



Subject:	Revised Amusement Permit Policy
Date:	16 April 2025
Reporting Officer:	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control, ext. 2300
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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 advise Committee that amendments have been made to the Council's Amusement Permit policy and to seek permission to commence consultation on the amended policy.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Committee is asked to consider the amended Amusement Permit policy and, subject to any changes that Members deem necessary, agree that consultation be initiated on the policy.
3.0	Main report

	<p><u>Background</u></p>
3.1	The Committee is required to consider all applications for the grant of an Amusement Permit under the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (the Order).
3.2	Members are advised that the Council agreed to the introduction of an Amusement Permit policy at their meeting of 1 May 2013.
3.3	The aim of the policy is to serve as a guide for Elected Members, Council officers, applicants and the wider public on applications for amusement permits in the Belfast City Council area. By outlining those matters which may be taken into account in determining an application for an amusement permit the policy is intended to introduce greater clarity, transparency and consistency to the decision-making process.
3.4	The need for the policy was highlighted by previous Court decisions on amusement permit applications. These demonstrated the need for the Council to make its position clear on the issues to be considered when deciding to grant or refuse an amusement permit application under the 1985 Order. Some of these issues, such as location, character and impact on neighbours/surrounding area often overlap with planning considerations.
3.5	The policy has been in operation since 2013 and is considered by Committee as part of the decision-making process in respect of every application for the grant of an amusement permit.
3.6	<p>The key objectives of the policy are to: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote the retail vibrancy and regeneration of Belfast; 2. Enhance the tourism and cultural appeal of Belfast by protecting its image and built heritage; 3. Support and safeguard residential communities in Belfast; 4. Protect children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling; 5. Respect the need to prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder.
3.7	<p>To meet these policy objectives when determining amusement permit applications, the Council will assess each application on its own merits and will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have regard to the requirements set out in the 1985 Order; and 2. assess the suitability of the location for a proposed amusement arcade, which will typically be based on several assessment criteria set out in the policy. Namely the: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the retail vitality of Belfast City; • Cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in a particular location; • Impact on the image and profile of Belfast; • Proximity to residential use; and • Proximity to schools, youth centres and residential institutions for vulnerable people.
	<p><u>Changes to the policy</u></p>
3.8	As with any policy of the Council it is important that it is reviewed and updated so that it can remain relevant.
3.9	A review of wording and terminology has taken place and quoted website links and references have been updated. Some parts of the policy have been reworded to make it easier to read and understand its meaning.

3.10	<p>While the main elements of the policy remain in place, they have been updated to take into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in related policy and legislation, notably the Belfast Local Development Plan and its supplementary planning guidance; • court judgements in respect of the Permit Policy since 2013; and • general lessons learnt from the application of the policy.
3.11	Dr Tony Quinn of Braniff Associates, a consultant with experience of policy formulation and planning matters, helped formulate the initial policy and has been involved in updating the recent amended version before you for consideration.
3.12	The proposed policy changes have also been reviewed with Legal Services, King's Counsel and colleagues in the Planning Service.
3.13	Dr Quinn will be available at your meeting to answer any queries you may have in relation to the revised policy.
3.14	Subject to any amendments Members may require it is proposed that the revised draft Amusement Permit Policy be subject to consultation in line with normal Council procedures. Those consulted will include the Gaming Industry, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure Planning, Police Service of N. Ireland, CommunityNI on Gambling, Gamblers Anonymous Ireland and various interested parties and organisations.
4.0	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
4.1	None associated with this report.
5.0	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
5.1	A review of the equality screening exercise undertaken in 2012 is being carried out and a full equality screening and rural needs assessment will be undertaken prior to consultation and implementation of the amended policy.
6.0	<u>Appendices – Documents Attached</u>
6.1	<p>Appendix 1 – Current Amusement Permit policy (May 2013)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Proposed revised Amusement Permit policy.</p>