

ASHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL



Council Offices,
Urban Road,
Kirkby in Ashfield
Nottingham
NG17 8DA

Agenda

Scrutiny Panel A

Date: **Thursday, 10th March, 2022**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road,
Kirkby-in-Ashfield**

For any further information please contact:

Lynn Cain

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Scrutiny Panel A

Membership

Chairman: Councillor Dave Shaw
Vice-Chairman: Councillor Caroline Wilkinson

Councillors:
Jim Blagden
Lauren Mitchell
David Walters

Trevor Locke
Warren Nuttall

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SUMMONS

You are hereby requested to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel A to be held at the time/place and on the date mentioned above for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.



Theresa Hodgkinson
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

1. **To receive apologies for absence, if any.**
2. **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests.**
3. **To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14 October 2021.** 5 - 8
4. **Scrutiny Review: Selective Licensing Scheme.** 9 - 18
5. **Scrutiny Review: Gambling Harms.** 19 - 26

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SCRUTINY PANEL A

Meeting held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield,

on Thursday, 14th October, 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Caroline Wilkinson in the Chair;

Councillors Trevor Locke, Lauren Mitchell and
Warren Nuttall.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Jim Blagden, Dave Shaw and
David Walters.

Officers Present: Lynn Cain, Mike Joy and Shane Wright.

SA.4 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary or Personal Interests and/or Non-Registrable Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

SA.5 Minutes

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 15 July 2021, be
received and approved as a correct record.

SA.6 Scrutiny Review: Tenancy Support

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting and reminded the Panel that an Informal Working Group meeting had been held on 14 September 2021, whereby Members had been presented with detailed information on the Selective Licensing Scheme via a presentation given by the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings, Phil Warrington and the Environmental Health Team Leader, Stacy White.

A copy of the presentation was shown again to Members during the Panel's discussions.

The Scrutiny Research Officer drew Members' attention to the original objections for setting up the Selective Licensing Scheme pilot in 2016 which had been established to tackle unprofessional landlords and their inadequate maintenance and management of rental properties in the designated areas of New Cross, Sutton and Stanton Hill.

Following the end of the initial pilot scheme after 5 years in operation, it was agreed that a Selective Licensing Scheme (SLS) review be undertaken by the Strategic Housing team to ascertain if the scheme remained fit for purpose and would continue to raise housing standards whilst providing benefits to the Council and its residents seeking accommodation through the private sector.

The SLS review was now almost complete, and officers were intending to submit a report to Cabinet on 7 December 2021 outlining the review's evaluations, outcomes and subsequent recommendations.

In the context of the Panel's ongoing review of tenancy support it had been previously agreed that sight of the report, prior to its submission to Cabinet, would be extremely useful to enable Members to submit their views/responses to the SLS review alongside the report. It would be the Panel's opportunity to inform and influence Cabinet's considerations and to request the inclusion of any specific caveats, checks and balances for management of the new scheme, should it be subsequently approved.

As the timeline for considering the draft report prior to its submission to Cabinet in December was limited, it was suggested that another Informal Working Group be convened at short notice to consider the document once it became available. The Panel concurred that this was a good idea and requested that the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings and the Portfolio Holder to Council and Social Housing also be invited to the meeting to contribute to any ensuing discussions.

Expanding on the possible outcome of the SLS review and whether the scheme would be renewed for a further 5 years, Members discussed the fact that rents had increased under the original scheme mainly as a result of landlords passing on the initial licensing fee to the tenants. This trend was indeed worrying and would need to be mitigated against in any revamped scheme going forward.

It was also acknowledged that many improvement grants and funding initiatives were available to landlords to upgrade their properties but many still seemed to fall short of maintaining their rentals at a decent standard.

To conclude Members expressed their desire to see the draft Cabinet report as soon as practicably possible and reiterated that they would welcome the chance to influence any housing scheme that would improve the lives of Ashfield residents in some way.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings be requested to release the Cabinet report in relation to the Selective Licensing Scheme Review to Panel Members for consideration as soon as practicably possible;
- b) as a result of a) above and upon release of the Cabinet report, the Scrutiny Research Officer convene an Informal Scrutiny Working Group meeting to enable Members to consider its proposals and recommendations as part of the 10 week consultation period;
- c) an invite to the Informal Working Group meeting, once arranged, be extended to the Portfolio Holder for Council and Social Housing and the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings, to enable them to contribute to the discussion as so required.

