

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 20th May, 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,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas,
McCann, McDowell, McKay, McKeown and Smyth.

In attendance: Mrs. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. S. Hipkins, Building Control Manager;
Ms. H. Morrissey, City Protection 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 McAteer.

A Member, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Councillor McAteer on the recent birth of her baby.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd April 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 5th May.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(d)

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

The Committee noted the licence applications which had, since its last meeting, been issued under the Scheme of Delegation.

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.

Application to provide outdoor musical entertainment beyond 11.00 pm at City Hall

The Building Control Manager provided the Committee with the details of the application. He explained that the City Hall had a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence during which entertainment may be provided both outdoors and in a marquee, Monday to Sunday, from 11.30 am to 11.00 pm.

The Members were advised that the following Special Conditions were attached to both the Marquee and Outdoor Entertainments Licences:

- Maximum numbers will be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control Service and will vary depending upon individual concert set up proposals;
- Prior to any event taking place the promoters are required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation and have in place a robust system of dealing with any complaints, which has been agreed in advance with the Council;
- Any requests to provide entertainment later than 11.00 pm must be considered by the Licensing Committee and therefore must be made at least 3 months in advance of the proposed event; and
- Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then receive a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint is of such significant impact, authority is granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter will be required to make contingency arrangements.

As the application was not to vary the terms of the Outdoor licence, rather a request for the Council's permission to extend the hours under an existing Licence Condition, there was no requirement for public advertisement.

The event organiser had indicated that outdoor music events were scheduled for the following nights: Sunday 2nd, Thursday 6th, Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th August 2026. The request was to provide entertainment to 1am on those nights.

The Police had been contacted by the Service in relation to the event, however, a response had not yet been received. He explained that, should the Committee be minded to approve the extended hours requested, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

Officers had engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in the Fleadh events team in relation to the events and would participate in pre-event meetings. An Event Management Plan for the Fleadh had been received and was being evaluated by the Service.

Regarding noise issues, a significant consideration for the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) would be the proposal to provide outdoor entertainment after 11.00pm. The noise mitigation strategy would be discussed at the pre-event meetings.

The Committee was advised that the event organisers would be required to engage with an acoustic consultant and requested to document a noise mitigation strategy for each night of entertainment. The purpose of the strategy would be to demonstrate that noise from the event would not cause unreasonable disturbance to commercial and residential premises. Once received by the Service, the strategy would be provided to EPU for appraisal.

The organisers would also be required to produce a suitable residents pre-notification letter containing a nominated event organiser contact that residents could refer concerns or make complaints to. The extent of the letters distribution, which would take place prior to the event, would be agreed with the event organiser by the Service in consultation with EPU officers.

The event organisers would be reminded of the standard licence condition that receipt of significant complaints may lead to further late nights being curtailed. However, it can be impracticable during the festival to curtail further nights at short notice, and as complaints are not all received on the nights that are the subject of the complaint a full picture does not emerge until all complaints are collated, by which time the events can be concluded.

A Member raised concerns regarding the amplification of sound from the "Gig Rig", which would be situated on the West Lawn of the City Hall grounds, and concerns that further details of the programme were not available. The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that the Noise Mitigation Strategy would be in place in order to control any amplified noise.

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor McKeown and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to extend the hours of entertainment and, subject to all technical requirements being met and a satisfactory response from the PSNI, entertainment be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence, to 1.00 am, on the following five nights of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann:

- Sunday 2nd, Thursday 6th, Friday 7th, Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th August, 2026.

**Application for the Variation of 7-Day
Annual Entertainments Licence for Muriel's**

The Building Control Managed outlined that an application had been received for the variation of a 7-Day Annual Indoor Entertainments Licence to extend the hours during which entertainment may be provided at Muriel's and to increase the occupancy of the indoor area.

The Committee was advised that the days and hours during which entertainment may be provided under the terms of the current indoor Entertainments Licence were:

- Monday to Saturday: 11.30am to 2.00am the following morning, and
- Sunday: 12.30pm to 2.00am the following morning.

He explained that the variation application related to a proposed extension to the hours during which entertainment could be provided, Monday to Sunday, to 3.00am the following morning, and he reminded the Committee that applications to provide entertainment beyond 1.00am were subject to Committee consideration.

The licensee had requested to extend the permitted hours until 3.00am, indicating that the premises was an integral part of Belfast's nightlife and that the proposed changes in hours were to keep them in line with similar venues in the vicinity, allowing them to compete within the sector.

The Members were advised that building works were ongoing at the premises to increase the area of the public bar on both the ground and first floors. They wished to increase the occupancy by around 60 persons. It was pointed out that the works were being inspected by the Building Control service and the final occupancy would be agreed by the Licensing Surveyor on completion of the works.

The Members were advised that no written representations had been lodged as a result of the advertisement of the application and that the PSNI and the NIFRS had both confirmed that they had no objections to the variation application. The Committee was advised that no noise complaints had been received by the Service in the past 12 months.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that Ms. J. Kane, the applicant, was in attendance.

In response to a Member's query regarding the nearby Church, she confirmed that there had been no issues raised by the Church in the past and that it was her intention that the bar would stop serving alcohol at 1.30am, with music playing until 3am.

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Anglin and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to the variation of the 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence to increase the indoor occupancy by 60 persons, subject to final agreement by the Licensing Surveyor on completion of building works, and to vary the hours during which entertainment may be provided as follows:

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 3.00am the following morning; and
- Sunday 12:30pm to 3.00am the following morning.

Chairperson