



## Belfast City Council

**Report to:** Licensing Committee

**Subject:** **Guidance Document on Outdoor Events**

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> August, 2014

**Reporting Officer:** Trevor Martin, Head of Building Control, ext 2450

**Contact Officer:** Stephen Hewitt, Building Control Manager, ext 2435

| 1   | <b>Relevant Background Information</b>   |
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| 1.1 | Members will recall that, at your meeting on 16 <sup>th</sup> April, you requested that the Service prepare a draft Outdoor Events Policy for consideration following a series of Party Briefings in March of this year.   |
| 1.2 | In drafting the document, we have consulted with various agencies such as the PSNI, DRD Roads Service, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. Officers of the Environmental Protection Unit and Night Time Noise Team have also been consulted regarding noise levels at various outdoor sites.                                |
| 1.3 | Importantly, to ensure that proposals are practical and realistic, Officers have also engaged with various promoters that regularly host events in Belfast on an annual basis.   |
| 1.4 | Another factor considered has been the nature and extent of any objection or cause for complaint associated with events held on a particular site to date and the likely impact that entertainment will have on the surrounding neighbourhood.   |
| 1.5 | It is intended that the proposed policy will simplify the current process for dealing with applications for outdoor entertainment, assist the Committee in its decision-making, balance the needs of the wider community with those living in the immediate vicinity and provide guidance which will enable licensees and promoters to plan for events more effectively. |
| 1.6 | Through the development work we have undertaken it has become clear that what we have been referring to as a policy should more appropriately be deemed as a guidance document. Developing a Council policy requires us to undertake extensive public consultation and will result in a protracted process that will delay the document unnecessarily.                   |

| 2   | <b>Key Issues</b>  |
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| 2.1 | The primary aim in the development of the document has been to identify a range of outdoor concert venues of varying sizes which promoters can refer to if they are planning an event. This document will also outline how frequently a venue can be used, when the entertainment must finish and what, if any, other restrictions there may be relating to the use of the site. |

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| <p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p> <p>2.10</p> <p>2.11</p> <p>2.12</p> <p>2.13</p> <p>2.14</p> <p>2.15</p> | <p>If all these sites are pre-approved by Committee then an applicant can book an act well in advance secure in the knowledge that the site for the event will be licensed for the days and hours required.</p> <p>The proposed guidance document will include a spreadsheet of venues and an associated map showing their location. For each site there is also an assessment sheet providing information about that site. The spreadsheet will be updated and amended as the guidance document is developed and implemented through the Committee process.</p> <p>The spreadsheet also identifies venues that do not currently have an Entertainments Licence in place but which have potential to be used as a venue for certain types of event.</p> <p>These mainly consist of venues owned by the Council's Parks and Leisure Department. Officers of the Service have liaised extensively with Officers of the Department whilst developing the guidance and it has been confirmed that events held at these venues in recent years did not require an Entertainments Licence and were unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.</p> <p>The Parks and Leisure Department has also advised that whilst it may be advantageous to increase the number of sites licensed for entertainment purposes it is not considered economically viable to spend money on a licence which may never be utilised.</p> <p>Members are advised that this will not prevent a site from being used by prospective promoters as long as an appropriate application is made within the required timeframe to enable Committee to consider it.</p> <p>As part of the discussions with Parks and Leisure we have also helped them to improve how they manage their licence applications thereby identifying considerable costs and efficiency savings; particularly in relation to advertising costs.</p> <p>As well as a mechanism to facilitate applications for venues which are not licensed, there will also be guidance on how to deal with requests for additional events when the prescribed quota for the number at a venue has already been reached.</p> <p>Other venues may wish to apply for an Outdoor Entertainments Licence and can be added to the guidance information in due course.</p> <p>Discussions at post event meetings will afford organisers and promoters the opportunity to comment on the guidance documents. This can be reported to Committee to enable you to make any necessary amendments required to refine and complete the guidance documentation.</p> <p>It is proposed that the guidance and supporting documents will be available online for prospective promoters and organisers wishing to hold events in Belfast.</p> <p>Copies of the draft guidance document, the revised spreadsheet, associated location map and proposed assessment sheets are appended to this report for your information.</p> <p><b>Consideration of Assessment Sheets</b></p> <p>In order to populate the spreadsheet of outdoor sites each must be considered by Committee in turn as the licence for the site falls due for renewal.</p> <p>A number of applications to renew Outdoor Licences are currently pending and are held subject to consideration at your meeting of the assessment sheet for each of them. If Members are content with the format and relevant information provided on each assessment sheet the licence will be renewed, as provided for in the Council's Scheme of Delegation, as none are the subject of objections. The spreadsheet of outdoor venues will then be updated and the assessment sheets will be incorporated into the guidance documentation.</p> |
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2.16 The assessment sheets you are asked to consider are attached as appendices to this report and relate to the following:

