

Support National Gambling Reform

Moved by: Cllr Louise Mitchell

Seconded by: Cllr Khevyn Limbajee

This Council notes:

- Gambling addiction is a growing national issue with serious social and economic implications. According to Public Health England, the estimated annual cost to society now exceeds £1 billion.
- Gambling harms extend far beyond the individual, affecting families, public services, and communities and particularly affect areas of socio-economic deprivation.
- Many local authorities are now witnessing a concerning proliferation of betting shops, adult gaming centres, and casinos along their high streets and are effectively powerless to stop it due to outdated legislation.
- Section 153 of the Gambling Act 2005 enshrines the 'Aim to Permit' principle, which requires councils to approve gambling licenses where minimum criteria are met, regardless of local community opposition or concerns over public health, crime, or social impact.
- The surge in online gambling and the widespread nature of gambling advertisements across the sporting world has only deepened these harms and normalised gambling in everyday life.
- At the Budget last week, the Chancellor raised the remote gaming duty, levied on online casinos, from 21% to 40% and noted that this increase was among measures to fund the end of the two-child benefit cap.
- When last surveyed, almost three quarters of the British public (73%) suggested that they would not want a betting shop on their ideal high-street.
- The Government's Men's Health Strategy recognises the health consequences of gambling harms and the need for a public health approach to tackling gambling harms.

We believe that:

- For too long, the house has always won – with the gambling industry extracting ever more profit from our high streets, while leading to serious financial addiction amongst individuals and families.
- Waltham Forest Council has long pioneered a successful approach to regeneration - powering great places, high streets and neighbourhoods, supported by rigorous licensing and enforcement on our high streets.
- Our ambition is thwarted by the current legal licensing regime for betting shops, bookmakers and adult gaming centres which makes it extremely difficult to refuse a gambling license.

This Council resolves to:

- Join the growing coalition of over 40 other local authorities, led by Brent Council, that have now written to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport calling for urgent reforms to tackle the harms caused by gambling and to restore decision-making powers to local authorities.
- Support the Social Market Foundation's Six Recommendations for Gambling Reform, which call on Government to:
 1. Grant greater licensing powers to local authorities, including the ability to carry out cumulative impact assessments for gambling premises.
 2. Include Directors of Public Health in the gambling licensing process, just as they are for alcohol licensing, ensuring public health is at the heart of local decision-making.
 3. Review the current premises licence classifications, particularly where Adult Gaming Centres operate under bingo licences, to close loopholes.
 4. Increase the cap on annual licence fees for gambling premises from £1,000 to at least £2,000 and require annual reviews so that fees reflect the true cost of enforcement and regulation.
 5. Clarify the balance of responsibilities between local authorities and the Gambling Commission on enforcement and inspection, ensuring accountability and local capacity.
 6. Review and ultimately remove the 'Aim to Permit' rule from the Gambling Act, restoring genuine local democratic control over gambling premises.
- Write to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and other relevant government departments expressing our full support for these proposals and urging immediate legislative reform.
- Join and promote the Coalition to End Gambling Ads (CEGA) and support the campaign to end gambling advertising across the Transport for London network.
- Work with our anchor institutions and raise awareness of gambling harms.
- Local health and voluntary sector partners to raise awareness of gambling harms and signpost residents to gambling addiction support and education initiatives.
- Use our new Local Plan to assess proposals for new betting shops with regards to existing clusters, proximity to areas of deprivation, health impacts and implications for community safety, crime and anti-social behaviour.