

# Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 18th February, 2026

## MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Doran (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty;  
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers; and  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,  
R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Carson,  
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, McAteer, McCann,  
McDowell, McKay, McKeown and Smyth.

In attendance: Mrs. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mr. S. Hipkins, Building Control Manager;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor M. Donnelly.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st January 2026, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th February.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Delegated Matters**

#### **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted the applications that had been issued under the Scheme of Delegation during January.

#### **Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted a list of applications for licences which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

### **Non-Delegated Matters**

#### **Fleadh Update on Licensing Matters**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed approach to a number of licensing regimes operated by the Council in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.
- 1.2 Location map for the Fleadh road closure area is attached as Appendix 1

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the information provided and to agree to the proposed approaches outlined, namely:

1. Note the Road Closure application procedures set out;
2. Note that the Building Control service will work to ensure that appropriate pavement café licences are in place for the Fleadh, but that suspension of some licences may be necessary in the lead up to or during the Fleadh for Health and Safety purposes;
3. Note that a further report Street Trading at the Fleadh will be brought to a future committee to determine location and process and agree that any applications received to date will be returned and refunded;
4. Note the ongoing work of the Building Control Service in relation to ensuring appropriate Entertainment Licensing is in place for the Fleadh; and
5. Agree that additional special meeting(s) may be required in July 2026 (dates to be determined)

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is to take place in Belfast on Sunday 2 to Sunday 9 August 2026
- 3.2 It is anticipated that the Fleadh will attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to the city for its duration. The successful hosting of the event will require input from a number of Council functions, communicating on a cross departmental basis within the Council and also multi agency liaison with external organisations. The ability to safely accommodate significant numbers of people within a designated city centre area will require a shared understanding of the programme of events and activities within this designated area in conjunction with planning for crowd safety.

- 3.4 As the Committee are aware, the Building Control service undertake a number of licensing duties across the city including determining road closure applications, pavement café licensing, street trading licensing and indoor and outdoor entertainment licensing. The Building Control Service therefore has a significant role to play in the event planning process and will be in continual communication with a range of internal and external partners in the lead in to and during this event.
- 3.4 As the event planning continues, the Building Control service will require the ability to make decisions that are compatible with ensuring the successful delivery of the event. This may require delegated authority on a number of issues that are detailed below.

**Road Closure Order**

- 3.5 Under the Road (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (NI) 2010 and the Road Traffic Regulation (NI) Order 1997 applications can be made to the Council for a Road Closure Order if an event is to be held on a public road.

The Building Control Service and statutory partners have been engaged in pre-application discussions with the Fleadh Event Team around the extensive road closures necessary to facilitate an event of this size to ensure the safety of citizens and visitors. This has led to significant engagement from the event team with businesses and city centre stakeholders which is being stepped up during February, with a number of further public engagement and information meetings scheduled.

- 3.6 The road closure application was formally submitted to Building Control on 9th February 2026 and the Service is now embarking on formal consultations with Statutory partners before publishing the public notification, including a list of affected roads with timings and restrictions applied, in local newspapers and on the Council website which is planned for March.
- 3.7 This will commence a 21-day statutory public notification period which gives an opportunity for members of the public to send written representations / objections to the Council.
- 3.8 In line with the current Scheme of Delegation if no objections are received during the notification period, the road closure order will be issued under delegated authority.

- 3.9 If any objections are received during the notification period that cannot be resolved, they will be brought along with the application itself, for consideration by the Committee at your May 2026 meeting,

**Pavement Café Licensing**

- 3.10 A pavement café licence authorises a person who operates a business supplying food or drink (in or from premises) to place furniture on a public area for use by customers. As Members will be aware, the Council is not responsible for alcohol licensing, which is administered by the Courts and enforced by the PSNI.
- 3.11 However, when a premises with a liquor licence, such as a pub, obtains a pavement café licence we inform the Courts, and their liquor licence is automatically extended to include the pavement café area.
- 3.12 Any business interested in providing such facilities at their premises for the Fleadh is advised of the need to apply in good time to allow the application to be properly considered. Any new pavement café licence applications should therefore be made by the end of April 2026 at the latest if they intend to operate during the Fleadh. These timescales are required for consideration of the application due to the processes that need to be followed in relation to notification, consultation and to allow time for any appeal should that be necessary.
- 3.13 Existing pavement café licensees are being reminded of their responsibilities in relation to pavement cafés and the Building Control Service continues to carry out enforcement of any illegal pavement cafes in the city centre area.
- 3.14 Some premises will want to maximise their sales footprint to capitalise on the business opportunity the Fleadh presents. Any proposals to extend an existing pavement café footprint must similarly be discussed with the Building Control service at least 3 months before the event to allow a variation application to be considered.
- 3.15 Modelling of crowd numbers and crowd management is currently being undertaken by the Fleadh team. This may determine that there are concerns around expected crowd density in certain locations. It may therefore be necessary to suspend some pavement cafes for health and safety reasons, potentially for the duration of the Fleadh, for set periods during the week of the event or as a result of crowd movement during the Fleadh event. Potential crowding risk

