

**TITLE OF REPORT: OSC Review on the impact of Gambling on the Borough**

**REPORT OF: Strategic Director, Communities and Environment**

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## SUMMARY

The Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of the impact of gambling in Gateshead as part of the 2016/17 programme. This report provides the Committee with an update on progress with the recommendations made.

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### Background

1. The Communities and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of the impact of gambling in Gateshead as part of the 2016/2017 programme.
2. The review drew on local and national evidence focusing on:
  - **Gambling in Gateshead** – the distribution, types and number of premises licensed for gambling and how this has changed over time; the types of gambling taking place in the borough
  - **The legal framework for regulation of gambling and the role of the regulators** - the Gambling Act 2005 and the respective roles of the Gambling Commission and Gateshead Licensing Authority; the impact of other regulatory regimes on gambling activity
  - **Local and national concerns about gambling** - evidence and observations from local and national regulators, operators, trade bodies, treatment providers, charities and public agencies
  - **Developing research evidence on gambling related harm** - a review of recent developments and best practice and how it can be used in Gateshead to minimise gambling related harm.
3. Four evidence gathering sessions of the OSC took place between September 2016 and January 2017. During the review the Committee heard evidence from:
  - Officers from Gateshead Council (including Licensing Officers, the Public Health Team, the Community Safety Team, and Safeguarding Adults)
  - The Gambling Commission - the body responsible for granting operating and personal licences for commercial gambling operators and personnel working in the industry

- Gamcare - an independent national charity providing information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

4. The evidence gathering sessions identified the following issues:

- There are a relatively small number of premises licensed for gambling in Gateshead and the number of premises has remained largely stable since the Gambling Act 2005 came into force. They are however a prominent feature of the main shopping areas of the borough which is a common theme across the nation.
- It was recognised by the Committee that a huge amount of gambling goes on in the borough which is outside of the control of the Council as licensing authority including the National Lottery, scratch cards and online gambling. The potential amount of money that goes out of the borough through this route is a matter of concern. The amount of promotion and advertising of gambling on television is also a matter of concern.
- The review highlighted the increase in the prevalence of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals and identified that there are potentially 168 of these in Gateshead's 42 licensed betting premises. It also highlighted the concerns from many different bodies about these machines.
- The review examined the national debate around the limitations of the evidence available to establish causal links between FOBTs and problem gambling and addiction to gambling highlighted the wide range of initiatives, schemes, research and inquiries which are currently being carried out to further understand the concerns raised.
- The review examined the available data sources about problem and at-risk gambling and their relation to the borough of Gateshead. It also highlighted to members the known risk factors associated with problem and at-risk gambling and the kinds of harm they are more likely than other people to experience.
- Members were advised however that while a wide range of local agencies services and bodies were approached to provide evidence on the extent of gambling related harms in Gateshead there was simply none available. It is apparent that there does not currently exist a mechanism to record and measure problems caused by gambling in our local community, and none were able to provide local statistics about specific problems, nor the number of individuals or families affected by them.
- Members heard a presentation from Rob Burkitt, the lead for Shared Regulation and Better Regulation at the Gambling Commission. Rob set out the role of the Gambling Commission and an overview of its priorities for 2016/2017. Members recognised the importance of the

working relationship between the Commission and the Council and were keen for it to continue.

- Members were informed about some work commissioned in 2015 by Westminster and Manchester Councils to explore what area-based vulnerability to gambling related harm might look like.
- Members received a presentation from the learning and development Manager of Gamcare an independent national charity providing information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling.

### **Final recommendations of the OSC review .**

5. The final recommendations of the OSC's review of the impact of gambling in Gateshead were:

- (1) The Council should use every opportunity to contribute to the national debate about the harms that can be caused by irresponsible and problem gambling.
- (2) The Council should continue to develop its productive working relationship with the Gambling Commission.
- (3) The Council should contribute to the continuing debate and proposed consultations on the harms associated with fixed odds betting terminals.
- (4) The Gambling Commission's introduction of Local Area Risk profiles represents a new opportunity for Gateshead Council to think more deeply about the protection of vulnerable people from gambling-related harm. The Council should develop Local Area Risk Profiles for the borough.
- (5) Gateshead Council as a licensing authority should examine the range of data available locally and evaluate how this can be used in Local Area Risk Profiles.
- (6) Gateshead Council as a licensing authority should also begin to consider what data and evidence is missing and establish closer working links with other services within the Council and with partner agencies to develop a better knowledge base and a better range of data
- (7) That further update reports be provided to the OSC on a regular basis.

### **Update on progress with the recommendations**

6. Arrangements have been made for a meeting between the Gambling Commission and Gateshead Council as part of the Commission's ongoing engagement plan with local authorities. The focus of the meeting will be on Gateshead Council's approach to gambling matters including inspections and enforcement, what sort of issues the Elected members are concerned about, and the work plan for next year – in particular about the review of statement of

principles (ready for 2019). The date of this meeting is yet to be finalized but is likely to take place in late September or October.

7. Newcastle University have approached the Council looking for projects for their post grad planners to carry out starting October this year. We are currently in discussions with the University about a project involving research around gambling in Gateshead, possibly based on the framework presented in the Geofutures work commissioned in 2015 by Westminster and Manchester Councils to explore what area-based vulnerability to gambling related harm might look like.

### **Recommendation**

8. The Committee is asked to note the progress that has been made.

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