

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REPORT**

SUBJECT: Statement of Gambling Policy and Proposals for Casinos

DIRECTORATE: Social Care, Safeguarding and Health

MEETING: Licensing & Regulatory Committee

Date to be considered: 17th September 2024

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All Wards

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To consider the approach to be adopted by Monmouthshire County Council with regard to casino premises applications within the County prior to submission to Full Council.
- 1.2 To consider the proposed 'Draft Statement of Gambling Policy 2025' prior to submission to Full Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 2.1 Members consider whether to retain the current resolution not to issue casino licences within the County of Monmouthshire prior to it being considered at Full Council.
- 2.2 Members review the proposed updated Gambling policy statement for the period 31 January 2025 to 30 January 2028, (changes highlighted in red) which is attached as Appendix A. This policy will then be considered at Full Council on 24th October 2024.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 requires that before each successive period of three years, the Council, in its role as the Licensing Authority, prepares and publishes a policy statement that it proposes to apply in exercising its functions under the Act during that period. The current Gambling policy covers the three-year period that began on 31 January 2022. A review must therefore be undertaken and the next Gambling policy published before 31 January 2025.
- 3.2 The Council will need to consider firstly if they wish to continue with the resolution not to have a casino within the County. The decision on this will then be inserted into the revised Gambling Policy that will be published on 31 January 2025.
- 3.3 Central Government upon the advice of the Casino Advisory Panel permitted 8 large and 8 small casinos along with those who had grandfather rights when the Act came into force, which have all been duly issued. There is currently no further provision for more casinos to be allocated. However, the Council still need to consider the course of action they wish to take with casinos and place this within the Gambling Policy should the availability of casinos change.
- 3.4 Before any licence for a Casino is granted, the Casino Advisory Panel will advise Central Government that the area is in need of regeneration and Monmouthshire would have to satisfy them that this is the case along with the type of area, social impact, community benefits and unique characteristics.

3.5 With regards to the Policy and how the Council will discharge their functions. The Policy must contain objectives regarding the following;

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime,
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, and
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

The Council will also need to have regard to any relevant code of practice issued by the Secretary of State, guidance issued by the Gambling Commission, how they exercise their functions consistent with the objectives and in accordance with the policy itself.

3.6 Since its publication in January 2022, the current Gambling policy has proved effective in guiding Officers, Members, the holders of licences and other authorisations granted under the Gambling Act 2005, plus members of the public, in understanding how the Authority will apply its' discretion and use its powers under the Act. It is therefore not considered necessary to greatly change the information contained in the current Gambling policy.

3.7 Additionally, the Gambling Commission is currently undertaking a review of the Social Responsibility Code of Practice, which will be done in stages with the final changes likely to be in force on 17th January 2025. The commission will review test purchasing, strengthen age verification from 'Think 21' to a 'Think 25' approach (if a person looks under 25 they will be asked to verify their age to prove they are in fact over 18 years old and permitted to gamble) and will also look at financial vulnerability checks. The Gambling Commission has indicated that Local Authorities should still proceed with their updated Policy as the proposals in the Code of Practice should not impact the Local Authority statement of policy – refer to Gambling Commission [statement](#).

3.8 As such, at the Licensing and Regulatory Committee considered a draft revision of the statement of principles on 21st May 2024. It was agreed that this draft statement undergo consultation, and that took place between 1st June 2024 and 31st August 2024 in accordance with Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005.

3.9 Four responses were received as a result of the consultation (attached to this report as Appendix B). The responses were duly noted and recommended changes (where appropriate) has been inserted included in the revised policy, as follows:-

Response 1

GambleAware: Information received on an interactive map, which is designed for use by local authorities. The maps shows the prevalence of the severity of problem gambling. This has been inserted into the Gambling policy in section 2.6. Also included in section 2.6 is the link on the Local Government Association's Council approach for tackling gambling harm as recommended by GambleAware. The Councillor handbook referral will be used as part of Councillor training and not placed within the policy.

Response 2

Aneurin Bevan Public Health Team: It was confirmed in an email that Citizens Advice Bureau no longer gives free help to problem gamblers. Public Health advised of another free counselling service, namely Addiction Recovery Agency (ARA) who also provides training and this has been inserted in Section 2.6 of the Policy.

Response 3

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB): It was commended on the Licensing Authority's approach within the Policy and wished the Authority to consider the comments made in their response. Reference was made to the 'True Cost of Gambling' and the case study conducted by them and Bangor University. This is included within section 2.6 of the policy in order to highlight the reasons measures are taken within our policy. Continued collaboration and data sharing takes place with ABUHB, the Police and the Authority to deal with problematic gambling areas and to provide information on training providers and counselling services that are available. As recommended by ABUHB, preventative measures are covered within this policy along with the Gambling Commissions code of practice, guidance and legislative requirements. The policy will also be monitored and evaluated and should significant changes, be it legislative or through guidance, would seek to review the policy prior to the planned 3 yearly assessment.

Response 4

GamCare: Welcomed the proposals placed within our policy and some of the recommended approach has been inserted within the Gambling Policy. Section 2.6 has also been amended to assist problem gamblers by signposting people to the services available by GamCare. Gambling hotspots is included in our Policy. However, they have recommended that frontline and primary care staff should be trained to recognise the signs of gambling harm. This is a matter that can be pursued for future training and should not be placed in the policy.

3.11 To assist, the timetable of events planned for the transition of the Statement of Gambling Policy are as follows:-

21 st May 2024	First Draft of Policy to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee (completed)
1 st June 2024 – 31 st August 2024	Consultation on Gambling Policy – Send out letters and put on the website (completed)
17 th Sept 2024	Final Draft, results of consultation to the Licensing and Regulatory Committee
24 th October 2024	Gambling Policy report to Full Council
End of Nov 2024	Legal Notice in Newspaper
3 rd January 2025	Publication of Gambling Policy
31 st January 2025	Commencement of Gambling Policy

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 The policy is necessary to guide consistent decisions and takes account of guidance.
- 4.2 There is a need to take account of collaborative approaches
- 4.3 To ensure that applications with no relevant information to consider can be dealt with without unnecessary delay.
- 4.4 To enforce the provisions of the Gambling Act 2005 effectively.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 Any additional costs will be absorbed within our existing licensing budget.

6. WELLBEING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The 'Future Generations' template is attached as Appendix C. In summary, currently the Authority has a resolution not to permit casinos within the County. If this resolution is lifted it may promote excessive gambling within casinos. This may in turn impact on those who are vulnerable or addicted to gambling.
- 6.2 If the resolution not to permit casinos is maintained, this protects children and so contributes positively to the wellbeing of existing and future generations.
- 6.3 It is a statutory requirement to compile a Gambling Policy, as outlined in Section 3. Although not a 'proposal' (therefore not requiring full assessment) it does contribute positively to protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

7. CONSULTEES:

Newport City Council, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Torfaen County Borough Council, Caerphilly County Borough Council.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- 1. [Monmouthshire County Council's Statement of Gambling Policy 2022](#)
- 2. [Gambling Act 2005](#)
- 3. [The Gambling Act 2005 \(Licensing Authority Policy Statement\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2006](#)
- 4. [Gambling Commission Guidance to Local Authorities](#)

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