**Department of Social Development (DSD)**

1. Custom House Square
2. Writers Square
3. Cotton Court
4. Donegall Quay, Lagan Lookout & Lagan Weir
5. Bank Square

**Parks & Leisure Department**

1. Boucher Road Playing Fields
2. Falls Park
3. Ormeau Park
4. Botanic Gardens
5. Woodvale Park
6. Waterworks Park
7. Alexandra Park
8. Cathedral Gardens
9. Grove Playing Fields

**Others**

1. Holy Cross Boys Primary School – Brookfield Street

2.17 Members may recall that applications to renew the Outdoor licences for Boucher Road Playing Fields and Custom House Square were granted at your meeting of the 18<sup>th</sup> June.

2.18 As reported to the Committee at your meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014 the promoters who hold events in Custom House Square have advised the Service that they would not be keen to hold them in another location, particularly those which are now regular events on the social calendar and synonymous with the venue.

2.19 Officers of the Service are endeavouring to identify suitable alternative venues within the City Centre and will liaise with the Council's Events Unit as part of this process. The matter is also being discussed with perspective promoters to look at viable alternative sites.

2.20 Two other venues, namely Drumglass Park and Holy Cross Boys School, are being presented to you for consideration in separate reports at this meeting. If Members are minded to grant these Licences they will then also be added to the spreadsheet and their assessment sheets will be incorporated into the guidance documentation.

2.21 It is envisaged that the Guidance will be fully implemented next year and as a result we propose to present further updates over the coming months as various Outdoor Licences fall due for renewal.

2.22 Attached to this report for approval are the proposed Assessment Sheets for the abovementioned venues which will be included with the Guidance Document on Outdoor Events.

**Other points for consideration**

2.23 **How to make areas remote from the city centre more appealing**

Promoters have advised the Service that venues such as Giants Park are not an attractive or viable location for them. However we will continue to work with the relevant Department to consider if any improvements could be made to address this issue.

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| 2.24 | <b>Informing residents of events</b><br>Officers of the Parks and Leisure Department have agreed that they will now notify all local residents of an event, if it is considered to be significant in size, which is being held within a Parks and Leisure venue.                         |
| 2.25 | The Building Control Service has also included another article in the summer edition of City Matters magazine in order to raise awareness about proposed outdoor events being held in Belfast.   |
| 2.26 | Officers will also notify Members and local Community Groups about major events in their area.   |
|      | <b>Local Government Reform</b>   |
| 2.27 | Officers of the Service are currently liaising with Lisburn and Castlereagh Councils to identify any potential outdoor sites that will be transferring to Belfast. If necessary these will be placed before you next year for consideration and inclusion with the guidance accordingly. |
| 2.28 | It is also the case that a number of sites currently licensed by the DSD, including Custom House Square, will be transferring to Belfast as part of the Reform process.  |

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| <b>3</b> | <b>Resource Implications</b>  |
| 3.1      | <b>Financial</b><br>This provision will be catered for within existing budgets. |
| 3.2      | <b>Human Resources</b><br>None  |
| 3.3      | <b>Assets and other Implications</b><br>None                                    |

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| <b>4</b> | <b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>  |
| 4.1      | There are no equality and good relations issues. |

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| <b>5</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>   |
| 5.1      | The Committee is requested to consider the information presented and agree, with amendments if necessary: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Guidance Document on Outdoor Events</li> <li>2. Any/all of the attached assessment Sheets for Outdoor Entertainment venues.</li> </ol> |

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| <b>6</b> | <b>Documents attached</b>   |
|          | <p>Appendix 1 - Draft Guidance Document on Outdoor Events</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Assessment Sheets for DSD venues</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Assessment Sheets for Parks and Leisure venues</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Assessment Sheet for Holy Cross Primary School</p> <p>Appendix 5 - Revised spreadsheet listing all Outdoor venues</p> <p>Appendix 6 - Revised map of the venues</p> |