

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

Licensing Sub-Committee (Statutory)

Meeting held 27 February 2024

PRESENT: Councillors Abdul Khayum (Chair), Cliff Woodcraft and Ann Woolhouse

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 No apologies for absence were received. Councillor Karen McGowan attended the meeting as a reserve Member, but was not required to stay

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

- 2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - BET EXTRA, 17-19 MARKET PLACE, SHEFFIELD, S1 2GH

- 4.1 The Chief Licensing Officer submitted a report to consider an application made under Section 159 of the Gambling Act 2005 for the grant of a premises licence for Bet Extra, 17-19 Market Place, Sheffield, S1 2GH (Ref. No. 21/24).
- 4.2 Present at the meeting were Ryan Holmes (Applicant), Paddy Whur (Legal Representative for the Applicant), Amanda Usher (Legal Representative for the Applicant), Gareth Barrett (Licensing Enforcement/Technical Officer), Maureen Hanniffy (Licensing Manager, Sheffield Children's Safeguarding Partnership), Susan Hird (Assistant Director of Public Health), Douglas Johnson (City Ward Member), Charles Ritchie (Gambling with Lives), Peter Sephton (ChangingSheff), Samantha Bond (Legal Adviser to the Sub-Committee), Shimla Finch (Principal Licensing Policy and Strategy Officer) and Philippa Burdett (Democratic Services).
- 4.3 Samantha Bond outlined the procedure which would be followed during the hearing.
- 4.4 Shimla Finch presented the report to the Sub-Committee, and it was noted that representations had been received from Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership, the Licensing Authority, Green Party City Ward Councillors, Charles Ritchie (on behalf of Gambling with Lives) and Peter Sephton (on behalf of ChangingSheff), and were attached at Appendix 'B' to the report.

- 4.5 Maureen Hanniffy stated that the objection from the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership related to the licensing objective 'to protect children and other vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling'. She noted that the premises were located in the vicinity of a crime hotspot, and that a Problem-oriented Policy plan had been set up by South Yorkshire Police due to the high level of crime and disorder in the area. She added that the area was frequented by vulnerable people, was near to student accommodation and was the main public transport link through the city centre for young people travelling to and from schools. She stated that she was concerned that allowing the premises to expand could increase the amount of gambling harm, and increase the negative impact of gambling on vulnerable adults, students, children and families. Negative social consequences on individuals included impacts on health, financial and wellbeing, breakdowns in relationships, and in some cases criminality to fund a gambling disorder. Ms Hanniffy noted that the Gambling Harm Reduction Strategy for Sheffield aimed to reduce gambling harm opportunities, and she was concerned that a new application would be contrary to this aim and could put additional pressure on existing support services. She believed that the submitted Local Area Risk Assessment did not fully consider the support services in the area, and she understood that there had been further increases of violence and assaults in the area, leading to temporary reduced opening hours for some of the support services nearby.
- 4.6 Gareth Barrett stated that the policy submitted by the applicant failed to address section 7.12 of Sheffield City Council's Gambling Act Policy, and failed to address the local profiling of the area, including the Archer Project and a number of nearby sensitive premises where young people congregated. He confirmed that the applicant's agent had provided an updated Local Area Risk Assessment, dated 19 February 2024.
- 4.7 Susan Hird explained that her report was in support of the representation made by the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership. She noted that Public Health was not anti-gambling, but was concerned about the harms caused by gambling. She felt that gambling harm was significantly under-addressed, both in Sheffield and nationally. This included mental and physical health and relationship and financial harms, affecting children, families and local communities as well as those gambling. She believed that granting this application would be harmful to the licensing objective of 'protecting children and other vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling'. She noted that since the original licence had been granted in 2013, there was a much greater evidence base on gambling related harm, in particular, those who were more likely to be vulnerable. Sheffield City Council's Statement of Principles 2022 contained a number of factors for the licensing authority to consider. If granted, the size of the customer area would be doubled, increasing the accessibility and availability of gambling, and resulting in an increased risk of harm to people who live, work, study and socialise in the area. The venue was close to multiple sensitive locations, which had not been noted in the original Local Area Risk Assessment, in particular a specialist treatment centre for people with gambling addiction. Ms Hird was concerned that by granting the licence, there would be an increase in gambling harm to those with a number of protected characteristics, and there would be a negative effect

on poverty and financial inclusion. She noted the importance of avoiding preventable harms from occurring in the first place, and stated that tackling gambling harm was a collective action.