may necessitate that pavement café furniture be removed to enable the free-flow of people on the footpath/street.

3.16 It will be important that information on locations that require pavement cafés to be removed due to crowd density and health and safety, and areas where pavement cafés could remain or even be expanded is provided as soon as possible to allow decision making on individual pavement cafes to be clearly communicated to licensees. It is expected that crowd modelling will be able to determine in the next month whether pavement café licences may need to be suspended.

3.17 In line with the relevant legislation, there are two mechanisms to suspend a pavement café licence or have furniture removed. For the purposes of doing so during the Fleadh the most appropriate options are:

1. Where a potential health and safety risk has been identified through crowd modelling prior to the event, a licensee will be notified of a reasonable request to remove furniture and / or barriers at least 21 days before the event (to allow time for any representation or appeal to be made). A licence condition is applied to all pavement café licences (previously agreed by Committee) and this will be used to make the reasonable request. This states:

The Licensee will comply with any reasonable request from a duly authorised officer of the Council to remove such furniture and barriers from the licensed area as is necessary to facilitate the safety of the public, including the safe movement of vehicles, during special events\*. Licensees will be notified of any such special events at least 14 calendar days before the event where possible.

**\*Special Events**

A special event includes, but is not restricted to, an event such as a rally, procession, marathon or other sporting event or an open-air concert.

2. Where a health and safety risk is identified during the event and immediate action is needed to in the public interest to remove any risk from a pavement café (and / or its furniture), the power delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy as outlined in the Corporate Scheme of delegation, (l) v. below will be used:

(i) Exercising all powers in relation to the issue, but not refusal, of pavement café licences, including the setting of trading hours in relation to pavement café licences, but excluding provisions relating to:

- i. applications for the grant, renewal or variation of licences where adverse representations are received;
- ii. compulsory variation of licences;
- iii. revocation of licences;
- iv. setting of licence fees;
- v. suspension of licences except where in the public interest the Strategic Director, in consultation with the City Solicitor, considers that there are particular circumstances which make it necessary to suspend a licence immediately;

3.18 Prior to the commencement of the Fleadh, notice will be given to any licensed premises where it is believed a health & safety risk may be posed in relation to crowd safety and the placement of temporary street furniture is required to be suspended.

3.19 Where a premises does not hold a pavement café licence, direct formal action will be commenced to ensure the removal of any temporary furniture.

3.20 During the Fleadh, it is planned to have an enforcement team on hand to remind premises, if necessary, that for health and safety reasons the placing of furniture in a particular location has been suspended and, should compliance not be achieved, to promptly remove any furniture that may be deemed to be potentially hazardous.

3.21 It is hoped that with prior notification and engagement, formal enforcement action will seldom be required.

#### Street Trading Licensing

##### 3.22 Existing Stationary Street Traders

The locations of all designated pitches that have a current operating licence within the city centre have been mapped out and provided to the Fleadh team for consideration and inclusion in their planning.

3.23 It has been established that there are 3 licensees who may be affected by the proposed event plan trading Hot and Cold Food & Drink on pitches at Writers Square, as this location is proposed for the official event merchandiser. Discussions are being held to accommodate those traders or provide

alternative pitches for the duration of the event within the Food Village area being set up in the Cathedral carpark.