The meeting closed at 7.37 pm

Chairman.

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Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL A
Date:	10 MARCH 2021
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	STANTON HILL, SUTTON CENTRAL AND NEW CROSS
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present Scrutiny Panel A with a draft final report on the Scrutiny Review: Selective Licensing Scheme to be presented to Cabinet in March. This report sets out the recommendations provisionally approved by Members at the informal working group of Scrutiny Panel A held on Thursday 20 January 2022. Furthermore, this report sets out the information and evidence Members considered over the course of the review as well as the methodology utilised.

Recommendation(s)

Scrutiny Panel A is recommended to:

- a. Discuss and approve the draft final report for the Scrutiny Review: Selective Licensing Scheme to be presented to Cabinet in March 2022, including the following recommendations:
 - o Cabinet is recommended to approve the renewal of the Selective Licensing Scheme.
 - o Cabinet is recommended to explore the feasibility of expanding the Selective Licensing Scheme to other areas in Ashfield that may meet the criteria.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

Scrutiny Panel A has been reviewing the Selective Licensing Scheme in conjunction with the wider review of the Scheme at the conclusion of the agreed 5-year pilot period.

Alternative Options Considered

Members of Scrutiny Panel A could consider not submitting any comments to Cabinet regarding the Selective Licensing Review. However, Panel Members feel that with the information considered that it would be most appropriate to make recommendations to Cabinet as they take the decision on whether to renew the Scheme.

Detailed Information

INTRODUCTION

Scrutiny Panel A have undertaken a review of the established Selective Licensing Scheme. The scrutiny review has been carried out concurrently with the review of the Scheme towards the conclusion of the agreed 5-year pilot period.

Members have worked closely with the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings and the Environmental Health Team Leader to gather information and evidence regarding the implementation of the Scheme, as well as the benefits achieved, and areas for improvement needed if the Scheme is to be renewed.

Members firstly looked to understand why the Selective Licensing Scheme was implemented, and were informed that the following objectives underpinned the establishment of the Scheme:

- Improve housing standards properties conditions within the private rented stock
- Improve management practices
- Improve levels of demand for housing and reduce the number of empty homes
- Contribute towards partnership working to improve wider community issues including crime, anti-social behaviour, and domestic nuisance

SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME REVIEW

As part of an introductory informal working group meeting held in September 2021, Members received a presentation from the Service Manger for Strategic Housing & Lettings and the Environmental Health Team Leader. The presentation set out the benefits of selective licensing to landlords, tenants, the Council, and the district.

Benefits for Landlords:

- Reduced turnover of tenants in the designated areas.
- Set out clear explicit standards for landlords, agents, and tenants in a regulated sector.
- Support, education, and guidance services have been provided for both landlords and tenants.
- The profile and public image of the designated areas has been raised encouraging tenants into the market and reputable investment.
- Tenants are more aware of their responsibilities for maintaining their tenancies.
- Improved rental and property values.

- Improved image and perception of the designated areas.
- Created a level playing field - decent landlords will not be undercut by an unscrupulous minority.
- Poor landlords are being pushed out of the area, either because they are unwilling to improve their properties condition or because they are issued with financial penalties and are unable to hold a license.
- Allows reputable landlords further opportunity for investment.

Benefits for Tenants:

- All licensed landlords and agents operating in the area are fit and proper and can manage property.
- More professional landlords bring about improvements to the quality and management of property.
- Tenants have seen economic benefits, reduced heating costs, and improved likelihood of regaining any deposit paid.
- Improvements to the neighbourhood have benefited private tenant's security and sense of community.
- Support, education, and guidance services have been provided for both landlords and tenants.
- Tenants have benefited from a guarantee of safer, healthier, and well managed housing.
- Improved the physical conditions of the housing stock to ensure that they are free from category 1 hazards as defined in the Housing Act 2004 to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants.
- Better management practices have help to increase the length of tenure and reduce incidence of unplanned moves or homelessness.

