Gambling Harms - Time for the UK Government to Take Action – Motion as adjusted approved, after division.

16 Councillor Doherty, seconded by Councillor Bell, moved that

"Council acknowledges that Glasgow has long recognised gambling as a public health issue, as set out in the city's 2022–2027 Strategic Plan. A key milestone in this work was the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement Committee meeting in August 2019 in the Shettleston ward. Council further recognises that it has consistently worked with community groups, campaigners, stakeholders, public bodies, world-leading researchers such as the University of Glasgow Gambling Research Collective, and people with lived experience to address gambling harms, most recently reporting to Committee on 17 April 2025.

Council notes that the April 2025 report confirmed that, following the UK Government's announcement of a Gambling Levy, the Chief Executive would write to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for Gambling to seek assurances on funding to support a public health approach to reducing gambling harms in Glasgow. The report also reaffirmed Glasgow's position that the UK Government must review the Gambling Act and ensure fair funding for the city.

Council records its extreme disappointment that, despite this and previous correspondence on gambling harms, no response has been received from the UK Government. Council condemns this continued failure to engage, noting that Glasgow is disproportionately affected: the city has more bookmakers than anywhere in the UK outside parts of London, and based on national figures, an estimated 1 in 15 residents—around 45,000 people—may have a gambling problem.

Council recognises that gambling harms cost the NHS, local authorities and other public services over £1 billion annually. Against this backdrop, and with the gambling industry generating revenues of £16.6 billion a year, the proposed £100 million statutory levy is inadequate. Council believes that the forthcoming UK Autumn Budget should ensure the gambling industry, not the public, bears a fairer share of the cost, and rejects measures that disproportionately burden the poorest communities.

Council notes the recent intervention by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who has joined the growing calls from public figures, politicians, policy experts and campaigners for tighter regulation and higher taxation of the gambling industry. Council recognises that, as Chancellor, Mr Brown oversaw the 2005 Gambling Act, which liberalised gambling laws and enabled the UK market to become one of the largest in the world. While this has created vast profits for the industry, it has also fuelled gambling-related harm and contributed to issues such as child poverty. Council welcomes Mr Brown's change of position but urges current Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, his Cabinet and Labour colleagues—reported by The Times to have accepted over £1 million in donations and gifts from the industry—to sever their ties with gambling interests.

Council reaffirms its commitment to tackling gambling harms and instructs the Chief Executive to bring an annual report to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement Committee, setting out updated whole-systems actions informed by the Gambling Harms Summit: Standing Strong for a Safer Scotland.

Council further instructs the Chief Executive to again write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for Gambling, highlighting:

- the lack of response to previous correspondence and the Council's motion of 22 June 2023 calling for gambling law reform, including recognition of Scottish anomalies and local powers;
- the case for properly taxing the gambling industry in the Autumn 2025 budget;
- the need for the UK Treasury to design and deliver fair and proportionate funding for local authorities, particularly for communities most affected by the proliferation of "environmental bads" such as gambling, which are fuelled by and fuel poverty; and
- Glasgow's proven track record in whole-systems work with researchers, stakeholders and people with lived experience, which uniquely positions the city to develop a UK Centre of Excellence for addressing gambling harms—funding research, education and treatment."

Bailie Lalley, seconded by Councillor Ahmed, moved as an amendment to insert the following after the first paragraph:

"Council notes that the Gambling Act 2005 was introduced at a time before the rapid expansion of digital and mobile betting. With the significant technological changes since then, Council believes it is right that both UK and Scottish Governments modernise gambling regulation to reflect today's realities.

Council welcomes the UK Labour Government's action in introducing a statutory levy on gambling operators and new online stake limits as part of its reform agenda. Council believes the priority must now be to ensure levy revenue is fairly distributed across the UK, with Glasgow recognised as a city disproportionately affected by gambling harms.

Council further notes that while gambling legislation is reserved to the UK Parliament, public health funding is devolved to the Scottish Government. Council therefore calls on the Scottish Government to provide dedicated resources to local authorities for gambling harm prevention and treatment, and to ring-fence public health funding for this purpose in line with the approach taken on alcohol and drugs.

Council recognises the recent intervention by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who has joined the growing calls from public figures, politicians, policy experts and campaigners for tighter regulation and higher taxation of the gambling industry.

Council recalls the pioneering work of former Labour Councillor Paul Rooney in Glasgow, who highlighted the dangers of 'street-corner casinos' and led the city's groundbreaking multi-operator self-exclusion trial, which became a national model.

Council also calls on the Scottish Government, working with COSLA, to establish a transparent funding formula that recognises Glasgow's disproportionate exposure to gambling outlets and ensures resources flow fairly to the city.

Council asks the Chief Executive to continue to report annually to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement Committee, setting out updated whole-systems actions informed by Glasgow's Gambling Harms Summit."

