

29 November 2016

Gambling Act 2005
Call for evidence high stake gaming machines

Wolverhampton is a city with a population of almost a quarter of a million people. It has a higher unemployment rate than the national average and has areas of significant social deprivation. Nearly one quarter of the working age population have no educational qualifications and a third of the children and young people in the city are living in poverty.

There are 42 betting premises, operating in almost every area of the city. Anti-social behaviour is reported as a cause for concern within the local vicinity of several betting premises and is, particularly, associated with the consumption of alcohol. Whilst Wolverhampton has adopted a designated public place order, there remain concerns that these types of premises are attracting groups which congregate and often cause anti-social behaviour.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many customers of betting premises are attracted to the FOBTs because of the potentially high pay-outs available and our understanding is that significant sums of money are gambled regularly on these machines. Operators of betting premises have previously suggested that the FOBTs are the main source of income at such shops. We have also been advised anecdotally that Wolverhampton is a profitable area for betting premises. In particular, those which are located in some of our poorest districts. This alone suggests that our most vulnerable citizens are being targeted by operators. It is also worth noting that within those districts where there are higher income levels together with lower levels of unemployment there are no betting shops.

Wolverhampton would welcome the introduction of any legislative change in order to reduce the most vulnerable people being targeted and, without any change, the trend of the vulnerable being targeted will continue to increase.

Over the last nine years, since the implementation of the Gambling Act 2005, the number of betting premises has increased by 27%. It is clear that operators have successfully lobbied the government for changes and have had little or no regard for the difficulties that these have raised in many areas. Local Authorities now need the tools to be able to make improvements to their problem areas, to protect residents, and to address the disruption and misery caused, fundamentally, by FOBTs.

In one area of Wolverhampton there is a betting premises at which, since April 2015 there have been six offences linked to it, three of those relating to violent incidents.

If you wish to discuss further please contact [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alan Bolshaw', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Chair of Licensing Committee
City Of Wolverhampton Council

