DECISION-MAKER:		CABINET			
SUBJECT:		RESPONSE TO SCRUTINY INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS ON REDUCING GAMBLING RELATED HARMS IN SOUTHAMPTON – ACTION PLAN			
DATE OF DECISION:		25 September 2025			
REPORT OF:		**Debbie Chase, Director of Public Health**			
CONTACT DETAILS					
Author:	**Title**	**Senior Public Health Practitioner**			
	Name:	**Clifford Enobun**	**Tel:**	**02380832325**	
	E-mail:	**clifford.enobun@southampton.gov.uk**			
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY					
None					

BRIEF SUMMARY

Gambling-related harm is a growing concern in Southampton due to its wide-ranging and serious impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Gambling is defined as playing a game of chance for a prize (i.e. 'gaming'), making or accepting a bet on the outcome of a race, competition, or other event or process (i.e. 'betting') or participation in a lottery, while harmful gambling is any gambling that causes harm, problems, or distress – leading to significant financial, relationship, health, employment, educational, and even criminal consequences. Certain groups, including younger men, people who are unemployed, people in deprived areas, people with mental health or substance use problems, and individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, are at increased risk.

From November 2024 to March 2025 the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook an inquiry and evidence gathering session focused on reducing gambling related harms in Southampton. The final report with 14 recommendations, was approved by the Inquiry Panel in May 2025, and attached as **Appendix 1**.

The report was considered and approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) on 12 June 2025 and received by Cabinet on 17 June 2025. Cabinet recognises the growing impact of gambling harms and the disproportionate effects on vulnerable residents (Reducing gambling-related harms in Southampton, 2025), and this report presents Cabinet's response – phased action plans, to the recommendations, summarised in **Appendix 2**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	To receive and consider all 14 recommendations of the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel, and phased action plans (**Appendix 2**), noting the scale of delivery of recommendations **2, 4, 6, 7, 8** and **13** are subject to funding through the national gambling levy. **Recommendation 1** – Southampton City Council's Public Health Service lead the development of, and establish governance arrangements for, a multi-agency harm reduction programme which

		works with others to reduce gambling prevalence and harm for residents of Southampton. **Recommendation 2** – Building on the approach adopted in this inquiry, Southampton continues to listen and learn from those with lived experiences of gambling related harm, and peers that are already succeeding on this topic. **Recommendation 3** – Recognising the importance of collecting, analysing, using and sharing local gambling harms data, Southampton City Council maintain and develop the Southampton City Gambling Health Needs assessment to provide an evidence base for partnership discussions and decisions. **Recommendation 4** – Reflecting the value identified by the Association of Directors of Public Health in the North East and their relationship with Newcastle University, the Council seeks to engage academic and government research partners in order to deliver a multi-agency harm reduction programme (University of Southampton, NIHR (National Institute for Health & Care Research), NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence)). **Recommendation 5** – Opportunities are explored to share and spread the learning and profile of the Scrutiny Inquiry and emerging harm-reduction programme to raise the profile of local action and inform action elsewhere. **Recommendation 6** - Use and encourage the use of the 'Words can Hurt' campaign as preferred language by elected members, local leaders and frontline staff when discussing gambling and gambling related harm. **Recommendation 7** – Children and young people are at greater risk of experiencing gambling-related harms than others. Reflecting the risk profile, work with schools and parents on the delivery of gambling harms information and awareness sessions to children and young people in Southampton. The sessions should be evidence-based, robust, independent from gambling industry influence, and preferably delivered by specialists. **Recommendation 8** – Southampton City Council engages with NHS Hampshire & IOW to run gambling harms marketing campaigns in Southampton and to publicise existing safety measures like self-exclusion schemes. **Recommendation 9** - Keep the Southampton City Council website up to date with information about reducing harm from gambling, and services available to those that are experiencing harm from gambling. **Recommendation 10** - Review opportunities for the Council, as an employer, to reduce gambling-related harm as it affects employees.

