

Report on	Fees for Entertainment Licences
Date of Meeting	8 February 2022
Reporting Officer	Terry Scullion, Assistant Director of Property Services
Contact Officer	Colm Currie, Principal Building Officer

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 inform Members of the Department of Communities consultation exercise on a review of the current Determination issued by the Department of Communities in March 2021 in relation to Fees for Entertainment Licences.
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.
2.4	Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic many venues over the 21/22 financial year have been unable to open or in certain cases have limited activity in line with Government Guidance. This has resulted in financial loss to the licensees, which has been highlighted to the Council as well as the Department for Communities. At present there has been easing of lockdown restrictions and licensed premises are permitted to now open as normal.
2.3	The fees are not set at the discretion of the Council but are issued by the Department for Communities.
2.4	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".
2.5	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

3.0	Main Report
3.1	Correspondence has been received from the “Department for Communities” (see Appendix 1) seeking the views of Councils in relation to the current reduced fees arrangement in place for the 21/22 financial year, with a response requested by 9 February 2022
3.2	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, Deirdre Hargey MLA, had 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.
3.3	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.
3.4	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.
3.5	Any potential loss of 21/22 income incurred was met from funding provided by the Executive, however, the Department for Communities correspondence does not give an indication that this funding is to be continued into the 22/23 financial year.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: As detailed, it is not indicated at present that the Executive will meet any potential loss of income to the Council.
	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	<p>That Members consider the options as noted below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a need to extend this measure beyond this period subject to any potential loss of income to the Council will be met by the Executive. <p>Or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The fees should revert to their pre April 2021 levels with effect from April 2022.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Review of Reduced Fees for Entertainment Licenses - Letter to Councils from the Department for Communities 19 January 2022
6.2	Appendix 2 – Table showing MUDC Entertainment Licenses issued since 1 January 2021