

LICENSING AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

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UPDATE ON RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING

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Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Licensing and Safety Committee on the voluntary partnership agreement relating to the promotion of responsible gambling in Medway through the Medway Responsible Gambling Partnership.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 Medway Council's Statement of Gambling Policy was approved by the Council on 24 January 2013, published on the website on 4 February 2013 and came into effect on 4 March 2013. This document outlines the way the Council, as the licensing authority, implements this legislation.

2. Background

2.1 During a meeting of the Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6 December 2012, discussions took place relating to the increase in the number of gambling establishments and bookmakers in High Streets, especially the proliferation of Fixed Odds Betting Terminals. The Committee agreed that the Chairman and Spokespersons, together with relevant officers, should seek a meeting with the Gambling Commission to discuss an approach to the gambling industry about this. The Committee also suggested research into whether local initiatives to address these issues had been introduced elsewhere and could be applied in Medway. (Minute 622/2012 refers)

2.2 Over the last 18 months meetings have taken place with the Gambling Commission and with the Association of British Bookmakers (ABB) and gambling and gaming operators in Medway.

2.3 During these meetings all parties agreed that a robust framework for gambling regulation exists, but it was recognised that local partnerships can supplement levels of statutory compliance, protect gambling and gaming establishment employees, at risk gamblers and assist operators to demonstrate social responsibility and enable them to aim to reduce harm in the Medway community. Discussions have been ongoing about how a local voluntary partnership in Medway might operate and what initiatives it might seek to implement.

3. Voluntary Partnership Agreement

- 3.1 A voluntary partnership agreement between the Council, the ABB and gambling and gaming operators in Medway was signed by Councillor Hicks, the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Customer Contact and was due to be signed by all the other parties imminently.
- 3.2 The voluntary partnership agreement sets out the background and scope of the agreement, what is expected of Gambling Operators, what is expected of the Council, some Key Performance Indicators, and what the existing requirements are on Gambling Operators and the Council.
- 3.3 As part of this voluntary agreement gambling operators will pilot a new self-exclusion scheme. Where a customer indicates that they wish to self-exclude from a particular gambling premises, assistance to complete a self-exclusion form will be readily available. The individual will be required to provide two photographs to be included in the scheme and to make it practical to enforce, and personal details will be retained (subject to compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998). Customers that self-exclude at one gambling premises will be encouraged to self-exclude from other participating gambling premises in Medway.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that the self-exclusion pilot will start in early December in Chatham and will run for two years. The Voluntary Partnership Agreement and the progress of the self-exclusion pilot scheme will be monitored by the multi agency Medway Responsible Gambling Partnership. This includes representatives of the Council, the Gambling Operators, the Association of British Bookmakers, the Police, the Community Safety Partnership and Safer Medway Partnership.
- 3.5 The combination of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement and the pilot self-exclusion scheme extending to more than one operator is the first of its kind in the country. There is likely to be considerable national interest in the launch of the self-exclusion pilot scheme.

4. Risk Management

- 4.1 It is important that the Licensing & Safety Committee is kept fully informed of issues in respect of licensing matters.

5. Financial and legal implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report
- 5.2 The Council has produced its Statements of Policy as required by the Gambling Act 2005 and has signed the voluntary partnership agreement to encourage responsible gambling in Medway and provide a mechanism for those seeking help.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the Committee notes the cutting edge work undertaken in Medway at the request of the Business Support Overview & Scrutiny Committee that has culminated in the signing of a voluntary partnership agreement between the members of the Medway Responsible Gambling Partnership.
- 6.2 That the Committee notes the setting up of a multi operator self-exclusion pilot scheme in Medway.
- 6.3 That the Committee requests further updates are provided to it on the work of the Medway Responsible Gambling Partnership and the self-exclusion scheme.

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Background papers

None