		For example, through practices, procedures and resources we use to support our employees. **Recommendation 11** - Use Health in All Policies, Whole Systems and Place Shaping tools to ensure that Southampton City Council policies include and bring about the reduction of gambling prevalence and harm (beginning with Housing, Planning, Licensing and Sponsorship). **Recommendation 12** – Following the letter signed by the Leader of the Council in April 2025 - Southampton City Council joins local leaders across the country in calling for urgent gambling reform - continue to advocate for reform to gambling legislation and guidance at national levels. **Recommendation 13** - Review the training needs for elected members, local leaders and frontline staff around gambling related harm, implement training where necessary, following the lead of other peer authorities, such as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the London Borough of Haringey, and Birmingham City Council. (for example through MECC (Make Every Contact Count) and Very Brief Interventions). **Recommendation 14** - Engage with and support local treatment services and commissioners to support them to align to NICE (National Institute for Health & Care Excellence) guidance and share clear information on treatment and referral options and pathways.
REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS		
1.	Gambling harm does not only affect individuals who gamble, but also their families, communities, and wider systems such as health, housing, employment and criminal justice. A whole system approach recognises that effective prevention and mitigation require coordinated action across multiple sectors, including public health, local authority, the NHS, education and research institutions, voluntary services and people with lived experience.	
2.	Evidence from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), the Local Government Association (LGA), and the Gambling Commission supports the use of integrated strategies – such as place-based interventions, early intervention, and targeted support – to address the social determinants and inequalities linked to gambling harms. Southampton's approach aligns with this evidence, embedding prevention, partnership, and lived experience at the heart of local policy and action.	
3.	In line with the Council's Constitution, the Executive (Cabinet) must consider and respond to recommendations from endorsed scrutiny inquiry reports.	
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED		
4.	The scrutiny committee considered multiple options for action. Delivery plans for the full set of recommendations have been considered and are recommended. The scale of delivery of recommendations **2, 4, 6, 7, 8** and **13** are subject to funding through the national gambling levy.	

5.	Taking no action to reduce gambling related harm was considered and posed too great a risk to public health in Southampton as detailed below.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
6.	Gambling-related harm is a growing concern in Southampton due to its wide-ranging and serious impacts on individuals, families, and communities. Harmful gambling – defined as any gambling that causes harm, problems, or distress – can lead to significant financial, relationship, health, employment, educational, and even criminal consequences. This is important for Southampton because based on national prevalence data, an estimated 6,160 to 31,900 adults in Southampton are experiencing harmful gambling, with a further 15,053 affected by someone else's gambling. The associated excess costs to the city are estimated at £4.7m - £7.9m annually, highlighting the urgent need to address the issue.
7.	At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) in October 2024, the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook an inquiry focussing on reducing gambling related harm in Southampton. The set objectives of the inquiry were: • To develop understanding of the harm caused by gambling in Southampton. • To identify what is currently available or planned to prevent/or reduce gambling related harms for residents of Southampton and to treat residents experiencing a gambling problem. • To identify good practice being employed across local authority footprints and city-regions to reduce gambling-related harm in the UK. • To identify what initiatives and approaches could work well in Southampton to reduce the harm caused by gambling.
8.	From November 2024 to March 2025, the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel conducted the inquiry over 5 evidence gathering meetings and received information from residents with lived experience and a wide variety of organisations. This included NHS Southern Gambling Service, Gambling Commission, University of Glasgow, ADPH North East, Betknowmore UK, GamFam, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, London Borough of Haringey, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, Aston University, Citizens Advice Southampton, NHS Hampshire and Isle of Wight and officers from Southampton City Council. The inquiry shed light on the extent and nature of the harm caused to Southampton residents and acknowledged that gambling harm is present. This also demonstrated Southampton City Council's strategic intent to use the tools that it has available, and the best practice identified from the vanguard authorities, to reduce the harm that comes from gambling. The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel recommends Southampton requires a multi-agency gambling harms reduction programme. The partnership delivering this programme will seek to: • Understand and evidence the harm that comes from gambling • Communicate that understanding to partners and populations • Introduce and influence policies that seek to prevent and reduce that harm • Develop projects that will engage with and reduce the harm.

9.	The final report, endorsed by the OSMC on 12 June 2025 and received by the Cabinet on 17 June 2025, includes 14 recommendations targeting four themes to reduce gambling related harms in Southampton: Theme 1 – Leadership, Understanding and Evidence, Theme 2 – Communication and Collaboration, Theme 3 – Introducing and Influencing Policies, Theme 4 – Projects and Programmes.
10.	The Cabinet Action Plan has a phased approach to implementation. Work from October 2025 launches within existing resources to put Southampton in a strong position to access the national gambling levy funding and support work through the Strategic Authority as it develops in the Hampshire and Solent region. The plans allow collaboration with local and regional partners to address gambling-related harms across a broader geography. **Appendix 2** details action plans, lead stakeholders, timeframes, monitoring measures, and resource considerations.
11.	The plans proposed builds on Southampton City Council (SCC) Public Health team's active engagement with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) at both regional and national levels in its role as the lead for preventing gambling-related harms in England. This will include participation in the OHID webinar on the new statutory levy for gambling, enabling SCC to better understand its implications for local action. Continued liaison with OHID has ensured that Southampton is aligning local strategies with national priorities and is well positioned for future gambling-related funding opportunities.
12.	Implementation will be phased **Phase 0 (Ongoing)** – This phase is about continuing and consolidating on the good work that is already in place within the council in preparation for future phases and launching quick-win opportunities **Phase 1 (October 2025 onwards)** – This phase is about making connections and establishing partnerships, subject to resources, to gain access to research and information required for future phases, including evaluation plans and agreeing the ethical principles for partnership. **Phase 2 (May 2026 onwards)** – Subject to resources, wider implementation of additional and more complex, longer-term projects, building on previous phases with the right people at the right time and evaluation of impact.
13.	An initial multi-agency task and finish group will launch this programme of work. This will include representation from across Southampton City Council as aligned to the delivery plan (including planning, housing, democratic services and licensing). The intent is to align governance with delivery of the forthcoming refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
14.	Existing and ongoing work includes: – Contributions from the Housing team to the Scrutiny Panel and ongoing discussions on embedding gambling-related harm prevention within the Housing Strategy.