Benefits for the District:

- Reduced the number of empty properties within the designated areas.
- Ensured that both landlords and tenants can be held accountable.
- Generated licensing income of circa £225k to enable a proactive response to issues in the locality. Tackling issues in the area has not taken a disproportionate number of day-to-day resources, thus impacting on service delivery.
- Making it easier to involve landlords in wider strategies including crime reduction initiatives and local spatial strategies.
- Protecting vulnerable groups who are often occupiers of privately rented accommodation which is poorly managed.

- Generated income from successful Civil Penalties which is used to continue proactive work through the district.

Benefits for the Council:

- Landlords who have not responded to any previous measures such as registration schemes have been required to engaged with Housing Enforcement Officers.
- Bad landlords have been forced to improve their practices or leave the market.
- The Council has gained extensive knowledge about private renting in part of the District. This has enabled targeted enforcement and support to landlords.
- Landlords and their agents are readily identifiable.
- The licence fee covers the costs of the scheme.
- Income generated from offences through civil penalties can be used to improve housing in areas outside of the designation and allow for more proactive work.

Housing Improvement

There have been 600 inspections in the designated Selective Licensing areas to date. Of these 600 inspections, 561 have required a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) inspection. 157 properties meet the HHSRS standards. There are 404 properties failing to meet the HHSRS standards. 98 properties have been identified as having category 1 hazards, where 400 properties have been identified as having category 2 hazards.

338 properties have had improvements made to ensure electrical installations meet required standards. 195 properties have had energy efficiency improvements made to boilers, windows, roofs, and insulation. 98 properties have been identified as high risk.

Empty Properties

In 2017, there were 21 identified empty residential properties within the designated areas. In 2021, there are 6 identified empty properties within the designated areas, with 2 currently for sale.

Licenses

Approximately 650 properties with the designated areas have been estimated to require a license under the Selective Licensing Scheme. To date:

- 620 licensing have been issued.
- 3 licences have been refused due to the proposed license holder not being deemed fit and proper.
- There are 12 pending civil penalties for failure to license.
- 3 landlords have been issued penalties for breach of licensing.
- 3 landlords are no longer deemed fit and proper.

Extending Licensing in the Designated Areas

- Encourage landlords to continue with good management of properties.
- Prevent rogue landlords investing in the area.
- Give the Council greater powers for dealing with substandard properties and poor management.
- The Council is not solely reliant on HHSRS for enforcing and breaches are strict offences which can be dealt with by means of civil penalties of up to £30,000 dependent on the severity.
- Money from non-compliance can be invested into other areas of the district and to fund proactive work in the private rented sector.
- Gives greater powers to support partner agencies dealing with other illegal activities (examples of this are recent work with both Trading Standards and Police).
- Little cost to the Council to implement.
- New more efficient application procedure.
- Embedded procedure to deal with breaches and failure to license.

CABINET MEETING – 7 DECEMBER 2021

At the December 2021 meeting a Cabinet, a report titled *Selective Licensing – Evaluation Report and Recommendations* was presented to Cabinet with the following recommendations:

- a. To note the findings of the evaluation of Selective Licensing Schemes, as attached at Appendix A.
- b. To consider the options in respect of the future of the existing Selective Licensing Schemes.
- c. To approve in principle, renewing the existing Selective Licensing Schemes for a further 5-year period, subject to a 10-week period of public consultation. The consultation period will begin immediately after the provisional decision is made and will relate to both the terms and conditions of the scheme and the geographical boundaries of the designated areas.

The Evaluation Report highlighted the fact that there had been considerable success with two specific objectives of the Scheme; improving housing standards and property conditions within the private rented stock and improving management practices.

Cabinet Members considered the key findings detailed within the evaluation report relating to Selective Licensing for privately rented properties and the options regarding the future of the schemes and a preferred way forward. Members considered the alternative options of declining to evaluate or renew the Selective Licensing Scheme, but this was not recommended. The schemes were initially implemented to tackle localised problems and whilst Cabinet agreed that although the schemes have had a beneficial impact, many issues still remained.

Cabinet resolved to approve the three recommendations above, with a view to receiving a further report in 2022 detailing consultation feedback and to make a final decision on if the Selective Licensing Scheme will be renewed or not.

