

GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING

Monday, 5 December 2016

PRESENT: Councillor P Dillon (Chair)

Councillor(s): T Graham, B Clelland, S Dickie, K Dodds, D Duggan, H Haran, J McClurey, C McHugh, J Turnbull and A Wheeler

APOLOGIES: Councillor(s): L Caffrey, P Craig, D Davidson, J Graham, M Hood and J Simpson

CPL16 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2016 were approved as a correct record.

CPL17 OSC REVIEW - IMPACT OF GAMBLING ON THE BOROUGH - EVIDENCE GATHERING

The Committee undertook its third evidence gathering session on the review into the impact of gambling on the Borough. This session focussed on what is known about the scale of harm caused by problem gambling in Gateshead and the impact of this on local people.

The Committee were informed that the term 'problem gambling' is one that is difficult to define. It is, to a degree, something that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits. Problem gamblers are more likely than other people to experience harms that can include:-

- Financial harms: overdue utility bills, borrowing from family friends and loan shark; eviction or repossession
- Family harms: preoccupied with gambling so normal family life becomes difficult
- Health harms: low self-esteem; stress related disorders; poor sleep and appetite
- School/college/work harms: poor performance; increased absenteeism; expulsion or dismissal

It was highlighted that 'at risk' gamblers are people who have experienced some difficulty with their gambling behaviour but who are not classified as 'problem gamblers'.

It is found that low and moderate risk gambling is higher among men than women and higher among younger age groups. Factors associated with at-risk gambling are:

- Age (with younger people being more likely to be at-risk)
- Religion
- Cigarette smoking
- Increased levels of alcohol consumption

The Committee noted that mechanisms to effectively record and measure problems caused by gambling in the local community do not exist. From those approached as part of the this evidence gathering session (Community Safety Team, Safeguarding Adults Team, Public Health, Citizen's Advice Bureau and Gamcare), none were able to provide local statistics about specific problems, nor the numbers of individuals or families affected.

Rob Burkitt, the lead for Shared Regulation at the Gambling Commission attending the meeting and provided an overview of the Commission's priorities for 2016/17 that include:

- Increase its focus on putting consumers at the heart of regulation
- Through strengthening the licence conditions and codes of practice on crime, advising on anti-money laundering requirements and reviewing the work of the Sports Betting Intelligence Unit, they will work to give consumers further confidence that betting is crime-free and markets are not rigged
- Review the Commission's enforcement policies and practices to promote credible deterrence

The Committee were informed that the Commission not only issue operators licenses for the larger operators such as William Hill and Coral but following a change in the law, they now provide licenses those who are remote operators (to cover online, telephone etc gambling).

The Committee were provided with research findings, undertaken by Manchester City Council, that highlighted those people who (by theme) may be vulnerable to gambling-related harm.

The Committee commented that the information presented covered a wide cross section of communities, and a wide cross section of people within them. However, they acknowledged that this information could become more comprehensive once organisations are more sophisticated in how this type of data is captured.

The Committee were informed that there is now an expectation for operators to have an understanding of the locality in which their premises are situated and any impact their premises may have on persons in the area who may be more vulnerable to gambling related harm.

It was noted that since April 2016, licence holders must undertake local risk assessments in cases where:

- applying for a new premises licence
- applying for a variation to a premises licence
- changes in the local environment or your own premises warrant a risk assessment to be conducted again.

Licensing authorities can request a copy of a risk assessment to ensure that an operator has a full understanding and awareness of the local surroundings.

The Committee were also informed that since April 2016, licensing operators in the arcade, betting, bingo and casino sectors are required to participate in a multi-operator self-exclusion scheme. This scheme would allow a customer to make a single request to be excluded from multiple operators within that sector and it is suggested that data for self-exclusion should be shared within a specified geographical area. There is an expectation that operators should make it as easy as possible for people to self-exclude and this should include being able to do so without having to enter a gambling premise(s).

The Committee raised concerns around online gambling and how accessible gambling sites are, including those outside of the UK. The Committee were informed that whilst it is not ideal that gambling is easily accessible online, if a person is accessing it in this way, more details about this person exist than they would if walking into a betting shop, adult gaming centre or casino where they are able to gamble anonymously.

Concerns were raised by the Committee in relation to problem gambling that can be associated with the sale of national lottery scratch cards. The Committee were informed whilst the regulation of this type of gambling was outside the remit of responsibility of the local authority, statistics/data could be obtained and circulated and that the concerns would be taken back to the Gambling Commission..

The Committee were reminded that whilst the aim of the Gambling Act is to permit gambling (so far as the applicant(s) are compliant with the Act), Council policies to regulate gambling within the borough could include the Council's expectations of gambling operators. The Committee were reminded that, unlike the supplementary planning document for hot food takeaways and over concentration of such premises, a similar approach cannot be taken in respect of betting shops etc, as the Gambling Act does not permit this.

The Committee commented on the accessibility of on-line gambling through use of apps and how their use can become 'normalised' behaviour. They queried if more could be done through way of advertising to help people to recognise that they may have or may be at risk of a gambling addiction.

The Committee were advised that operators have been contacted by the Commission regarding the need to accelerate the pace at which they are putting consumers at the heart of business decisions. The effects of gambling will be picked up as part of Public Health campaigns in the future as it is recognised that this is a feature of a wider issue. A multi-agency approach is needed to keep people appropriately informed, useful information provided and to ensure staff in gambling premises can identify those persons who may have a problem. Gamcare is keen to work closely with local authorities to offer its services.

The Committee recognised the importance of the working relationship between the Commission and the Council and hoped that this would continue.

RESOLVED – That the comments of the committee be noted

CPL18 THE COUNCIL PLAN - SIX MONTHLY ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY 2016-17

The Committee considered a report that provided a six month assessment of performance delivery for the period April to September 2016 in relation to the Council Plan 2015 – 2020.

The achievements, key actions and areas for improvement were set out in the report.

The Committee commented on the level of recycling and whilst there have been improvements, the recycling rates have now levelled. The Committee were informed that the introduction of payment for green waste collection had had an impact on this figure. We are not aware of any schemes that have yet achieved their 50% recycling target without the collection of food waste.

However, the service are providing regular information to residents around recycling and the Council believe in the education of recycling rather than progressing the enforcement route.

- RESOLVED -
- i) That the Committee was satisfied with the activities undertaken during April – September 2016 in relation to the Council Plan 2015 – 2020.
 - ii) That the report be endorsed for submission to Cabinet at its meeting on 24 January 2017.

Chair.....