	– Conversations on the development of a workplace HR policy to reduce gambling-related harm among staff. This will focus on raising awareness, supporting those at risk, and fostering a safer workplace environment - serving as a model for other local employers. – Identify opportunities for embedding gambling-related harm considerations into licensing policy and practice. – Exploring partnership with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (HIOW ICB) to develop targeted communications and joint actions to address gambling-related harm. – Inclusion of gambling harm impact within the financial wellbeing priority of the Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy. – Initial discussions on the development of lived experience models, drawing on insights from addiction services, aligning with existing approaches in Southampton, and working with local residents to inform the design of effective interventions.
15.	Phase 0 also includes Recommendation 12 (continue to advocate for reform to gambling legislation and guidance at national levels). It builds on existing input to national policy making. This includes SCC's response to the 2025 HMRC consultation on the online gambling tax to advocate for reforms that strengthen protections and reduce gambling-related harm. At the recommendation of the previous leader of the Council, SCC was also one of the signatories to a multi-council open letter calling for action by the national government to tackle the harm done to communities by gambling.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue/Property/Other</u>	
16.	Phase 0 **(Recommendations 1, 5, 9 & 12)** have actions achievable within existing resources. Phase 1 **(Recommendations 14** have actions achievable within existing resources while **Recommendations 2, 4 &13)** will require additional external funding. Phases 2 **(Recommendations 6, 7 & 8)** will require additional external funding while actions for **Recommendations 3, 10 & 11** are achievable within existing resources.
17.	Potential funding sources includes the statutory levy on gambling operators (Oversight and Disbursement by OHID) and other identified sources to deliver at scale. We do not yet know when or how OHID will allocate funding. All proposals requiring extra expenditure will only proceed once funding sources are confirmed.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report</u>:	
18.	Section.1 of the Localism Act 2011 (General power of competence) relates to the role of Local Authorities in health and wellbeing.

Other Legal Implications:	
19.	Gambling regulation falls under the Gambling Act 2005, with Local Authorities as Licensing Authorities together with the Gambling Commission.
20.	Section. 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (public sector equality duty) applies.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
21.	Failing to implement the action plans of the recommendations would risk perpetuating a gap between local need and service provision, with significant consequences for individuals, families and the city. In the absence of proactive interventions many people who need help will remain invisible to services. This perpetuates stigma, limits access to early support, and allows vulnerability to escalate into severe financial distress, mental and physical health decline, relationship breakdown, homelessness, and even criminal behaviour. National evidence underscores that the cost of such inaction is high: untreated gambling harms generate extensive social and economic impacts across multiple domains, disproportionately affecting deprived and vulnerable populations and exacerbating local health inequalities. Without a coordinated local response, the unmet needs in Southampton will widen – and overall harms will increase.
22.	This response also ensures compliance with constitutional requirements in relation to scrutiny.
23.	The plan mitigates risks of inaction through staged implementation and alignment with statutory duties.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
24.	Health and Wellbeing Strategy - Theme Four (4) - Financially Well. The Health and Wellbeing Board approved the wording to include gambling harm as a focus area in Theme 4, the Strategy is currently out for public consultation.
25.	Supports Southampton 2035 City Plan missions: • A more equal Southampton • A healthier Southampton • A safer Southampton • A greener Southampton • A Growing Southampton
KEY DECISION	No
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	all
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION	
Appendices	
1.	Appendix 1 - Conclusions and Recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel Report
2.	Appendix 2 - Action Plans – Cabinet Response to Reducing Gambling-Related Harms Recommendations

Documents In Members' Rooms		
1.		
Equality Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIA) to be carried out?		**Yes**
Data Protection Impact Assessment		
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out?		**No**
Other Background Documents **Equality Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:**		
Title of Background Paper(s)		
1.		