

Response from the Liberal Democrat Group-October 2012

We believe that the council should ensure that all the recommendations made last year by the scrutiny panel on the clustering of betting shops, should be implemented, the main recommendations being:

- The concept of 'clustering' should be clearly defined and appropriately reflected in relevant planning policy documents. The panel also recommended that the planning service should consider the development of a 'clustering' policy'.
- The Licensing Team establish a Responsible Gambling Premises Scheme, similar to the Responsible Licensee Scheme already in operation in Haringey. Local gambling operators should be encouraged to sign up to this voluntary agreement which sets clear standards and procedures
- Council should develop a full appraisal of the costs and benefits of adopting an Article 4 Direction.
- The Council should continue to lobby central government for amendments to the Gambling Act (2005).
- The Council should write to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Gambling Commission about the concerns associated with the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals.
- There should be improved liaison between betting operators and Safer Neighbourhood Teams and borough intelligence in helping to reduce low level crime and ASB in relation to the local betting shop estate.
- The Council should undertake further work to investigate whether the clustering of betting shops has precipitated an increase in rental values in the areas in which these have occurred.
- The Council should encourage Area Committees in monitoring the clustering of retail uses and the impact that this may have on the communities for which they are responsible.
- Given the associated risk factors and co-behaviours associated with problem gambling (such as smoking, alcohol usage), a copy of the report is made available to Public Health Directorate for dissemination among local health and associated professionals to improve awareness and possible treatment options.

We are also concerned that there is a particular problem with the clustering of betting shops in the Green Lanes and Wood Green areas. The council needs to tackle this problem as new betting shops continue to open in these areas despite the high number already there.