

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 6 August 2020

Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh – Road Occupation Permits for Tables and Chairs

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
---	------------------

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Policy and Sustainability Committee approve the proposal set out in this report to waive fees for road occupation permits for tables and chairs from 1 July 2020 – 31 October 2020.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Gareth Barwell, Head of Place Management

E-mail: Gareth.barwell@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 5844

Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh – Road Occupation Permits for Tables and Chairs

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report responds to the request from the City of Edinburgh Council meeting on 28 July 2020 that the costs for outdoor spaces be reviewed and to bring forward a proposal for fees associated with licensing of outdoor spaces for eating, drinking and other similar activities.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [28 July 2020](#) the City of Edinburgh Council approved a report on Supporting Local Businesses in Edinburgh.
- 3.2 In addition to the report recommendations, Council also approved the following Addendums:
- 3.2.1 Council notes that a local Champions network will be established with individuals from local businesses, Traders Associations and/or Community Council to enable the Council to consult directly with local businesses on the additional action which they would like the Council to take to provide further support within the Spaces for People and other economic recovery programmes;
- 3.2.2 Asks that Officers engage immediately with trade bodies and work with the Local Champions network to quickly agree a policy proposal regarding licencing of outdoor spaces for eating, drinking and other similar activities; including exploring deferral of fees and discount for small businesses;
- 3.2.3 In the event that a policy is proposed which has a financial impact beyond the existing Spaces for People budget, that the proposed policy is brought to the next Policy and Sustainability Committee for consideration;
- 3.2.4 Notes City Centre businesses are suffering from severely reduced footfall because of the absence of both tourists and office workers who amounted to 25 – 30,000 incoming visitors per day and there is currently a reduction of 85 – 90% in footfall; notes that this is unlikely to change until Scottish Government Covid-19 guidance changes but recognises that there is an

urgent need to support these businesses in the immediate term, Therefore, and requests that officers further review the speed and costs of licensing outdoor spaces in order to deliver animation to the City Centre to support it through this very difficult trading time.

- 3.3 The 28 July report reported that a new application form and key principles have been established to streamline the process for businesses applying to use outdoor space.
- 3.4 On [20 February 2020](#) the City of Edinburgh Council set fees and charges for the financial year 2020/21.
- 3.5 Road occupation permits for [tables and chairs charges](#) were set as below from 1 April 2020:
 - 3.5.1 £132.00 per square metre within the World Heritage Site; and
 - 3.5.2 £105.00 per square metre outwith the World Heritage Site.
- 3.6 Tables and chairs permits allows anyone who sells food or drink to put tables and chairs on a public pavement between 9am and 9pm, seven days per week.
- 3.7 In response to the outbreak of COVID-19, the Council's Incident Management Team agreed to retain the charges for tables and chairs permits at 2019/20 costs of:
 - 3.7.1 £126.00 per square metre within the World Heritage Site; and
 - 3.7.2 £100.00 per square metre outwith the World Heritage Site.
- 3.8 The United Kingdom Government introduced lockdown restrictions in March 2020 to minimise the spread of COVID-19. The Scottish Government route map to relax these restrictions included permitting the reopening of bars and restaurants outdoors from 6 July 2020 and indoors from 15 July 2020.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Since the reopening of outdoor areas for bars and restaurants has been permitted, a number of individual businesses and local representative groups have requested that the Council reduces or removes the charges in place for tables and chairs permits to enable them to ensure that safe physical distances can be maintained when customers are visiting their premises.
- 4.2 Although the Local Champions Network is not yet fully established, Council officers have been working with organisations such as Essential Edinburgh, West End BID and local High Streets since early summer to understand the challenges businesses are facing in recovering from the impact of COVID-19.
- 4.3 Committee is asked to consider waiving charges for all new road occupation permits for tables and chairs for the period of 1 July 2020 to 31 October 2020 for all businesses.

- 4.4 Businesses will still be required to apply for tables and chairs permits, and the standard conditions will need to be met, however no charges will be levied for this time period. Refunds would be applied to any business which has already been granted a permit where payment has been received.
- 4.5 Whilst the Addendum that was approved by Council did ask for consideration of the application of a discount for small businesses, it is the view of officers that the administration of such a discount will add time to the process for issuing tables and chairs permits and will create unnecessary delays and frustration for business. It is therefore proposed that a blanket removal of permit fees is applied across all business for the time period 1 July 2020 to 31 October 2020.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If Committee approves the proposal outlined in this report, no charges will be applied for the duration of the permit up to 31 October 2020. Any business which has already been granted a permit for which payment has been received will receive a refund for any payment which covers the period from 6 July to 31 October 2020
- 5.2 If Committee does not approve the proposal, all applications for tables and chairs permits will continue to be subject to fees per square metre of £126.00 in the World Heritage Site and £100.00 outwith the World Heritage Site.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 In 2019/20 the Council raised circa £0.380m from fees and charges associated with tables and chairs permits across the city.
- 6.2 On [23 July 2020](#) Policy and Sustainability Committee received an update on the Council's revenue budget for 2020/21. This recognised that there would be a net loss of income across the Place directorate. The net loss anticipated from tables and chairs permits included within this report was £0.3m. This has been included in the Council's estimate of lost income and additional expenditure related to COVID-19. The details of any income compensation scheme in Scotland have not yet been announced but it is anticipated that this will be included in any City of Edinburgh Council submission.
- 6.3 Given that this reduction would only apply from 1 July to 31 October 2020, there is still scope for income to be generated from permits issued after this date. However, this cannot be accurately estimated at present.
- 6.4 The City of Edinburgh Council has been allocated £5m from the Scottish Government's Spaces for People programme to create safe spaces for walking, cycling and wheeling. This funding has been committed to developing and delivering schemes across the city. It should be noted that this funding allocation would not be permitted to be used to subsidise tables and chairs permits.

- 6.5 The Addendum to the 28 July 2020 report outlined in paragraph 3.2.3 requested that, if the impact cannot be met from the Spaces for People allocation, it should be brought forward to Committee for consideration.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The lockdown measures introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that many businesses had to pause trading. As lockdown restrictions begin to ease, the priority of the Council is to support businesses to recover while ensuring that appropriate public health measures are introduced to protect both staff and the public.
- 7.2 Engagement with businesses directly and through representative organisations has already taken place and will continue. In addition, when the new local business Champions Network is established, officers will also engage with them on this issue.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 None.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 None.