

**Bracknell Forest Responses to the Statement of Gambling Principles Consultation**

**Background**

Bracknell Forest Council, along with all other licensing authorities, is required to prepare, adopt and publish a "Statement of Principles" (SoP) setting out the Council's approach to applications under the [Gambling Act 2005](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/19/section/349) (hereafter known as The Act) and the information it expects applicants to provide.

The SoGP seeks to promote the guidance set out by the Gambling Commission and the three licensing objectives of:

1. preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime
2. ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way
3. protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling

The policy guides the administration of licensing under The Act and helps to ensure that an appropriate balance is drawn between the interests of those wishing to provide and take part in legal gambling, and those who might be adversely affected by such activities.

Under the Act, we are required to review our policy at least every three years or when we believe the policy requires updating. The current policy period ends on 31 January 2025.

The [**Current SoGP**](https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/media/2420/bracknell-forest-statement-of-gambling-principles-january-2022.pdf) has not been the subject of any legal challenge or complaint. It is therefore considered that the current Statement of Gambling Principles remains fit for purpose and only minor amendments are proposed. However, s.349 (3) Gambling Act 2005 requires a licensing authority to consult when "preparing a statement or revision".

**Changes Proposed to the Existing Policy**

The current SOGP was comprehensively reviewed in 2022 to reflect the updated Guidance published by the Gambling Commission. No substantive changes have been made to the draft consultation iteration of the policy. The only changes consulted on were an update to the district's population data and definitions around gaming machine classifications were added to the glossary.

**Why We Wanted Your Views**

It is by hearing from local people that we can make the changes needed to ensure our policy is fit for purpose and reflective of the needs in our local area

**Who and How we Consulted**

* The consultation was posted on the Bracknell Forest Council’s Consultation Hub and on the Public Protection Partnership’s website on the 25 October 2024.
* A Facebook message was posted on the 25 October 2024
* A press release was issued on the 25 October 2024
* The consultation ran from the 25 October to 06 December 2024.
* A notice was placed on the noticeboards at Bracknell Library and Times Square Reception
* We wrote to the individuals and organisations listed in Appendix A to the report.

**What You Told Us**

The Council received two responses to the consultation which is a slight increase on the 2021 consultation when no responses were received. The comments are set out below.

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| **RESPONSE** |
| **Licence Holder**  On behalf of the Jenningsbet group of companies that operate within the Borough, we have no comments to make. |
| **GamCare**   * We welcome the position Bracknell Forest Council is taking to go beyond the mandatory and default conditions of the Gambling Act 2005 in its statement of principles. * Local authorities can play a greater role in reducing gambling harm, particularly for those of our clients who experience harm in land-based gambling venues, due to council’s licensing responsibilities. * It is vital that Bracknell Forest Council develops a local picture of the level of gambling harms, in order to best target resources and tailor service provision. This could be achieved by gathering data from the National Gambling Helpline, as well as those already providing services in the area. * Building on the proactive approach the council is already taking, we would like to see Bracknell Forest Council commit in its statement of principles to a public health approach to gambling. * This commitment should include training frontline and primary care staff to recognise the signs of gambling harm and develop referral pathways to the National Gambling Helpline or local treatment providers. GamCare has worked with Haringey Council to implement a similar system, that has received widespread support. * In the absence of Cumulative Impact Assessments as a method by which the “aim to permit” approach can be challenged, Bracknell Forest Council should continue to pursue a [Local Area Profile](https://www.westminster.gov.uk/licensing/licensing-policy-and-strategy/local-area-profile-gambling-risk) approach that specifically analyses gambling risk, and use this data as a basis from which to scrutinise and possibly oppose a licensing application. * The changes to Bracknell Forest Council’s statement of principles should be viewed in the context of the Gambling Act Review and subsequent process of white paper consultations, so take account of the rapidly changing regulatory environment. |

**What We Are Proposing To Do**

Officers will now consider the comments received and make recommendations based on the comments to the Licensing and Safety Committee. Members of the Licensing and Safety Committee will asked to consider the draft policy and any proposed changes at a special meeting on the [**19 December 2024**](https://democratic.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=148&MId=14278&Ver=4)

The Licensing and Safety Committee will then recommend that the draft policy, subject to any amendments agreed at the meeting, be recommended to Council for approval at the [**08 January 2025**](https://democratic.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=13711&Ver=4) meeting.

Once approved the revised policy will be published before the end of January 2025.

