

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 12 September 2019 at 5.30 pm in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.00 pm
Concluded 7.45 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Azam Dunbar D Green Kamran Hussain Watson Tait	Riaz Sullivan	Griffiths

Councillor Azam in the Chair

9. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency Members declared an interest in the following items:

- (i) Councillor Green declared an interest in the item relating to Gambling in the Bradford district (Minute 13) as he was a regular user of betting shops. In relation to the item regarding the HR Plus Contract (Minute 15) he mentioned that he was the Leader of Council and Member of the Executive, who had made the decision to proceed with the HR Plus Contract.
- (ii) Councillor Dunbar declared an interest in the item relating to Gambling in the Bradford district (Minute 13) as he was a campaigner on problem gambling.

ACTION: City Solicitor

10. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2019 be signed as a correct record.

11. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

12. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no referrals made to the Committee.

13. GAMBLING IN THE BRADFORD DISTRICT

The Strategic Director Place submitted a report (**Document “E”**) which provided an update on action taken regarding problem gambling and gambling related harm within the district, following the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 March 2019.

The Licensing and Local Land Charges Manager updated Members on the actions that had been taken since the 21 March meeting, which were detailed in the report.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions, the questions together with the responses are detailed below:

In response to a question on how Members could be more involved in relation to the issue of problem gambling, it was explained that training on the subject matter could be provided via the Members training officer.

In relation to the timing of Gambling Awareness Week, a Member stated that it would be better to have this in the lead up to one of the major horseracing schedules such as Ascot, Cheltenham or the Grand National, as it would raise greater awareness around the issue. In addition he also commented that self exclusion from bookmakers did not include casinos.

A representative from William Hill was present at the meeting and he acknowledged that it would make more sense to have Gambling Awareness Week during one of the larger racing schedules.

A Member commented that the issue of the number of betting shops in the city centre skewed the statistics and the age profile. In addition it was highlighted in the report that not much evidence had been found that there was a problem regarding underage gambling. In response it was explained that spot checks were undertaken by the licensing team and in addition, staff were well trained to deal with underage gambling.

A Member stressed that one of the main areas of gambling activity was online, which was particularly difficult to monitor and police effectively. Another Member stated that this was a national issue which Government was finding difficulties grappling with, and therefore the Council had to be focused on what we could do locally to effectively deal with problem gambling.

In relation to the issue of self exclusion, the representative from William Hill explained that although this worked in some cases, its effectiveness was limited and required further enhancements in technology for it to be more effective. A Member stated that in his experience self exclusion only had limited effectiveness and that it varied from shop to shop, and what was really required was an industry wide protocol to effectively deal with the issue.

The representative from William Hill stated that in terms of self exclusion staff were trained to spot problem gambling and any erratic gambling behaviour would be dealt with by staff, such as an individual staking a large bet or a number of losing bets. The Licensing Manager acknowledged that as part of the licensing regime, how staff interacted with customers was looked at. In addition there was a social responsibility code which operators had to adhere to and this covered the issue of self exclusion. The Gambling Commission could also look into any breaches in the social responsibility code, which included self exclusion.

A Member stated that the gambling industry saw individuals as pound signs and although we have been told about self exclusion and that staff were trained to spot issues, the fact of the matter was that people were still betting big and that the industry were aware of this and turning a blind eye to the issue.

The representative from William Hill stressed that staff were trained to deal with issues around problem gambling as well as interact with customers.

A Member stated that staff in betting establishments had to sometimes endure verbal and physical abuse and that problem gambling was not always about large amounts of money, as small amounts could still allude to a problem. In addition there needed to be a recognition that problem gambling also existed in those who frequented casinos, amusement arcades and bingo establishments, so a holistic approach needed to be developed across all forms of gambling.

A former gambling addict was present at the meeting to give an account of his experiences. During an emotional testimony he alluded to how gambling had left him in huge debt and how the industry took no responsibility for the harm and misery it caused. He added that self exclusion was a red herring and not effective. That he was not anti gambling, however the industrial scale of gambling and the upsurge in online gambling needed curbing as this could be best described as the 'wild west', and that the industry was well versed in producing products to suit different clientele and this in turn had seen a huge upsurge in

gambling and problem gambling, resulting in huge financial and social costs. He urged that better, more effective regulation was needed as a matter of urgency.

Members were in agreement that more effective controls needed to be in place to tackle the issue of problem gambling and developed further in Bradford, and it was therefore:

Resolved –

- (1) That this Committee requests that the final Local Area Profile be presented to this Committee at its meeting on 14 November 2019.**
- (2) That this Committee requests that a cross departmental and cross organisational plan be presented to this Committee on 14 November 2019, which focuses specifically on the issues identified in the Local Area Profile and also identifies other potential populations that could be deemed to be at risk.**
- (3) That this Committee requests that representations from treatment services and the Gambling Commission be requested to attend the meeting in November 2019.**
- (4) That this Committee requests that the Executive consider organising a cross sector group conference to examine the issue of problem gambling in the Bradford district and to also explore local solutions.**

ACTION: Strategic Director Place

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved –

That the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the Not for Publication Appendix 2 relating to the HRplus Contract Review on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the proceedings, that if they were present, exempt information within paragraph 3 (financial or business affairs) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed and it is considered that, in all the circumstances, the public interest in allowing the public to remain is outweighed by the public interest in excluding public access to the relevant part of the proceedings for the following reasons:

It is in the public interest in maintaining these exemptions because it is in the overriding interest of proper administration that Members are made fully aware of the financial implications of any decision.

15. HRplus CONTRACT REVIEW

Following the Bradford Council's full year performance report to this Scrutiny Committee on 10 July 2019, Members requested a report evaluating the HRplus contract. The Director of Human Resources submitted a report (**Document "F" which contained a Not for Publication Appendix 2**) which evaluated the HRplus contract.

The Director of Human Resources gave an overview of the contract, the historical context and performance to date, adding that further work was currently being undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the contract and to inform an options appraisal which would be considered to decide the future of workforce advice and information provision.

A number of Members raised concerns around the performance of the contract to date, together with a 27% response rate to the user satisfaction survey, which did not give a resounding impression that the contract was progressing well. Follow up with managers on cases was not always progressed to fruition, this was a particular issue in Children's Services.

A Member expressed concerns around any realistic savings that had been achieved by outsourcing the service and that the targets were just a set of aims and objectives. He added there was a need to empower managers and it seemed the contract had not achieved in this respect. In addition the advisers at the contact centre did not always understand the internal structure of the Council and services provided and he strongly urged that the contract should be brought back in-house.

In response to some of the issues raised the Strategic Director Corporate Services and the Human Resources Director stated that they welcomed Member's comments and their concerns, however the review would provide an opportunity to analyse the full contract and suggest options on a way forward.

Members asked that the review findings come back to this Committee in November, so Members can discuss them in detail and it was therefore:

Resolved –

That the HR Plus Contract Review findings be considered by the Committee in November 2019 together with options for future service delivery including bringing the Service back in-house.

ACTION: *Human Resources Director*

16. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2019/20

The Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (**Document “G”**) which set out the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2019/20. The Committee was asked to consider which items it wished to include in the work programme.

No resolution was passed in respect of this item.

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.