Licensing Committee, prior to the Policy being considered by the Executive Board and Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) before being presented to full Council for adoption.

The following key issues were highlighted:

- The draft Policy reflected the national change in language around gambling being driven by Public Health. The use of ‘problem gambling’ and ‘vulnerable persons’ laid the responsibility on the person experiencing addiction, and the language had been amended to consider “Gambling Harms” throughout the draft Policy.
- The research undertaken in 2016 by Leeds Beckett University for Leeds City Council prior to the opening of Leeds Large Casino had been included in the previous Policy and had been widely used to describe groups of people who could be considered to be vulnerable to or at a high risk of gambling harms. That research had been largely replaced as the Licensing Authority now worked more closely with Public Health which had more recent research. The draft Policy also included input from the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities.
- The draft Policy referenced the work undertaken with the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) in 2023 on gambling harms and the Council’s approach which had recognised that gambling harm should be regarded as a Public Health issue.
- The partnership approach of the work undertaken by the Leeds Gambling Harms Group which included representatives of local treatments services, Third Sector, Citizens Advice Bureau, LCC Financial Inclusion team, Public Health and the Licensing Authority.
- The draft Policy also included updated requirements of operators/licence holders.

Additionally, the Committee noted the intention to offer a training session on Gambling Harms to all Members in November 2024 with Members of the Committee invited to attend.

During discussions the following matters were considered:

Breadth of consultation – In response to a query whether consultation was undertaken with people with experience of gambling and staff who worked in gambling premises, rather than an operators Head Office, the Committee heard that each gambling premises in Leeds was contacted as part of the process, as well as their legal representative and Head Office. It was noted that premises managers often regarded the consultation process as a corporate issue and passed it onto area management, however work was also undertaken with the “Gambling With Lives” organisation who worked with people who had been affected by gambling harms and their families.

Gambling harms risk matrix – One Member commented on that part of the appendix which was intended to identify ten areas in the city where residents may be at most risk from harmful gambling products and whether local Ward Councillors who represent the areas would be involved in work to address the issues. It was noted that the gambling harms matrix was still in development. It was intended that it would be included in the document which would be released for public consultation, however if not, the reference would be removed. The matrix would indicate areas where there may be potential harm,

not identify actual harm, drawn from data analysing the risk factors the Licensing Authority was aware of. The matrix would be used to inform the Licensing Authority's response to applications for licences issued under the Gambling Act 2005.

On-line gambling, young people, children and gaming – A Member who was also a Member of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) commented on the type of on-line gaming which children and young people participate in that includes an element of gambling or random win, whereby players purchase items known as “Loot Boxes” in order to improve their game. It was reported that this type of easy access on-line gaming/gambling was causing concern amongst parents due to the cost and children and young people were identified as vulnerable to gambling risk. As children were being introduced to gambling in this way, a plan preparing for the future impact of long term gambling on young gamblers as they reach 18 years old and can access physical gambling in Betting Shops/Casinos was needed, as this may bring a higher spike of gambling harms. A further comment that as a Child Friendly City, there was a council wide role in educating children and young people on gambling harm and risks was noted, with the Committee agreeing that the Chair should write to the Executive Member for Children and Families to highlight this specific issue and the Committees concerns and support for any work being undertaken to address the issue.

The Committee noted the response that the LCC Financial Inclusion team had recently published the results of the “My Health, My School” survey undertaken in schools. Work was being undertaken in secondary schools to raise awareness amongst young people of in-gaming gambling, and subsequent to the Scrutiny work, this was being extended to primary schools.

It was also noted that on-line gaming and gambling products did not fall within the remit of the Licensing Authority which was tasked with dealing with gambling in premises. In response to a query, it was confirmed that the previous Government had included a section on protection in gaming products in the White Paper, “High stakes: gambling reform for the digital age” published in April 2023, however with the recent change in Government, the future of the White Paper was uncertain. The Committee agreed the Chair should write to Lisa Nandy MP, the Secretary of State for Culture, to express Members concerns.

In conclusion the Chair thanked officers for their excellent work in this area.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the draft Statement of Licensing Policy and the comments and/or amendments outlined above were noted for incorporation into the Policy as part of the forthcoming public consultation, as appropriate.
- b) To note the matters agreed for action outlined above.

17 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED - To note the date and time of the next meeting as Tuesday 6th August 2024 at 10.00 am.