- 4.8 In response to questions from Members of the Sub-Committee, it was noted that further data could be sourced relating to the density of gambling premises per capita in Sheffield, and specific cases of gambling harm. It was confirmed that no issues had been reported about the premises since their licence was granted in 2013.
- 4.9 Councillor Douglas Johnson explained that his role as a City Ward Member was to represent the people that lived and worked within the ward, and stated that his main concern was the location of the premises. He noted that it was a busy intersection and a 'gateway' for children and students crossing the city, and was situated in a block of student flats. He noted the high number of school-aged children passing each day, and his concerns about their increased exposure to gambling. He added that the area was an anti-social behaviour 'hotspot' and that there was currently a public consultation on whether a Public Spaces Protection Order should be made in the city centre. He noted the increased awareness of gambling harm over the last ten years, and was concerned that granting of the application might increase harm.
- 4.10 In response to questions from the Legal Adviser to the Sub-Committee, Councillor Johnson confirmed that he had no personal knowledge of the premises, but was concerned about the visibility of the site and how expanding the premises might lead to an increase in work for those organisations already committed to supporting vulnerable people in the city centre.
- 4.11 Charles Ritchie, local resident and member of Gambling with Lives, explained that his son and the son of a friend had both committed suicide in 2017 due to issues relating to gambling addiction, and that this had led to him setting up Gambling with Lives. He explained that this organisation had subsequently brought the scale of gambling addiction to the attention of regulators; in particular, gambling related suicides. He added that Gambling with Lives had challenged the idea that gambling affected only a small number of vulnerable people that could be identified and helped, and that it actually affected ordinary people. He noted that his son and his friend's son were young people who were not vulnerable and had no mental health issues when they began gambling. He added that in August 2023, the Gambling Commission had broadened the definition of vulnerability to include personal and demographic situations and life changes, for example young people going away to university, and that stake limits for online slot games had been reduced for those under the age of 25. He noted his concern that fixed odd betting terminals had the highest report rate for people entering treatment as to what was the cause of their gambling problem, and that the relatively new self-service betting terminals provided a higher speed gambling experience. He was concerned that expansion of the premises would lead to an overall increase in the amount of betting, and that this would link to an increase in gambling harm. He stated that he had visited the premises and, as he had not witnessed any customer interactions, he was concerned that written policies were not necessarily being put into practice. He noted that there was evidence to suggest

that there were high levels of social and economic costs associated with gambling and that it did not generate great wealth, and believed that granting of the licence would lead to further negative effects.

- 4.12 In response to questions from Members of the Committee, Mr Ritchie confirmed that his son's introduction to gambling had been through betting premises rather than online gambling. He added that through his work with gamblers in recovery, he understood that they felt relaxed in betting shops, with fewer restrictions and limits than online gambling.
- 4.13 Peter Sephton read out his representation on behalf of the volunteer group ChangingSheff, included in Appendix 'B' of the report. In summary, he stated that he strongly opposed this location for expansion of a gambling premises, due to existing levels of crime and disorder.
- 4.14 Paddy Whur expressed his condolences to Mr Ritchie, and credited him for his work with central government to make services available when gambling became a problem. He referred to the 'Case Outline' information submitted by the applicant, and noted that Bet Extra was a Yorkshire-based family business and independent operator, and had been licensed at this site since 2013. He added that during this time there was no evidence of children or vulnerable people entering to gamble, or of it being directly responsible for crime and disorder or harming vulnerable people. He confirmed that the majority of customers were regulars and gambled in a responsible manner, and that an extension of the premises would allow the customer base to enjoy more modern facilities. He explained that appropriate planning consent had been gained for the proposed extension, with no additional conditions imposed, and that an amended Local Area Risk Assessment had been submitted. He added that the premises had been operating in accordance with the licensing objectives, and that a robust policy was in place, that included training of staff. Mr Whur confirmed that there had been no recorded incidents of crime at the premises and there was no evidence to show contradiction of safeguarding requirements, adding that the applicant regularly employed a mystery shopping service to test this. He stated that the applicant was a responsible operator and accepted the offer of working with support organisations to further reduce gambling harm. Mr Whur stated that there was no evidence to support the claim that increasing the size of the premises would increase the risks associated with gambling, and added that the aim was to extend the premises to provide a comfortable space for customers to enjoy their leisure time. He noted that the premises had CCTV and that betting terminals were in direct line of sight of staff.
- 4.15 In response to questions from Members of, and the Legal Adviser to, the Sub-Committee, Mr Whur and the applicant confirmed the following:
- An expansion to the premises aimed to create a modern and comfortable environment for people to relax. More seating would be provided, and better screens for watching live sporting action.
 - External signage would be in accordance with planning and licensing legislation requirements.
 - A log of 'under 21' checks was kept by staff and was available for