Councillor Anderson, seconded by Councillor Bruce, moved as an amendment that, at the end of the motion, after the bulleted list, add the following additional paragraph:

"Council agrees that - given the UK Government's proposals for the statutory gambling levy are inadequate - consideration should be given to use of devolved and local financial levers to fairly tax the gambling industry, which extracts wealth from our communities and some of our most vulnerable constituents. Council welcomes the Scottish Government exempting betting shops from eligibility for the Small Business Bonus Scheme of exemptions and discounts to non-domestic rates liability. Further, Council supports the introduction of a national 'public health (gambling harms) supplement' on non-domestic rates for casinos, betting shops and the premises of online gambling providers, and failing that, the devolution of necessary supplementing powers to local authorities. Council asks the City Treasurer to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government setting out this proposal ahead of the Scottish Government publishing its draft 2026/27 Budget."

During the debate Councillor Doherty and Councillor O'Lone, with the agreement of their seconders, agreed to combine their amendments resulting in the following adjusted amendment:

"Council acknowledges that Glasgow has long recognised gambling as a public health issue, as set out in the city's 2022–2027 Strategic Plan. A key milestone in this work was the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement Committee meeting in August 2019 in the Shettleston ward. Council further recognises that it has consistently worked with community groups, campaigners, stakeholders, public bodies, world-leading researchers such as the University of Glasgow Gambling Research Collective, and people with lived experience to address gambling harms, most recently reporting to Committee on 17 April 2025.

Council notes that the Gambling Act 2005 was introduced at a time before the rapid expansion of digital and mobile betting. With the significant technological changes since then. Council believes it is right that UK Governments modernise gambling regulation to reflect today's realities.

Council welcomes the UK Government's action in introducing a statutory levy on gambling operators and new online stake limits as part of its reform agenda. Council believes the priority must now be to ensure levy revenue is fairly distributed across the UK, with Glasgow recognised as a city disproportionately affected by gambling harms.

Council notes that the April 2025 report confirmed that, following the UK Government's announcement of a Gambling Levy, the Chief Executive would write to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for Gambling to seek assurances on funding to support a public health approach to reducing gambling harms in Glasgow. The report also reaffirmed Glasgow's position that the UK Government must review the Gambling Act and ensure fair funding for the city.

Council records its extreme disappointment that, despite this and previous correspondence on gambling harms, no response has been received from the UK Government. Glasgow is disproportionately affected: the city has more bookmakers than anywhere in the UK outside parts of London, and based on national figures, an estimated 1 in 15 residents—around 45,000 people—may have a gambling problem.

Council recognises that gambling harms cost the NHS, local authorities and other public services over £1 billion annually. Against this backdrop, and with the gambling industry generating revenues of £16.6 billion a year, the proposed £100 million statutory levy is inadequate. Council believes that the forthcoming UK Autumn Budget should ensure the gambling industry, not the public, bears a fairer share of the cost, and rejects measures that disproportionately burden the poorest communities.

Council recognises the recent intervention by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who has joined the growing calls from public figures, politicians, policy experts and campaigners for tighter regulation and higher taxation of the gambling industry, especially to combat child poverty, however Council believes this must also support those affected by gambling harms which is calculated by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research to cost £1.4billion annually.

Council recognises that, as Chancellor, Mr Brown oversaw the 2005 Gambling Act, which liberalised gambling laws and enabled the UK market to become one of the largest in the world. Council notes that since 2005 the combination of rapid technological developments and the lack of further regulation since 2010 has created vast profits for the industry, combined with the impacts of austerity, has led to a real and material increase in gambling related harms and contributed to issues such as child poverty.

Council asks the Chief Executive to continue to report annually to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement Committee, setting out updated whole-systems actions informed by Glasgow's Gambling Harms Summit: Standing Strong for a Safer Scotland.

Council further instructs the Chief Executive to again write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for Gambling, highlighting:

- the lack of response to previous correspondence and the Council's motion of 22 June 2023 calling for gambling law reform, including recognition of Scottish anomalies and insufficient local powers;

- the case for properly taxing the gambling industry in the Autumn 2025 budget;
- and the need for the UK Treasury to design and deliver fair and proportionate funding for local authorities, particularly for communities most affected by the proliferation of “environmental bads” such as gambling, which are fuelled by and fuel poverty; and
- Glasgow’s proven track record in whole-systems work with researchers, stakeholders and people with lived experience, which uniquely positions the city to develop a UK Centre of Excellence for addressing gambling harms—funding research, education and treatment.”

On a vote being taken electronically and by calling the roll, 10 voted for the amendment and 64 for the motion as adjusted which was accordingly declared to be carried.

Adjournment.

17 In terms of Standing Order No 5 (12), the time being after 1630 hours, the Council agreed to adjourn the meeting, the remaining items of business being 8(e), 8(f), 8(g) and 8(h).