

Report to Council – 18 October 2021

Report of Licensing Committee – 30 September 2021

Present: Councillor G Saffery (Chair)
Councillor Devonish (Vice Chair)
Councillors Crout, Feldman, Hannon, Hofman, Khan, Mauthoor, A Saffery,
Smith, Stiff and Wenham

Officers: Head of Community Protection
Senior Solicitor
Senior Licensing Officer
Business Compliance Officer
Democratic Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer

There was the following recommendation to Council.

14. Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles 2022 - 2025

The committee received a report of the Senior Licensing Officer detailing the public consultation of the Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles 2022 - 2025.

The policy was presented at July committee, which included a no casino resolution. There were three responses from the public consultation, none of which suggested amending or reviewing the statement of principles.

Councillor Hannon asked about the no casino principle, being approved by the council in relation to the full council meeting date of 12 October which had yet to occur.

The Senior Licensing Officer stated that the date of the full council meeting in the report needed to be changed as it was now to be held on the 18 October. The no casino resolution was in the report to reflect the current position and maintain the status quo. If the no casino recommendation was not agreed at council, Democratic Services would be consulted.

Following a question from Councillor Hofman regarding the no casino resolution, the Senior Licensing Officer stated that there had been no interest shown in opening a casino in Watford. The policy regarding no casino was always dependent on national guidance and legislation, however there was some discretion in some areas. There was a possibility to depart from guidance if a good reason was provided.

In response to a further question from Councillor Hofman, regarding exemptions to the no casino resolution, the Senior Licensing Officer stated that there were exemptions under law to allow people to put on events that could be described as casino style nights. There were occasional use or temporary use licenses for one off small scale events. The resolution was for a permanent casino premises licence.

Councillor Hannon having asked about the distinction between large bingo venues and casinos, the Senior Licensing Officer stated that there were legal definitions between casino and bingo venues. These were set out in the legislation.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Licensing Committee recommends that the Council, acting as the licensing authority for the Borough of Watford, adopts the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 as set out at appendix 1, to take effect from 6th January 2022 upon the expiry of the existing policy.
2. That the committee recommends that the Council resolves under section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005 that it will continue with the policy not to issue any casino premises licences as it believes a casino would detract from its aspiration to create a safe, prosperous and family-friendly town centre.