- 3.24 The modelling of crowd numbers and crowd management currently being undertaken by the Fleadh team and ongoing discussions on the Road Closure Order and health and safety arrangements will determine where there are opportunities for Street Trading within the proposed pedestrianised zone. Once those opportunities have been identified, a further report will be brought before the Licensing Committee to agree the locations and commodities to be sold (e.g not food and drink).
- 3.25 Committee will also then be able to consider how any identified pitches can be operated and whether applications will be taken from individuals to operate from those locations. If applications are to be invited, it is likely that this will be within a certain timeframe and that delegated authority will be sought from the Committee for officers to determine between any competing applications. This would save significant time as such matters would then not have to be referred to Committee for determination.
- 3.26 The Council has, however already received a number of applications for street trading during the Fleadh. In order to ensure fairness if applications are to be invited within a set timeframe it is proposed that all applications received to date are returned and refunded.
- 3.27 Due to crowd control health and safety measures that are being implemented during the event it will be necessary to robustly prevent the setting up of illegal stalls or any illegal activity that causes the infringement of free flow of people especially in areas that are known to have limited space.

#### Entertainments Licensing

- 3.28 The Building Control Service has a well-established regime to complement an Entertainment Licence granted by the Council. This involves engagement with licensees, and their consultants, at the initial grant of their licence. Further to this, engagement continues at the renewal and/or variation stage(s) of their licence. Additionally, these processes are then complemented with a during performance inspection process involving unannounced inspections of venues when entertainment is being facilitated.
- 3.29 In preparation for the Fleadh, when it is anticipated that an increased footfall will be experienced by the hospitality sector, an enhanced frequency of during performance inspections has been introduced across licenced venues in Belfast. In delivering this, the Service has sought to remind

licensees of their responsibilities to manage their venues in accordance with the Entertainments Licence granted to them by the Council. In particular, licensees of indoor venues and their staff, are being encouraged to be familiar with the conditions set out within the BCC Rules of Management; conditions which they must adhere to when granted a licence. This inspection regime will continue over the duration of the Fleadh.

- 3.30 Recognising that entertainment will not solely be confined to indoor venues, the Service have been proactive in its consideration of outdoor entertainment. To upskill relevant parties, an invite to attend training delivered by an internationally recognised expert on crowd management was extended to, and availed of by the Fleadh team.
- 3.31 Many event spaces in the city which are commonly used for outdoor entertainment continue to be licenced and may therefore be available for activities associated with the Fleadh. The Service remains available to assist event organisers in developing their event management plans when using such spaces.
- 3.32 For operators of any venue who wish to consider providing indoor or outdoor entertainment, or existing licensees who wish to modify their venues in preparation for the Fleadh, it is essential that engagement with the Service takes place prior to commencement of any work. It is a statutory requirement to have in place an Entertainments Licence prior to any such offering. Notification, or discovery, of entertainment being provided without an Entertainments Licence will result in investigation by the Service.
- 3.33 To assist operators of venues which do not currently have an Entertainments Licence, the Service advises that any submission of an application for the grant or variation of an Entertainments Licence should be made before the end of April 2026 to allow at least three months for consideration of the application. These timescales are required for consideration of the application due to the processes that need to be followed in relation to notification, consultation and to allow time for any appeal should that be necessary.

#### Licensing Committee

- 3.34 The last planned Licensing Committee before the Fleadh is scheduled for the 17th June 2026. Given the extent of organisation underway for the Fleadh and the expectation that this will continue to involve licensing issues up until the date of the event, officers believe that it may be prudent for the Committee to have a special sitting in July 2026 to cater for such matters.

**3.36** In addition, where Committee is being asked to make decisions on certain matters, this may be accompanied by a recommendation to agree that the decision is not subject to normal call-in processes. This would allow more responsive decisions to be made in the lead into the event in association with any delegated authority sought. This will be vital in ensuring that the licensing functions of the City Council can be undertaken quickly to address any health and safety issues identified. Any report will be clear as to whether this is required for a particular decision.

**4.0** **Financial & Resource Implications**

**4.1** There is an additional resource requirement for the carrying out of enforcement activities in the run-up and during the Fleadh period, a time when particularly outdoor musical entertainment is already at its peak in the City.

**5.0** **Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

**5.1** There are no issues associated with this report.”

In response to a Member’s query regarding pavement cafes, the Director of Planning and Building Control confirmed that, if a business already held a Liquor Licence, then any pavement café licence would extend their premises and they were entitled to serve alcohol within that area.

Regarding street traders who wished to operate in the City Centre during the Fleadh period, she outlined that a report would be brought before the Committee in the coming months, asking it to consider setting certain parameters within which officers could determine applications, including delegated authority to determine competing applications should the situation arise. She explained that the Committee might wish to, for example, recognise those traders who were already paying significant rates for premises within the City.

