



Subject:	Airbnbs and Short term let accommodation
Date:	21 August 2024
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control, ext. 2300
Contact Officer:	Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager, ext. 2435

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider the responses from the Department for the Economy (DfE), the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Communities (DfC) to recent correspondence from the Committee regarding the regulation of short term lets, such as Airbnbs, in Northern Ireland.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of the responses received from DfE, DfI and DfC.
3.0	Main report

3.1	At the Licensing Committee meeting on 20 March 2024, the Committee agreed to write to the NI Executive regarding the regulation of short term lets, such as Airbnbs, in Northern Ireland. (Copy letter at appendix 1)
3.2	The Committee thought it important that the Executive ensure that an appropriate model is in place for the management of short term lets, and the extent to which they exist in any city and beyond, given the direct impact that they are having on communities, not least in terms of the affordability of buying or renting property.
3.3	The Minister for the Economy responded on the 24 May 2024 (Appendix 2) recognising that this is a complex area to deliver change in, with policy and operational responsibilities spanning a number of Executive Departments, Councils and other agencies.
3.4	The DfE has responsibility for the implementation of the Tourism (NI) Order but the scope of the Order is tightly defined and limits Tourism NI to inspecting properties to ensure that they meet a minimum standard of safety, cleanliness, and the provision of facilities.
3.5	The response sets out that due to significant growth in the number of self-catering properties certified by Tourism NI they will shortly be carrying out a review of the role of the certification of visitor accommodation. This review will examine options for the future regulation of visitor accommodation. However, any changes which are considered following the review will require new and/or amended primary legislation to be debated and approved by the Assembly.
3.6	In a response from the Department for Infrastructure on 20 May 2024 (Appendix 3) they advise that rent regulation is a specific responsibility of DfC under the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and that DfC also has overall responsibility for housing policy including the provision of decent, affordable and sustainable homes.
3.7	In addition, DfI maintains that councils have the important responsibility for setting a vision for the long-term future development of their areas through the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs). In doing so councils have the flexibility to bring forward bespoke approaches to dealing with any local issues which affect their communities. Information in relation to Belfast City Council's approach set out in our LDP is included in Appendix 5.
3.8	The response from DfC is included at Appendix 4. It sets out that policy responsibility for Airbnbs and short-term tourist accommodation lies with the Department for Economy and, its Arm's Length Body, Tourism NI. It therefore suggests that the Council write to the Department for Economy about the issues raised in the letter.
3.9	Members are advised whilst we are well aware of the Council's responsibilities and powers under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, it is the view of Officers that the necessary regulation of short term lets would go beyond the assessment of acceptability of such uses in land use terms.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.10	There are currently no financial or resource implications as a result of this report.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.11	There are no issues associated with this report.
4.0	<u>Appendices</u>

	<p>Appendix 1 letter to DfE 9 May 2024 Appendix 2 letter from DfE 24 May 2024 Appendix 3 letter from DfI 20 May 2024 Appendix 4 letter from DfC 7 May 2024 Appendix 5 Briefing on BCC approach to short term lets in the Local Development Plan</p>
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