



Subject:	<b>Review of Reduced Fees for Entertainments Licences</b>
Date:	16th February, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager, ext: 2435
Contact Officers:	Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager, ext: 2435

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To seek agreement on a response to the Department for Communities (DfC) query regarding the continuation of a reduced fee of £1 for applications for the renewal of Entertainment Licences for the 2022/23 financial year.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider whether the reduced fee of £1 should continue to apply to applications for the renewal of Entertainment Licences for the 2022/23 financial year and determine whether:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>to extend this measure for the financial year 2022/23 or,</li><li>to revert to pre-April 2021 fee levels with effect from 6th April, 2022.</li></ol>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
3.1	In February 2021, DfC determined that a reduced fee of £1 would apply to applications for the renewal of all categories of entertainments licence, both indoor and outdoor, received on or after 6th April, 2021.
3.2	This reduction applies for the duration of the 2021/2022 financial year and was introduced to alleviate hardship being experienced by the hospitality industry because of Covid-19 restrictions.
3.3	Following the first lockdown in March 2020 and the significant impact that this had on the hospitality sector, several interim measures were agreed with the City Solicitor to assist licensees and primarily those with entertainment, cinema or street trading licences.
3.4	These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accepting confirmation of an intention to renew, to ensure subsistence of the licence, and agreeing the application and associated fee may be provided at a later date;</li> <li>• temporarily suspending the requirement to place a legal notice in the press;</li> <li>• not requesting certificates that would normally be submitted with a licence application until a later date; and</li> <li>• agreeing extended licence periods in recognition of lockdown restrictions.</li> </ul>
3.5	These measures were in place for renewal applications between April, 2020 and June, 2021.
3.6	Since June last year, the Building Control Service has undertaken an extensive review of all entertainment licensing applications and has been in contact with licensees concerning the status of their licence. The Service has taken a flexible approach to assist them as equitably as possible, in a way that is seen to be supportive of business recovery and in a manner that will be legally defensible.
3.7	During that time, the Service has processed almost 300 entertainment licence renewals and has attempted, as far as possible, to enable the applicant to avail of the £1 renewal fee.
3.8	For any applications where objections have been received, these have not been renewed under these processes and will be subject to Committee consideration as normal.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
4.1	In a letter dated 19th January 2022, DfC has asked for the Council's view on the reduced fee of £1 for applications for the renewal of all categories of entertainments licences, which only applies to the 2021/2022 financial year, and whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there is a need to extend this measure beyond this period or,</li> <li>• if the fees should revert to their pre-April 2021 levels with effect from April 2022.</li> </ul>
4.2	The new Coronavirus restrictions which came into force on 26th December 2021, amongst other measures, required nightclubs to close and brought further operating restrictions in all other licensed premises. It is clear that the hospitality sector continues to be impacted by the pandemic and no doubt it would welcome any additional financial support that can be offered.

4.3	DfC has simply asked if there is a need to extend the measure beyond March, 2022. To ensure that all licensees can avail of any further reduced fee it is suggested that any extension should be for the entire 2022/23 financial year. It is also suggested that the extension should only be for that period and anything thereafter will be subject to further review by the Council.
4.4	DfC has asked that a response be made by 9th February 2022, but has subsequently confirmed that, should Committee approval be required, that this is not an absolute deadline.
4.5	The letter from the DfC is attached.
<b>5.0</b>	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b>
5.1	Planned income for 2022/23 is based on our pre-Covid estimate for entertainments licensing income of £195,940.
5.2	Given the uncertainty around the sustainability of many hospitality venues due to the impact of Covid, it is very difficult to predict renewal fees income for 2022/2023.
5.3	However, if we make the assumption that all the applications we have received or are due to receive this year are renewed again next year and are subject to the £1 renewal fee it is estimated the Council will lose income in the region of £180,000.
5.4	The Council has secured funding from the Department for Communities to cover Covid recovery costs for 2022/23, which can be used to make up for any loss of income that extending the concessionary fee for a further year would create.
<b>6.0</b>	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>
6.1	None.
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Document Attached</b>
	Letter from DfC