SELECTIVE LICENSING SCHEME - ORIGINAL IMPLEMENTATION

As part of the review process, Panel Members considered the September 2016 report to Cabinet where the Selective Licensing Scheme was originally implemented. This included examining the reasoning provided for implementation at the time, as well as the consultation exercises that took place.

Members learned that the original recommendations presented to Cabinet in 2016 were:

- a. *To accept that there is evidence and considerable public support for the selective licensing of private rented properties in identified areas within the District.*
- b. *That Council be recommended to formally designate the areas of Stanton Hill and Sutton Central as Housing Act 2004 Part 3 Selective Licensing areas.*
- c. *To note that, following a decision to introduce a Selective Licensing Scheme, a public notification period of 3 months is required by statute ahead of implementation to communicate the decision to consultees and the public.*
- d. *To agree and support the financial implications of implementing a Selective Licensing Scheme (including the proposed fees of £350 for a license for 5 years).*
- e. *That Council recognise the risks in relation to the unknown elements of delivery of the Scheme and that we commit to undertake a review to ensure the fees and resources deployed to the Scheme are appropriate, and to enable further recommendations to be made to Cabinet as necessary after 12 months.*

The report went on to detail:

“Selecting Licensing is an important component of the Council’s wider regeneration strategy. It is the only option available to local authorities that compels landlords to look at how they manage their rented properties and where required, make improvements to their management practices. It is important that the significant investment from the Council and its partners aimed at improving the physical environment and economic conditions of the area are supported by this initiative. This will ensure that the area is sustainable as a mixed tenure environment with a range of housing options”.

The 2016 report further set out that strong evidence existed linking lower house prices in the identified areas of Stanton Hill and New Cross resulted in an influx of some unprofessional landlords purchasing properties to rent. These kinds of landlords often show little interest in managing their properties properly leading to a multitude of issues including increasing anti-social behaviour. Furthermore, inadequate property management leads to prevalent issues such as electrical hazards, damp and mould, fire safety, excess cold, and structural collapse.

Statutory Consultation

Prior to implementation of the Selective License Scheme in Ashfield, numerous statutory consultation exercises were undertaken by the Council, and the results are detailed in the 2016 Cabinet report.

Consultation was carried out with landlords, tenants, and local business owners that included:

- A dedicated webpage launched on the 6 May 2016 listing a proposal document and all ancillary advice and documentation.
- An online questionnaire for the three main stakeholder groups.
- A street level leaflet drop to all affected properties and local businesses.
- Officers attended several public drop-in sessions to offer advice and clarification.
- A stakeholder pre-launch event was held.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrutiny Panel A held two informal working group meetings discussing the Selective Licensing Scheme Review, as well as two formal Panel meetings on the topic. Throughout the review, Members have been offered consistent support from the Service Manager for Strategic Housing & Lettings and Environmental Health Team Leader. The Panel has carried out the Scrutiny Review: Selective Licensing Scheme with the intention of submitting a final report to Cabinet at the same time they will be taking a decision on whether to renew the Selective Licensing Scheme.

Following a review of the information and evidence available, Scrutiny Panel A Members approved the following two recommendations to be presented to Cabinet.

- a. Cabinet is recommended to approve the renewal of the Selective Licensing Scheme.*

Upon reviewing all of the information and evidence provided, taking into consideration the primary objectives of the Selective Licensing Scheme, and the benefits and improvements that have been achieved in the first 5-year period of implementation, Scrutiny Panel A Members feel it would be most appropriate for Cabinet to approve the renewal of the Selective Licensing Scheme.

- b. Cabinet is recommended to explore the feasibility of expanding the Selective Licensing Scheme to other areas in the District that may meet the criteria.*

Panel Members have discussed the possibility that other areas in Ashfield may benefit from the implementation of a Selective Licensing Scheme and recommend to Cabinet that exploration is undertaken to identify any such areas that would meet the criteria required to establish a Selective Licensing Scheme.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Council's Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023 sets out key priorities and ambitions to be achieved over the coming years. Under the Homes and Housing vision, the following desired outcomes are set out:

- Assist tenants with welfare and monetary advice to increase tenancy sustainment.
- Maintain and increase positive preventative action.
- Increase tenancy sustainment by offering appropriate tenancy support.

