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Ms Valerie Curtis
Secretary of the Casino Advisory Panel
DCMS
2-4 Cockspur Street
London
SW1Y 5DH

Dear Ms. Curtis

Additional information in response to questions concerning our Small Casino license application.

Please find attached additional information in response to the queries raised by the Casino Advisory Panel concerning our small casino license bid.

Yours sincerely



Graham Haywood
Chief Executive

Response to the Casino Advisory Panel request for further information.

Social Impact.

The Sefton Gambling and Debt Network have been consulted on the matter of social impact and community benefit – minutes attached.

In summary the network does not see significant negative impact on the community from the awarding of a small casino license given that Southport has always had at least one Casino

The network does however make two recommendations which it wishes Sefton MBC to consider in the introduction of new policy measures around any new casino license, which are:-

- 1. to recommend to Sefton MBC that (should it be successful in obtaining a license) in deciding which organisation should be awarded the license, it should take cognisance of that organisation's commitment to funding additional, free-to-use, community assets.*
- 2. that a commitment to using local labour should also be considered by Sefton MBC in the awarding of the license, particularly in light of the fact that the Casino is in the centre of 2 Neighbourhood Renewal Wards each of which have high levels of deprivation.*

Need for Regeneration.

The latest status with the Floral Hall project is that it has received planning permission from Sefton Council's Planning Committee and in turn Government Office NW has formally indicated that they will not be calling the application in. The developer is presently part way through a full OJEU contractor procurement process with the intention that they will break ground before the end of this year. The 4 star Hotel element of the project is scheduled to open in June 2008 with the remaining elements open to trade by the end of 2008.

With regard to other projects within the 5 year Action Plan we can report that;

- Splashworld (the Aquadome project) has been on site since late 2005 and is well progressed. It is scheduled for opening in Spring 2007.
- The Lord St improvements project is fully developed and costed. It recently secured NWDA Board approval for its funding application to them. All £3 million funding has been obtained. It is scheduled to start on site in early 2007.
- Chapel St has been on site since January 2006. The contractors have recently informed us that they expect to achieve practical completion of the main works by the end of November with some minor landscaping and tree planting remaining to be completed once the key Christmas shopping period is over in the New Year. This is scheduled to be complete by February 2007.
- The Neville St Phase 1 and 2 elements of the project have been completed and the remaining phase, the HLF funded support for key heritage buildings, is being actively progressed.

Probability of Implementation

Encouraged by extensive discussions to date the operators of the adjacent Floral Hall conference facility have worked in partnership with the Council to develop an additional improvement project centred on the existing conference facilities in support of the Floral Hall hotel and leisure development. This adds critical mass to the original scheme and supports the importance and probability of delivering said scheme.

Market need studies have been undertaken and are positive in their analysis of the conference market potential of the scheme and this is also evidenced by the level of interest already demonstrated by key conference organisers.

Turning now to the Casino element of the Floral Hall Hotel scheme, the developers have already established detailed operator requirements with regard to the casino element so the scale of offer is reasonably well understood. From this the Council are aware from discussions with potential conference organisers that the new offer will be very well received.

In terms of recent experience in attracting private sector leisure and tourism investment the hotel and leisure scheme (including the casino) has been a key factor in the minds of potential developers presently planning to invest in the resort. One scheme that has been in development for some time (subject to a confidentiality agreement with the Council in this development phase) is a substantial £25m visitor attraction. This is scheduled to submit a planning application in the coming months with a prospective opening date of summer 2008. Other developments include a £12m boutique hotel starting on site in October and another hotel project has recently been awarded planning permission. The Floral Hall hotel and leisure scheme can justifiably be regarded as a catalyst for this complementary private sector investment.

Regional and Local Context

With regard to PPS6 preference for casinos to be located in town centres the Floral Hall scheme is, in planning terms, within the Southport Town Centre development area. In short the proposed casino is categorised as a town centre location.

The existing casino, operated under a 68 Act licence, is within the town centre. As stated above the new casino is also within the town centre. Accordingly there is no effective change in accessibility from that already existing for many years.

Community Benefits

The Gambling and Debt Network and the Southport Partnership (the delivery body for the Southport Seafront Action Plan) both recognise that the contributions to community assets and the hiring of local labour, if obtained by Sefton MBC through the license awarding process, would bring significant benefits to a deprived Neighbourhood Regeneration area and produce significant community benefits.

For information, appended below are the minutes from a recent meeting of Southport's Gambling & Debt Network

Minutes of the Gambling & Debt Network meeting held at the Southport Partnership's offices on Friday 22nd. September 2006

Present:

Rev. Sue Calverley
Andrew Booth
Catherine Taylor
Stefan Jankowski

Light for Life
Sefton Pensioners Advocacy Centre
Children's and Young Persons Network Co-ordinator
The Southport Partnership

Apologies

Nigel Bellamy
Anne McDonald

Sefton Council for Voluntary Service
Southport Housing Advice Centre

The initial discussion centred on the lack of collated information available concerning both debt in general and gambling in particular.

There is a recognised need to promote the role of the Credit Unions within Sefton within the community, voluntary and faith networks as the Credit Union provides valuable advice on financial management.

Schools within Sefton are teaching students how to manage money within a budget.

Impact of the proposed Small Casino License

Social Impact

The meeting discussed in detail the ramifications of this proposal and several key points were raised.

3. People with mental health issues can be particularly susceptible to gambling / promotions/ scratch cards
4. Slot machines are very attractive to older residents and youngsters.
5. The view of the meeting is that whilst the Casino will lie at the heart of a complex with high quality restaurants, a 4 star hotel and the conference and exhibition facilities it offers nothing to the community in the way of free to use facilities or community assets.
6. **To this end the meeting decided to recommend to Sefton MBC that (should it be successful in obtaining a license) in deciding which organisation should be awarded the license, it should take cognisance of that organisation's commitment to funding additional, free-to-use, community assets.**
7. Suggestions as to what form such assets might take included all weather pitches for youth diversionary activities or support for older members of the community.
8. **Equally, the meeting feels that a commitment to using local labour should also be considered in the awarding of the license, particularly in light of the fact that the Casino is in the centre of 2 Neighbourhood Renewal Wards each of which have high levels of deprivation.**

The meeting agreed that, given that a casino already exists in Southport, it is unlikely that a casino operating under the new laws would materially change gambling patterns in the town. The meeting re-iterated the need for Sefton MBC to require a contribution towards community assets from whichever operator was awarded the license.

Other Issues

The meeting considered the lack of baseline information available and the need to work with all organisations in this field including Gamblers Anonymous, the Citizens Advice Bureau and others to develop data on trends of gambling debt.

Next meeting

28th November 2006 at 11 a.m. at the Southport Partnership offices