

# **Epsom & Ewell Borough Council**

## **Film Classification Policy**

# **POLICY FOR DETERMINING FILM CLASSIFICATIONS**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The public exhibition of all films on licensed premises must either be classified by the British Broad Film Classification (BBFC) or authorised by the Licensing Authority under the powers of the Licensing Act 2003.
- 1.2. Section 20 of the Licensing Act 2003 (the Act) provides that where a Premises Licence or Club Premises Certificate authorises the exhibition of a film(s), the licence must include a condition requiring the admission of children to films to be restricted in accordance with recommendations given either by the British Board of Film Classification (the BBFC) or by the Licensing Authority itself.
- 1.3. The purpose of this Policy is to set out the formal procedure for the Council as the Licensing Authority to determine the classification of previously unclassified films, appeals by distributors against the British Board of Film Classification's decisions or requests to reclassify films.
- 1.4. Where a premises seeks or intends to exhibit film(s), that venue must be covered by a Premises Licence, Club Premises Certificate or Temporary Event Notice under the Licensing Act 2003.

## **2. Definitions**

- 2.1. Children - any person under the age of 18 years.
- 2.2. Exhibition of a film - the exhibition of moving pictures.

## **3. Circumstances the Licensing authority may classify a film**

- 3.1. The Licensing Authority may be requested to authorise the showing of an unclassified film(s) within the Borough of Epsom & Ewell. Usually this will be for:
  - A film festival covering a specific period of time
  - A one off screening of a film
  - A trailer for a film
- 3.2. The Licensing Authority may also be requested to authorise a film that has already been classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) when:
  - (a) a distributor of a film wishes to appeal against the decision of the BBFC and request that the Licensing Authority re-classifies/authorises the film for local screening (with recommendations on age restrictions);

or

(b) An independent party may request that the Licensing Authority reclassifies or authorises the film for local screening (with recommendations on age restrictions)

#### **4. Submission of film**

- 4.1. Applications for authorisation of films shall be referred to and determined by the Licensing Department on behalf of the Licensing Authority.
- 4.2. Applications should be submitted to the Licensing Authority with a minimum of 20 working days before the proposed screening.
- 4.3. An application for authorisation should include the following information:
  1. the film title, duration and genre
  2. the name of the film maker;
  3. a brief synopsis of the film
  4. any recommendation as may have been made by the film maker upon age limit for the intended audience for exhibition of the film;
  5. any existing classification issued by an existing classification body, whether within or outside the UK;
  6. information identifying the material within the film considered by the exhibitor to be likely to have a bearing on the age limit for the audience for exhibition of the film.
  7. the premises name and address of proposed screening
  8. the language spoken in the film and whether there are subtitles in English.
  9. details of how any age restrictions will be enforced.
- 4.4. All requests shall be accompanied by the film(s) in DVD format to avoid delays, the cost to be borne by the applicant.
- 4.5. If the film contains dialogue in a language other than English an interpreter will be required for the classification. The Licensing Authority will arrange for a suitable interpreter and the applicant will be responsible for the cost of this.
- 4.6. Applicants must ensure that all material that is the subject of the application complies with the current interpretation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988 or any other relevant legislation and has not been created through the commission of a criminal offence.

#### **5. Process**

- 5.1. Requests will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible as it is appreciated that films are generally only shown in cinemas for a relatively short period.

- 5.2. The Licensing, HIA, Grants Manager will view the entire film and assess it against the BBFC guidelines and any national guidance. If the Manager is unable to make a decision then the classification for that film will be referred to a Head of Service.
- 5.3. The Licensing Authority shall issue a Notice of Determination of the authorisation within 5 working days from the date of viewing.
- 5.4. The Licensing Authority will formally advise the applicant and the licence holder of any recommendation(s) restricting the admission of children to the film(s).
- 5.5. Where the Licensing Authority has determined to refuse authorisation of a film clear and concise reasons shall be given