Legal:

Section 80 of the Housing Act 2004 gives Councils the power to introduce (with permission) selective licensing of privately rented properties.

Finance:

There are no financial implications contained in this report. Consultation with Finance will be required if approval is given to the recommendation relating to exploring the feasibility of expanding the pilot to other areas of the District.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None
General Fund – Capital Programme	None
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Scrutiny Panel A concluded that the Selective Licensing Scheme has resulted in a number of positive outcomes for those tenants within the pilot areas. Ending the service creates risks to the quality of private sector rented accommodation.	Cabinet approval for the renewal of the Selective Licensing Scheme and consideration of options to extend the scheme to other areas of the District.

Human Resources:

None.

Environmental/Sustainability

Energy efficiency improvements have been achieved under the Selective Licensing Schemes through installing new boilers, loft insulation and replacement roofs.

Equalities:

Within the selective licensing areas there are a disproportionate number of families whose ethnic origin and first language is not English. Consideration will be given to this as part of the consultation process.

Other Implications:

None.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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Report To:	SCRUTINY PANEL A
Date:	10 MARCH 2022
Heading:	SCRUTINY REVIEW: GAMBLING HARMS
Portfolio Holder:	NOT APPLICABLE
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to introduce the Scrutiny Review: Gambling Harms topic to Scrutiny Panel A. Gambling Harms was added to the scrutiny work programme at the December 2021 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report provides the Panel with background information regarding gambling and gambling-related harms and sets out some initial considerations for the review scope.

Recommendation(s)

Members of Scrutiny Panel A are recommended to:

- a. Note the information contained in this report.
- b. Undertake a review scoping exercise to determine the objectives, methodology, and potential outcomes of the Scrutiny Review: Gambling Harms.
- c. Identify next steps to be taken to progress the Scrutiny Review: Gambling Harms.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Scrutiny Review: Gambling Harms was added to the scrutiny work programme by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2021.

Alternative Options Considered

No alternative options have been considered at this stage of the review process.

Detailed Information

INTRODUCTION

December 2021 Council Meeting

At the December 2021 meeting of Council, Members approved a revised Statement of Gambling Policy effective from 31 January 2022. During the debate on this item, various Members voiced growing concerns on the serious impacts of gambling on local communities and individuals, with a desire for the Council to identify what it can do to lessen these issues.

Following this debate at Council, Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee voted to add gambling harms as a topic to the scrutiny work programme so that the issues highlighted during the debate could be explored further, with comments and recommendations to be put to Cabinet directly.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

LGA Councillor Handbook: Gambling Regulation

In July 2021, the LGA published a councillor handbook designed to assist councillors in understanding gambling regulations and the role local authorities have in managing those regulations.

Within the handbook there is a section on “Protecting Vulnerable People”. This section states that protecting children and vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling is one of the three licensing objectives. Ensuring that this objective is upheld is one of the core responsibilities licensing authorities must meet.

The full LGA handbook on gambling regulation can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/gambling-regulation-councillor-handbook-england-and-wales-0>.

Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) is working on a project with the Gambling Commission to raise awareness and increase the involvement of elected members in overview and scrutiny roles in tackling gambling related harms. As part of the project, the CfGS have released a document detailing how local authorities are using scrutiny to tackle gambling harms.

As set out in the introduction to *Local Authorities Using Scrutiny to Tackle Gambling Harms*:

“The COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered the gambling landscape by shifting activity online due to restrictions on people’s movements, the cancellation of major sporting events, and the closure of commercial venues. The most recent Gambling Commission statistics demonstrates a 7.7% decrease in licensed betting premises between March and November 2020, and this is a continuing trend.

Many experts are now examining the impact of the pandemic upon gambling behaviours, alongside increased availability and accessibility of gambling products, the use of multiple products, the time spent gambling, and the alarming, elevated risk of harms.

Gambling harms are an issue for every local authority in the UK, both from the perspective of the authority's wellbeing and community leadership role, and their regulatory responsibilities. The growing issue of gambling harms can also be considered within the wider commitment to reducing health inequalities and an equitable post-covid recovery.