inspection at the premises. There was clear signage on the door, and it was unusual for under-age people to enter the premises. Staff were aware of their responsibilities and would have regular updated training on ID challenges, and this would be checked twice per year by employing the services of an independent checker.

- Incidents of vulnerable people being identified in the premises were sporadic and any incidents relating to the conditions of the licence were recorded and inspected by the applicant once per week.
- Customers were able to 'self exclude' from the premises and would be directed to leaflets on the Multi Operator Self Exclusion Scheme (MOSES) if needed. The applicant was notified via email of individuals in the area that were excluded via this scheme.

4.16 In response to questions from the responsible authorities and objectors to the application, Mr Whur and the applicant confirmed the following:

- Customer interaction would be conducted by staff if there were signs of uncontrollable gambling. If a regular customer was identified as not gambling in their usual pattern or were not in control, staff were trained to approach the customer in a sensitive way and refer them to supporting organisations.
- The applicant shared information with the Gambling Commission on self-exclusions for his five premises, which amounted to approximately 100 per year. Most exclusions (approximately 90%) came via the MOSES scheme, whereby customers were excluded from all betting shops.
- The applicant had agreed standard conditions with South Yorkshire Police, with an additional condition of acquiring radio sets for the premises and to put the City Centre Retailers Against Crime radio scheme into use at all times when trading.
- Mr Whur had attended the premises a number of times unannounced and was satisfied with the customer interaction he had observed.
- The proposed extension of the premises was to provide better facilities and a better customer experience and not to provide additional gambling facilities.
- A customer interaction log was kept at the premises, which had an entry approximately once every week or two. Staff would look for physical signs, such as a customer being agitated, behaving aggressively or becoming subdued, and not necessarily the length of time spent on a machine.
- Government legislation had restricted stakes and prizes to protect vulnerable people whilst gambling; it was the responsibility of operators and staff to monitor and interact with customers to identify vulnerable individuals.
- All staff at the premises were trained on formal Gambling Commission guidance on customer interactions, and the premises operated under 'Think 21' guidelines. These were regular staff who knew the customer base. The current manager had been in post for approximately seven years.
- The applicant was considering the addition of an additional self-service betting terminal, and such terminals did not need to be specified in the

premises licence.

- 4.17 Mr Whur summarised the case on behalf of the applicant.
- 4.18 Shimla Finch outlined the options available to the Sub-Committee.
- 4.19 **RESOLVED:** That the public and press and attendees involved in the application be excluded from the meeting, and the webcast be paused, before further discussion takes place on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if those persons were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as described in paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.
- 4.20 Samantha Bond reported orally, giving legal advice on various aspects of the application.
- 4.21 At this stage in the proceedings, the meeting was re-opened to the public and press and attendees, and the webcast re-commenced.
- 4.22 **RESOLVED:** That, in the light of the information contained in the report now submitted, the representations now made and the responses to the questions raised, the application for a premises licence in respect of the betting premises known as Bet Extra, 17-19 Market Place, Sheffield, S1 2GH (Ref No. 21/24) be granted in the terms requested, and subject to the conditions agreed with South Yorkshire Police.

(NOTE: The full reasons for the Sub-Committee's decision will be included in the Written Notice of Determination.)