

Report on	Continuation of Reduced Fees for Entertainment Licences 2022/23
Date of Meeting	4 th April 2022
Reporting Officer	Terry Scullion, Assistant Director of Property Services
Contact Officer	Terry Scullion, Assistant Director of Property Services

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on the outcome of the Department of Communities consultation exercise with Councils on a review of Fees for Entertainment Licences for 2022/23
2.0	Background
2.1	The Council is empowered to process and issue Entertainment Licences in accordance with the "Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 – Schedule 1".
2.2	Entertainment Licences are renewed on an annual basis for all relevant venues with the renewal date for licences varying throughout the year across the District.
2.3	Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic many venues over the 21/22 financial year were unable to open or in certain cases have limited activity in line with Government Guidance. This resulted in financial loss to the licensees, which has been highlighted to the Council as well as the Department for Communities. In recent months there has been easing of lockdown restrictions and licensed premises are permitted to now open as normal.
2.4	The fees are not set at the discretion of the Council but are issued by the Department for Communities.
2.5	Within the legislation, paragraph 5(2)(c) states "Every application will be accompanied by such fee as the Department may from time to time determine".
2.6	It is therefore currently considered that the Council would not have the ability to adjust or reduce the fees applicable for the renewal of an Entertainment Licence.

2.7	Members will be aware that the issue of fees had been the subject of a committee paper in March 2021 when the Minister for Communities, decided that the Department would amend the licensing fees structure, to introduce a nominal fee of £1 for the renewal of applications only. This change came into effect from 6 April 2021 and has remained in place for the duration of the 2021/22 financial year.
2.8	In February 2022 Correspondence has been received from the “Department for Communities” seeking the views of Councils in relation to the current reduced fees arrangement in place for the 21/22 financial year. As resolved at Committee Council responded to the consultation, requested that this measure be extended beyond the end of the 2021/22 financial year, and sought confirmation that the department will cover the loss of income to Council in charging £1 for the renewal of an entertainment licence.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	With the introduction of a nominal £1 fee for the renewal of a Full or Occasional Licence, depending on the size and type of licence, this resulted in a saving to the applicant of anything in the range from £49 for a small venue (holding not more than 100 persons) for an occasional licence to £999 for large venues (holding over 1000 persons) for a full licence.
3.2	It had been indicated that this financial arrangement would be subject to review early this year to determine whether there is a need to extend the measure beyond this period and into the 22/23 financial year.
3.3	Correspondence has been received from the “Department for Communities” (see Appendix 1) advising the nominal fee of £1 for renewal applications only, for all categories of entertainments licence will therefore remain for the 2022/2023 financial year, subject to a further review later this year.
3.4	The continuation of this measure will result in further loss of income for councils during the year to come. However, additional funding of some £17m provided by the Executive for council losses incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is to be allocated to local councils by the Department. This funding includes provision to cover any loss of income resulting from the reduction in fees for the renewal of entertainment licences for 2022/23.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Funding from the Department for Communities includes provision to cover any loss of income resulting from the reduction in fees for the renewal of entertainment licences for 2022/23.
	Human: Within Current Resources

	Risk Management: None
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None
	Rural Needs Implications: None
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that Members note the content of this report in respect of Entertainment Licence fees for 2022/23.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Review of Reduced Fees for Entertainment Licenses - Letter to Councils 23 March 2022