Whilst many councils have discussed gambling harm within licensing committees, in the context of reviewed and updating the gambling policy statement, through our research we have found that tackling gambling harms is underexplored in local authorities. As with other public health issues, arguably there should be consideration of gambling harms at the highest level to ensure appropriate political and strategic priority.”¹

The CfGS publication goes on to provide recent examples of councils tackling gambling harms through scrutiny committees – using the function to understand, evaluate, and improve efforts that prevent and treat gambling harms in the community.

Common themes have been identified:

- Mapping areas of risk and vulnerable populations
- Bringing together local partners
- Involving stakeholders and victims
- Seeking to understand individual, social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors that influence a person's experience of gambling harm
- Understanding gambling harms as a public health issue and advocating for a whole system approach to address this
- Recommending a coordinated action plan to prevent and reduce gambling harms
- Lobbying government through correspondence with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sports to take action on gambling harms

Case Study Examples

Devon County Council

Councillors in Devon expressed concern about the impacts of gambling in their communities and were keen to explore the wider societal and economic effects. Scrutiny asked for Public Health to report on the issue – the report outlined that Devon's seasonal tourism; high house prices and low wages has caused pockets of deprivation. This deprivation puts communities at risk to gambling related harms, the impacts of which are highly likely to influence spend on services for vulnerable people.

In 2018, Devon County Council undertook a scrutiny spotlight review of gambling-related harms, the scope of this spotlight review was:

- To understand the underlying causes of problem gambling and the challenges associated with problem gambling
- To explore the ways in which the Council and partners could work together to prevent people who are at risk of problem gambling reaching crisis point
- To identify the ways in which the Council and partners could work together to support people who have gambling addictions

¹ Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, *Local authorities using scrutiny to tackle gambling harms*, June 2021.

The review carried out by Devon County Council reflected the importance of the issue from a public health and partnership perspective, as well as the importance of Councillors having a community leadership role.

Key questions of the review focused on prevention, understanding when gambling becomes a problem, and identifying support available when someone is struggling with problem gambling. Bringing together different stakeholders and partners to collectively problem solve, the parties involved included other local authorities, the Police, gambling charities, and a company supplying gambling equipment.

The review was interested in whether there were specific characteristics and risk factors that led people to become problem gamblers. One concern was the link between gambling and suicide. The review was also concerned about the increasing trajectory of remote gambling.

The findings of the review were particularly focused around the need for reliable and accurate data. Several of the partners involved in the review committed to working together to better understand the scale of the problem as well as to support services that exist to help people with gambling addiction.

Bradford Metropolitan District Council

In 2019, Bradford's Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee members received a report that detailed how gambling businesses were mainly situated in some of the most deprived areas of the Bradford District.

Bradford has high prevalence of population groups particularly vulnerable to gambling related harm. Evidence indicates that particular groups are more vulnerable to gambling related harm than others – young people are one of these groups, and Bradford has the highest percentage of under 18s for a city authority in the country. People living in areas of greater deprivation is another vulnerable group, Bradford is ranked the 11th most income deprived local authority in England.

Bradford's Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider the prevalence of gambling and gambling related harm within the district and the development of the Council's approach to problem gambling.

Over several meetings, many different perspectives were sought to inform the committee. A representative from an organisation which campaigns to highlight the dangers of problem gambling – "Gambling with Lives" was present at the meeting to talk about the work of the organisation and how he had lost his own son through problem gambling. The committee also invited a representative of the gambling operator William Hill and a recovering gambling addict.

Members highlighted that a broader debate needed to be had with the industry on the issue of problem gambling. Following these scrutiny meetings, councillors were in agreement that more effective controls needed to be in place to tackle the issue of problem gambling in Bradford.

The full *Local Authorities Using Scrutiny to Tackle Gambling Harms* publication, with more case study examples, can be accessed through the following link: <https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Scrutiny-and-gambling-harms-case-studies.pdf>.

GAMBLING RELATED HARMS

The Government published a research and analysis paper in September 2021 titled *Gambling-related Harms Evidence Review* that sets out some of the foremost gambling related issues in the UK, as well as the national picture on gambling in recent years.²

In the 2005 Gambling Act, gambling is defined as gaming, betting, and participating in a lottery.

