

Title of Report: Pavement Café Licensing Scheme - continued support for hospitality businesses	Officer Presenting: Director of Health and Community Author: Head of Health and Community Wellbeing
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

1.1 To seek Council approval:

- (i) to extend the period during which an application may be made for a pavement café licence, free of charge, until 31 August 2021; and
- (ii) for the extension of the licence period of existing pavement cafe licences, with a new expiry date of 31 March 2022.

2 Background

- 2.1 It was recognised that restrictions introduced in response to Covid-19, including the periodic, enforced closure of hospitality premises and the need for social distancing had the potential to threaten the viability of some businesses serving food and drink in or from their premises.
- 2.2 It was further recognised that using outdoor space, where possible, would assist businesses to reopen safely, when permitted, and to serve more customers, while ensuring social distancing guidelines could be adhered to.
- 2.3 However, businesses such as cafés, restaurants and bars wishing to place furniture on public areas for use by customers would have required a pavement café licence to permit them to do so and no businesses had such a licence.
- 2.4 It was considered that the application fee for the grant of a pavement café licence, which has been set at £460 may have deterred businesses already facing financial difficulties from making an application.
- 2.5 In response, at its meeting on Thursday 25 June 2020, (C167/20) Council resolved to
- (i) approve the proposed procedure to process applications for a pavement café licence under The Licensing of Pavement Cafés Act (NI) 2014; and

- (ii) approve the introduction of a temporary Pavement Café Licencing scheme/consultation process and to waive all fees associated with granting a licence for a period of six months, to be reviewed by January 2021.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Since introducing the scheme on 1 July, Council has received a total of 29 applications for pavement café licences.
- 3.2 To date, 14 pavement café licences have been issued and officers are continuing to work with applicants in relation to 10 ongoing applications.
- 3.3 In addition, we are aware of some premises who have placed furniture on public areas for use by their customers, but who, despite advice from officers, have not made an application for a pavement café licence.
- 3.4 Currently all pavement café licences will expire on 28 February 2021.
- 3.5 Extending the period of these licences will provide further support to businesses together with a degree of certainty during the forthcoming period of recovery.
- 3.6 Allowing applications to be made without the normal fee until 31 August 2021 will provide an opportunity for all businesses wishing to place furniture on public areas with an opportunity to obtain a pavement café licence without being disadvantaged.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR, Improvement, Rural Needs and other Implications

- 4.1 The decision to waive the normal licence application fee has resulted in a loss of income to Council.
- 4.2 However, given the unprecedented challenges faced by the hospitality sector at this time, this loss of income may be considered to be in the interest of the local community, many of whom are employed within the sector.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that Council approves:
 - (i) an extension of the period during which an application may be made for a pavement café licence, free of charge, until 31 August 2021; and

- (ii) an extension of the licence period of existing pavement café licences, with a new expiry date of 31 March 2022.

Background Papers

Mins Ref: C167/20