## **6. Classification**

- 6.1. The BBFC classifies films in accordance with published Guidelines, which are based on extensive research into public opinion and professional advice.
- 6.2. The National Guidance under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 recommends that Licensing Authorities should not duplicate the BBFC's work by choosing to classify films themselves. The classifications recommended by the BBFC should be those normally applied unless there are very good local reasons for a Licensing Authority to adopt this role. Licensing Authorities should note that the provisions of the 2003 Act enable them to specify the Board in the licence or certificate and, in relation to individual films, to notify the holder or club that it will make a recommendation for that particular film
- 6.3. The Licensing Authority considers the classification system used by the BBFC to be nationally understood and accepted. It will therefore use this system and any amendments thereto, as a reference point for determining its recommendation(s) on the restriction of access of children to the film(s). It should be noted however that the Licensing Authority is not obliged to follow these guidelines.
- 6.4. Where a licensed premises seeks to exhibit a film that has not been classified by the BBFC then it will be the responsibility of the Licensing Authority to authorise that film.
- 6.5. The Licensing Authority recognises the principle within the Human Rights Act 1998 that adults should be free to choose their own entertainment. However material should not be in breach of the criminal law, including material judged to be obscene under the current interpretation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 or has been created through the commission of a criminal offence.
- 6.6. In accordance with paragraph 10.31 of the National Guidance, the Licensing Authority shall concern itself primarily with the protection of children from harm. It will not use its powers to censor films save where there is clear cause to believe that this is required to promote the licensing objectives.

## **7. Protecting children from harm**

- 7.1. In terms of film exhibitions and festivals, the most relevant licensing objective is the Protection of Children from Harm.
- 7.2. Paragraph 2.41 of the National Guidance states: The protection of children from harm includes the protection of children from moral, psychological and physical harm and this would include the protection of children from too early an exposure to strong language and sexual expletives, for example, in the context of film exhibitions or where adult entertainment is provided.
- 7.3. In line with the National Guidance, where a film is recommended by the Licensing Authority as falling into an age restrictive category, no person under the age specified shall be admitted.
- 7.4. Where a film is recommended by the Licensing Authority as falling into a category requiring any persons under a specified age to be accompanied by an adult, no person under the age specified shall be admitted unless accompanied by an adult.
- 7.5. Where the Licensing Authority authorises unclassified material to be shown the Licensing Authority will require an undertaking from the applicant that he has satisfied himself after proper enquiry that no material to be exhibited contravenes the current interpretation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988 or any other relevant legislation and has not been created through the commission of a criminal offence.
- 7.6. The Licensing Authority shall also not be liable for any material that has been created through the commission of a criminal offence. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that no film or trailer contravenes the law.
- 7.7. In these circumstances, the licence holder will be required to display in a conspicuous position a notice clearly stating the relevant age restrictions and requirements. With regard to the wording of such Notices, the Licensing Authority shall have regard to any national guidance, e.g.:
  - (a) Persons Under the Age Of [insert appropriate age] Cannot Be Admitted To Any Part of The Programme
  - (b) Persons Under the Age Of [insert appropriate age] Can Only Be Admitted To The Programme If Accompanied By An Adult.

## **8. Authorisation**

- 8.1. Any authorisations for the exhibition of film issued by the Licensing Authority shall only apply when the film is exhibited within the Borough of Epsom & Ewell and does not affect the authorisation or recommendations in any other borough.
- 8.2. Once authorised by the Licensing Authority a film will be authorised for a particular showing or festival only, subject to the recommendations imposed by

the Licensing Authority (unless further application for re-classification is made). Details of the authorisation including any recommendations shall be available from the Council's Licensing Team.

- 8.3. The issue of any authorisation by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council is strictly limited to the authorisation within the Borough and it is assumed that all relevant third party consents and licences in respect of any and all copyright, confidential information and all other intellectual property rights have been obtained.
- 8.4. Where the Licensing Authority authorises unclassified material to be shown the Licensing Authority will require an undertaking from the applicant that he has satisfied himself after proper enquiry that no material to be exhibited contravenes the current interpretation of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988 or any other relevant legislation and has not been created through the commission of a criminal offence.
- 8.5. The Licensing Authority shall also not be liable for any material that has been created through the commission of a criminal offence. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that no film or trailer contravenes the law.

## **9. Exemptions**

- 9.1. The provision of the exhibition of a film is exempt from regulation by the Licensing Act 2003 if:

It consists of or forms part of an exhibit put on show for any purposes of a museum or art gallery (the Licensing Act does not define a museum or art gallery so the ordinary meaning of the term is taken), or;

Its sole or main purpose is to:

- demonstrate any product,
- advertise any goods or services (excluding the advertising of films), or
- provide information, education or instruction.