



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>The exhibition and rating of an unclassified film 'The Negotiator'</b>
<b>Date:</b>	20 August 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning & Building Control, ext. 2300
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Darren McCamphill, Lead Building Control Surveyor, ext. 2444

**Restricted Reports**

**Is this report restricted?**

**Yes**

☐

**No**

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**Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.**

**Insert number**

☐

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

**After Committee Decision**

**After Council Decision**

**Sometime in the future**

**Never**


**Call-in**

**Is the decision eligible for Call-in?**

**Yes**

☒

**No**

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	<p>The report is to inform the Committee of a decision taken under delegated authority by the Strategic Director of Place and Economy to approve the exhibition of a film called “The Negotiator” in Cineworld, Belfast on the 25 June 2025.</p> <p>Delegated authority of the Strategic Director of Place and Economy was sought as the request was received after the Licensing Committee’s June meeting had taken place, and a decision was needed before the Committee’s August meeting.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the content of the report.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
3.1	The Council licences cinemas and other venues under the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 for the exhibition of films. The main functions of the legislation relate to technical matters such as structural stability and fire safety and, as such, the powers to issue licences are delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control.
3.2	However, the Order also requires the Council to impose conditions or restrictions prohibiting the admission of children to film exhibitions involving the showing of films designated as works unsuitable for children.
3.3	Unlike other types of Licences there is no public notification and representation process for Cinema Licence applications hence there is normally no involvement of the Committee with Cinema Licensing.
3.4	When issuing Licences, the Council establishes Conditions on each Licence regarding the general running and administration of the premises. One such Condition is that only films which have been classified with a certificate issued by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) may be shown.
3.5	The BBFC is an independent body which classifies all films on behalf of local authorities, and they have strict guidelines and criteria in awarding films a classification.
3.6	Until recently it has been rare for a licensed cinema to seek permission to show a film that has not been through the BBFC process. However, with the development in the local creative industries and filmmaking sector here more films are being produced locally many of which are unclassified, or not classified by the BBFC, but the demand for them to be screened in local cinemas is growing.
3.7	There is a proviso in the Licence Conditions which allows the Council to give permission to show an unclassified film if it is satisfied with that film. The Council can also append any Conditions it deems appropriate, including an age restriction.
3.8	The Council has had requests in the past for permission to exhibit films which either do not have a classification or have a classification from another country. The Council has previously agreed such requests where it considered them to be acceptable.

3.9	Council officers were contacted on the 19 June 2025 regarding the screening of 'The Negotiator'. The film, which was supported by Queens University, Belfast, was being broadcast as part of the 'Docs Irelands' series of international documentary films by independent film makers. Screening of the film was scheduled for 25 June 2025 at Cineworld, cinema at the Odyssey Arena, Queens Quay.
3.10	The film had not been classified. It has not been given a rating by the BBFC. The applicant has been informed by the programming team that a '12A' rating would be appropriate for the film.
3.11	Information on the BBFC classification is provided in Appendix 1.
3.12	Normally approval to permit the film to be exhibited is considered and given by the Licensing Committee. In this instance the request was received after the June Committee meeting and the August Committee meeting was too late to consider the request for the proposed screening on 25 June 2025.
3.13	Discussions took place with Legal Services as to the options available to the Council and therefore the Strategic Director of Place and Economy under his delegated authority.
3.14	The film does not have a BBFC classification or have a classification from another country. A screener link was afforded by the applicant permitting viewing of the film by officers of the Service. This was to permit validation of the '12A' rating expressed by the applicant. See Appendix 3.
3.15	The expertise for film classification is considered to exist with BBFC and other statutory bodies established for this function. The option to validate the '12A' rating was not taken in this instance.
3.16	The applicant has identified that no tickets are to be made available for children for the screening.
3.17	The matter was discussed with the Chair of the Licensing Committee and the appropriate course of action was considered to be that the film should be allowed to be shown as an unclassified film with a rating of '18'.
3.18	The applicant was agreeable to screen the film as an unclassified film with a rating of '18'
3.19	Legal Services advised that this decision could be made under the delegated authority of the Strategic Director of Place and Economy (in accordance with para 2.3 of the Scheme of Delegation which deals with emergencies and cases of urgency) subject to advising the appropriate Chair and reporting the matter to the Licensing Committee at their next meeting.
3.20	This report is to inform Members that the Strategic Director of Place & Economy exercised his powers of delegated authority and approved the exhibition of "The Negotiator" in Cineworld, Odyssey Arena on 25 June 2025 as part of the 'Docs Irelands' series of international documentary films with an '18' Rating.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Financial and Resource Implications</b>  None. Officers will carry out inspections before and during the events which will be catered for within existing Service budgets.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</b>

	There are no issues associated with this report.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appendix 1 – Conditions of licence</li><li>• Appendix 2 – BBFC Classification Guidelines</li><li>• Appendix 3 – Applicant request</li></ul>