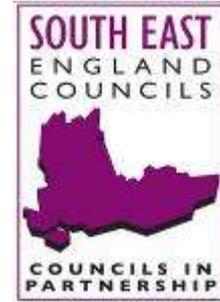


**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**



Date: 27 March 2013

Subject: Localising decision-making on casinos by allowing portable licensing

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

Recommendations

SEEC Executive members are asked to:

- i) Consider the request from Cllr Robert Bliss to write to Ministers in support of increasing the portability of casino licenses.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 We welcome Cllr Robert Bliss, Leader of Shepway DC, as a speaker today to outline his request for SEEC to support increasing the portability of casino licences between local authority areas.

2. Background to casino licensing

- 2.1 Casino licensing in the UK is a centralised function, governed by the Gambling Act 2005. It can be a controversial issue that divides opinion locally and nationally – for example on the benefits of jobs and regeneration vs moral and social concerns about the effects of gambling.
 - 2.2 The 2005 Act allowed for:
 - 8 large casinos (over 1,500m² and up to 150 gaming machines)
 - 8 small casinos (over 750m² and up to 80 gaming machines)
 The Act also permitted continuation of casino licences granted under the earlier Gaming Act 1968.
 - 2.3 The 16 licences under the 2005 Act were granted to specific local authorities who are at various stages of inviting applications from operators who wish to run casinos. Only two of the 16 authorities are in the South East – Milton Keynes and Southampton – both entitled to issue a large casino licence.
 - 2.4 Progress in translating 2005 licences into actual casinos is mixed, with little progress in seven areas covering two large casinos and five small casinos.
 - 2.5 In addition, approximately 37 licences granted under the 1968 Act are currently unused. Operators granted these licences are able to relocate to new premises but must remain within the same licensing authority area.
- 3. The Shepway situation**
- 3.1 At the time of the 2005 Act, Shepway DC bid to be one of the 16 casino licensing authorities but was not selected. There is now interest from an operator who wants to explore the potential for a casino in Folkestone, but without a change in the law Shepway is unable to respond to this interest.
 - 3.2 Cllr Bliss is asking Government to consider a change in the law that would allow currently unused casino licences to become portable between local authority areas. This would not increase the overall number of licences but would allow interested

local authorities to develop casinos by taking over unused licences from areas where there is no apparent interest or demand for casinos.

- 3.3 The House of Commons Culture Media and Sport Committee recently proposed that local authorities should be able to make local decisions about whether they wish to have a casino and recommended making unused licences portable.
- 3.4 Government has yet to respond to this proposal but Cllr Bliss has met Ministers to make the case for a change in the law that would allow willing local authorities to take over unused casino licences. He is now asking SEEC members to support this case as a way of delivering greater localism and local decision-making.