

Licensing Applications Committee

14 November 2024



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles (Gambling Policy)
Purpose of the report	To make a recommendation to Council
Report status	Public report
Report author	Robert Smalley, Licensing & Enforcement Officer
Lead Councillor	Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Corporate priority	Not applicable, but still requires a decision
Recommendations	1. That Council be recommended to approve the revised “Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles” as attached at Appendix RS-1.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. **A revision to the Policy to include a reference to the Reading Borough Local Plan was approved by Council on 30th January 2024. The current policy timeframe is 31st January 2022 to 31st January 2025.**
- 1.2. **The Gambling Act 2005 (the ‘Act’) requires that the Council review its Gambling Policy every three years.**
- 1.3. **The purpose of this report is to recommend a revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles to Council for approval, which would be in effect from 31st January 2025 until 30th January 2028.**

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. Under the Act, Reading Borough Council is responsible for issuing gambling premises licences, permits and registering small lotteries. Reading Borough Council, as the licensing authority, has responsibility for:
 - Licensing premises for gambling activities (and temporary use) e.g. betting shops & casinos.
 - Regulating gaming and gaming machines in clubs and miners’ welfare institutes.
 - Granting permits to family entertainment centres for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines.
 - Regulating gaming and gaming machines on alcohol licensed premises such as pubs.
 - Granting permits for prize gaming.
 - Registering small society lotteries.
 - Producing a local area profile for the Borough of Reading and ensuring that applications are consistent with the licensing objectives and policy of the Council.
 - Enforcing the provisions of the Act.
- 2.2. The gambling framework must center around the 3 licensing objectives:

- to protect children and other vulnerable people from harm;
- to prevent gambling being a source of crime or disorder; and
- to ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way.

2.3. Licence fees for gambling activities are set centrally but are banded so that local authorities have some discretion in the level of fee payable.

3. The Proposal

3.1. Current Position:

3.2. The Gambling Act 2005 (the 'Act') requires that the Council review its Gambling Policy every three years. The Policy typically runs for a three-year period starting and ending in January.

3.3. The three-year period for the current Gambling Policy comes to an end on 30th January 2025 and therefore a revised Policy needs to be in place from 31st January 2025.

3.4. Option Proposed:

3.5. Approval is sought to implement the revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles as detailed at **Appendix RS-1**.

3.6. The revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles will come into force on 31st January 2025.

3.7. There are a few small changes to the Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles. These are mostly updating statistical figures, maps and contact details.

3.8. Other Options Considered:

3.9. No other options considered because a Policy is required under the Gambling Act 2005

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1. This Policy and its implementation contribute to the following strategic aims in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-25:

- Thriving Communities.
- Inclusive Economy

4.2. The aim of the Policy is to find a balance between securing the safety and amenity of our residential and business communities and responsibly maintaining and developing Reading's role as a major entertainment and cultural centre.

4.3. The Policy considers the Gambling Commission's aim to strengthen social responsibility and to ensure that operators of gambling premises are risk assessing their operation in line with the local area profile drawn up by the Licensing Authority. The Policy also aims to ensure that all gambling is conducted with a view to promoting the licensing objectives and to encourage operators to promote responsible gambling, in line with the relevant codes of practice and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. There are no specific environmental or climate implications to this Policy.

5.2. There are currently 32 licensed premises, of which, 27 are of small retail unit size and 6 are larger buildings (casinos, bingo hall & adult gaming centre). It is not envisaged that any premises that fall under this Policy will negatively impact the following to any significant degree: air quality, biodiversity, wildlife, green space, natural habitats, landscape/visual impact, natural resources, noise pollution, waste/waste management.

- 5.3. Furthermore, no significant increase in emissions of greenhouse gases/ carbon dioxide are expected. It is not possible to predict how the total number of premises, nor the number of customers to such premises will fluctuate over the next 3 years of the proposed Policy, however, there has been a decrease of 3 licensed premises throughout the current policy period.
- 5.4. There has also been an increase in the number of remote gambling activity (gambling online via computer, smartphone etc)
- 5.5. The Climate Impact Assessment is attached at **Appendix RS-2**.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. Consultations regarding the review of the Council's Gambling Policy were sent to various bodies within the gambling industry, groups who deal with the effects of gambling and responsible authorities stated within the Gambling Act.
- 6.2. The list of consultees is attached at **Appendix RS-3**.
- 6.3. The consultation period ran from 16th August 2024 until 13th September 2024 and responses are attached at **Appendix RS-4**.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not relevant to a decision on this policy.
- 7.3. The aim of the Gambling Policy is to ensure the nighttime economy is safe and accessible to all.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1. The Gambling Act 2005 requires Local Authorities to review, consult and publish a Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles every three years. Failure to do so would lead to the Council being in breach of its statutory obligation.
- 9.2. Local Authorities may attach such conditions to certain categories of licences as they may consider reasonably necessary, in accordance with the Act. All applications for premises licences will need to demonstrate how they will promote the licensing objectives; adhere to the relevant codes of practice and guidance issued by the Gambling Commission and adhere to the Licensing Authority's Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles, specifically the Local Area Risk Profile for their area of operation. Whilst there is an expectation that the Licensing Authority will 'aim to permit' a licence, it shall only do so, subject to the applicant meeting the criteria set out in this paragraph and in paragraph 8.1.1 of the Council's Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. Please see the Financial Implications section at the end of this report.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. The revised Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles will come into force on 31st January 2025.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

1. **RS-1** – Draft Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles 2025-2028
2. **RS-2** – Climate Impact Assessment
3. **RS-3** – List of Consultees
4. **RS-4** – Responses to Consultation
5. **RS-5** – Gambling Premises Licence Fees

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

1. Revenue Implications

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Employee costs	£0	£0	£0
Other running costs	£23,079	£24,118	£24,118
Capital financings costs	£0	£0	£0
Expenditure	£23,079	£24,118	£24,118
Income from:			
Fees and charges (See Appendix RS-5)	£23,079	£24,118	£24,118
Grant funding	£0	£0	£0
Other income	£0	£0	£0
Total Income	£23,079	£24,118	£24,118
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)	£0	£0	£0

2. Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	£0	£0	£0
Funded by			
Grant (specify)			
Section 106 (specify)			
Other services			
Capital Receipts/Borrowing			
Total Funding	£0	£0	£0

3. Value for Money (VFM)

The annual licence fees charged cover the cost of enforcement. Licence fees for gambling activities are set centrally but most are banded so that local authorities have some discretion in the level of fee payable. Fee levels are reviewed regularly and set at Full Council.

4. Risk Assessment.

The Council is required by statute to review, consult and publish a Statement of Gambling Licensing Principles every three years. Failure to do so would lead to the Council being in breach of its statutory obligations and could lead to judicial proceedings being taken against it which would incur significant costs to the Council.