

Report No.4

Report to Town Hall and Facilities Committee 4th November 2015

Fees and charges

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To advise the committee about financial implications and anomalies associated with the current charging regime for use of the Town Hall.

2. Background

- 2.1. Two years ago the committee resolved to simplify and reduce the charges levied for the use of the Town Hall. The aim was to encourage local groups to make use of the Town Hall and generally increase the occupation levels.
- 2.2. Whilst there appears to have been an increase in the use of the Town Hall by local groups a number of anomalies exist within the present charging structure about which members may not be fully aware.
- 2.3 The current charging structure is based as follows:

2.3.1 Town Hall

1. Monday to Thursday 10.00 until 22.00 – community rate £6.00 hr incl VAT
standard rate £24.00 hr incl VAT
2. All other times, any user £24.00 hr incl VAT.

2.3.2 Old School Room/Hub

1. Any day at any time community rate £6.00 hr incl VAT, standard rate £24.00 incl VAT

- 2.4 The office hours are currently 9.00am until 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 4.30pm on Friday. Whilst there is no need for a caretaker during this period there are hidden labour costs associated with hiring the Town Hall, including moving furniture to suit the needs of hirers.
- 2.5 Charges are no longer levied for the use of tables, chairs etc. These have a finite life and the current level of charges are so low that a fund cannot be built up from this source for replacement or repairs.
- 2.6 During the off-peak evening periods of hire at community rate the fees charged do not cover the costs of employing a caretaker. If there is only one user the deficit is £26 for a two hour hire dropping to £16 if there are two hirers at the same time period.
- 2.7 The current regime would allow for a private party to be held in the Wesleyan room by an individual for a cost of £18 for a three hour session during off-peak evening periods. This is lower than many village halls with fewer facilities.
- 2.8 The peak rate use or use by businesses at any time is set at £24 per hour, reduced to £18 for regular hirers. This lower rate just covers direct costs.

- 2.9 There is also an expectation by some hirers that the Town Council will include facilities such as a flip chart and paper within the hire charge, even if this is only £6 per hour including VAT.
- 2.10 The charge for use of the Old School Room/Hub has previously been set at £6 per hour including VAT and include community use on Sundays at this level of fee.
- 2.11 The current level of basic cost for the caretaker is in the region of £12 per hour including on costs and the insurance company has refused cover if the premises are operated as a turnkey facility.

3. Proposal

- 3.1. The committee may wish to review the interpretation of user groups and the scale of charges, especially those at a reduced or community rate and below the actual costs incurred.
- 3.2 The Town Hall Administrator is best placed to negotiate with commercial hirers to seek to secure the most appropriate level of income for the Town Council.
- 3.3 Empowering the Town Hall Administrator will reduce the need to take issues to the committee for a decision and enable swifter responses to be given to hirers.

4. Financial implications and risks

- 4.1 The current level of reduced charges is not sustainable unless the subsidy to the operation of the Town Hall is increased.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The committee is requested to note the report, consider if current charges are appropriate and if not to agree the new rates to be charged and a revised definition of community groups/individuals.

J Penfold
Town Clerk
26.10.2015