A further Member raised the importance of mobility and accessibility concerns for large scale events and requested that further information be submitted for the Committee’s consideration regarding the enforcement powers and staffing for the week long, City-wide event.

In response to a further Member’s query, the Director emphasised that an upcoming public notice would advertise the proposed road closures in and around the City Centre and that any representations arising from it would be brought to the Committee.

She added that, once the crowd modelling had been completed, officers would be engaging with those businesses with Pavement Café licences to ensure that they were aware of the City-wide event and of their responsibilities in terms of their outdoor furniture.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

### **Model Conditions - Caravan Licensing**

The Director presented the following report to the Committee:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 This report sets out how the model conditions for Caravan and Campsites have been updated by the Department for Infrastructure in July 2025.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to note the background to the model conditions and the updated model conditions for Caravan and Campsites (in Appendix 1 and 2 on mod.gov) and agree that they will be adopted by the Council and referenced on our website.**

#### **3.0 Main report**

Under the [Caravans Act \(Northern Ireland\) 1963](#) ('1963 Act') the development of caravan sites and their physical standards are controlled through:

- 1. planning permission granted for the use of land as a caravan site and**
- 2. the 1963 Act's site licensing system.**

**Applications for a caravan site licence must be made to the Council. There is no charge to apply.**

**There are currently no licensed caravan or camping sites in the Belfast Area.**

**Before applying for a licence, the operator must have:**

- Secured planning permission,**
- Sufficient insurance,**
- Met the appropriate licence conditions.**

**The Department has a role in providing Model Licence Conditions regulating the layout and provision of facilities, services and equipment for caravan sites including water supply, electricity and fire points.**

In drawing up the conditions which will attach to any licence, councils must have regard to the Model Licence Conditions.

Updated model conditions were published by the Department for Infrastructure on 1 July 2025. These conditions revise and update the Model Licence Conditions for Caravan Sites 1992 (Holiday Caravan Sites) and Model Licence Conditions 1994 (Residential Caravan Sites) and apply to:

- permanent residential caravan sites;
- holiday caravan sites; and
- touring caravan sites

This review has been prompted by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Travellers' Accommodation in NI' investigation report published on 6 March 2018. The report made a number of recommendations for public authorities, including that the Department should:

*'review the legal and policy framework concerning site licences. This should include the development of a model site licence setting out the minimum standard of provision and safety requirements for each type of Travellers site in NI, along with enforcement powers for any breach.'*

The Department has accepted this recommendation and has published a stand-alone set of Model Licence Conditions for Traveller Sites.

While addressing the report's recommendation the Department has also taken the opportunity to update and amalgamate the current Model Licence Conditions for holiday caravan sites as well as residential caravan sites into one document, creating greater clarity and ease of reference for councils and stakeholders.

Although the conditions remain largely unchanged there are some revisions and updates including to emergency telephones, flood risk and fire safety measures.

The updated licensing conditions represent what would normally be expected as a matter of good practice on all caravan sites and should be applied with due regard to the particular circumstances of each case, including the physical character of the site, any facilities or services that may already be available within convenient reach, and other local conditions.

**4.0 Financial & Resource Implications**

**4.1 There are no financial or resource implications that arise as a result of this report.**

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

**5.1 There are no issues associated with this report.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Request for the Exhibition of Unclassified Films**

The Director outlined that a request had been received from the Nerve Centre Belfast, to screen three unclassified films at the Queen’s Film Theatre (QFT) on Saturday, 28th March, 2026.

The Committee was reminded that the Council licensed cinemas and other venues under the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which primarily focused on technical aspects such as structural stability and fire safety. Typically, cinema licenses required films to be classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). However, the Council had the authority to permit the screening of unclassified films under specific conditions, including imposing age restrictions. She reminded the Committee that it had previously approved similar requests for unclassified film screenings.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. B. Brennan, Nerve Centre, to the meeting. He confirmed the details of the screening requests.

The films had been produced by students of the Nerve Centre as part of a six-month program funded by the Department for Communities, which aimed to provide young people aged 16-19 with opportunities to learn about the creative industries while working on their own projects.

The screenings would be invitation-only, free of charge, and not open to the general public. The Nerve Centre had proposed age classifications for the films, with two films rated PG and one rated 15, based on their content.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to permit the screening of the three unclassified films in accordance with an age classification of 15, the highest rating specified by the Nerve Centre.

Chairperson