



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Communities

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Licensing and Registration of Clubs
(Amendment) Bill: Committee Deliberations

22 April 2021

entertainment licence will allow them to do so. That answers the question. It separates alcohol from entertainment for groups that want to continue entertaining beyond 3.00 am.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): OK, thank you. That clears that up.

We will move on. I draw members' attention to the departmental response to queries raised in last week's meeting.

Clause 29 is "Young people prohibited from bars". The Committee had requested that the Minister add to the amendments already agreed for this clause by ensuring that the Bill contains regulation-making powers enabling the amendment of the number of months referred to in clause 29(1) and the number of prize-giving ceremonies referred to in clause 29(3), should that become necessary in future. The Minister has accepted the request and will take it forward as a departmental amendment.

Are members content with the Minister's commitment to take forward that amendment?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): We turn to cinemas. The Committee noted the Department's concerns about an amendment allowing alcohol to be sold in cinemas being made to primary legislation without public consultation. The Committee discussed the way forward. The Department has proposed a consultation, pending legal advice to determine whether there is an opportunity to include cinemas within the definition of a place of public entertainment via regulations. The Committee was minded to support that proposal, provided that a short and focused consultation takes place over July and August of this year, with regulations being brought to the Assembly in the autumn of this year.

The Committee, at its meeting last week, requested that the Minister confirm in writing her agreement to that timetable. The Department's response states that legal advice has confirmed that cinemas could be included in the definition of a place of public entertainment by regulations. The Minister has instructed officials to carry out a short and focused public consultation over the summer months. The Minister will consider responses to the consultation, and, subject to no serious concerns being raised, regulations will be brought to the Assembly in the autumn.

Do members have any comments? Are they content with the Minister's commitment to carry out a consultation and bring regulations to the Assembly in the autumn?

Mr Durkan: Given that some, if not all, cinemas across the North have responded in some format or other to the ongoing consultation, will those responses be carried across into the new consultation or will they have to repeat all that work?

Ms Carol Reid (Department for Communities): I believe that, if they have already responded, we can carry those responses across. However, if they have anything to add, they will have an opportunity to do so. This consultation will be public, and it will be issued to everybody on the stakeholder list and everyone on the section 75 list, which the Department follows for any consultation. They absolutely have an opportunity to come back.

Mr Durkan: Thanks for that.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Do members have any further questions that they want to ask of Liam and Carol? No? OK.

May I ask you both, very quickly, whether you have any idea when the Committee will see any of the ministerial amendments? Until we see them, we cannot progress to clause-by-clause consideration.

Ms Reid: I thought that we were both going to speak at the same time there. *[Laughter.]* I am sorry, Chair.

Mr Quinn: This is the difficulty of not being in the same room.

Ms Reid: Work has commenced, Chair. We have worked with the draftsman, and we are part way through our instructions to counsel. Counsel has provided some drafts to us, which we will now

consider. Once we have all those together, we will have to share them with the Minister, for clearance. However, officials are working on them, and the Office of the Legislative Counsel is committed to doing that work as soon as is practically possible. Obviously, we need time to make sure that the draft amendments that have been provided work, not just in the Bill but in the overall order. We need to pick up any consequential amendments to make sure that it is done correctly.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): That is fine. Thank you for that.

Thank you both for being with us today. We have the same understanding for our session later today: if we need you to come in, we will give you a shout. Is that grand?

Ms Reid: Yes, certainly, Chair.

Mr Quinn: That is fine, Chair, thank you.

The Chairperson (Ms P Bradley): Thank you so much, Liam and Carol.