As set out in the research paper, in recent years, concern about the harms associated with gambling has been increasing in the UK and in March 2018, Public Health England confirmed priorities to ‘inform and support action on gambling-related harm as part of the follow up to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport-led review of gaming machines and social responsibility’.

Stated in the introduction to the research paper:

“The UK has one of the biggest gambling markets in the world, generating a profit of £14.2 billion in 2020. Previous research has shown that harms associated with gambling are wide-ranging. These include not only harms to the individual gambler but their families, close associates, and wider society. There have been growing calls by the public health community, people with lived experience, and parliamentarians that a population-level approach is needed to tackle this public health issue. However, there was a need to fully understand the extent to which gambling is a public health issue, for whom it is a problem, and the extent of the possible harms.”³

The evidence reviews and analysis examined the following questions:

1. What is the prevalence of gambling and gambling-related harm in England by socio-demographic characteristics, geographical distribution, and year?
2. What are the determinants (risk factors) of gambling and harmful gambling?
3. What are the harms to individuals, families, communities, and wider societal harms associated with harmful gambling?
4. What is the social and economic burden of gambling-related harms?
5. To what extent has coronavirus affected gambling participation and behaviour?

Gambling-related Harms Evidence Review can be read in full at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review/gambling-related-harms-evidence-review-summary>

REVIEW SCOPING

At the commencement of a review, it is good practice for Members to consider the review scope. Please see below some key questions and suggestions:

- What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

² *Gambling-related Harms Evidence Review*, Public Health England, September 2021.

³ *Gambling*, Public Health England, September 2021.

- *The aim of the review is to conduct an investigation into the scale and effect of gambling and gambling-related issues in Ashfield.*
- What are the key lines of enquiry?
 - *What are the types of gambling activity?*
 - *What is the Council's licensing regime?*
 - *How many licensed premises are in Ashfield?*
 - *What is Government policy regarding gambling?*
 - *What information exists regarding levels of gambling-related harm and impacts on health and wellbeing?*
 - *Are there preventative measures in place in relation to gambling-related harm?*
 - *What are the views of local operators?*
- What information is needed?
 - *Details of national guidance/legislation regarding gambling*
 - *Statistical information relating to gambling nationally and locally*
 - *Relevant reports and research papers into gambling-related issues*
 - *Actions taken by other local authorities*
- How will information be gathered?
 - *Committee meetings*
 - *Desktop research*
 - *Site visits*
 - *Focus groups*
 - *Surveys*
- How will key partners be involved in the review?
 - *Identify an appropriate method to engage key partners and stakeholders in the review process.*

NEXT STEPS

The next formal meeting of Scrutiny Panel A is not scheduled until after the Annual Council Meeting in May. Members may want to consider arranging an informal working group before the Annual Council Meeting to progress the review.

Members should also identify what information, evidence, and attendance is required at the next meeting to progress the review.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

In scoping the topic, gambling can have implications on the following priorities detailed within the Corporate Plan:

- Health and Happiness

- Economic Growth and Place
- Cleaner and Greener
- Safer and Stronger
- Innovate and Improve

Legal:

Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 requires the Licensing Authority to prepare and publish a Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy every 3 years. The current Statement 2022-2025 was published in December 2021.

Finance:

There are no financial implications contained within this report.

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	None
General Fund – Capital Programme	None
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	None
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	None

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Gambling harm has been identified by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny as being a key social issue that would benefit from scrutiny consideration. Furthermore, the CFGS is also working with the Gambling Commission on a project to raise awareness and increase the involvement of elected members in overview and scrutiny roles in tackling gambling related harms. It was added to the workplan in December 2021. To not consider this topic would risk not complying with the Scrutiny Workplan and being unable to demonstrate consideration of national issues at a local level.</p>	<p>Scoping meeting on the agreed topic to be held on the 10 March 2022 setting out objectives, methodology and desired outcomes.</p>

Human Resources:

There are no direct HR implications resulting from this report.

Environmental/Sustainability

There are no direct environmental or sustainability implications resulting from this report.

Equalities:

There no diversity or equality implications contained within this report.

Other Implications:

None.

Reason(s) for Urgency

None.

Reason(s) for Exemption

None.

Background Papers

None.

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