

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer - Citizen, Culture, & Facilities****West Dunbartonshire Council – 29 March 2023**

Subject: Scale of Charges – Clydebank Town Hall**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This responds to a motion to Council requesting that Officers prepare a report to allow Elected Members to consider a review of all hire costs associated with Clydebank Town Hall events and what level of charitable discount or reduction is appropriate.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that Elected Members:

- note the current scale of charges and discount scheme at Clydebank Town Hall and in addition note the £20,000 fund created as part of the 23/24 budget to support community groups with the hire of Council venues or facilities for one-off events
- delegate authority to officers to establish a process and criteria for applications
- delegate authority to the Chief Officer - Citizen, Culture, & Facilities and/or the Chief Officer – Resources to approve or reject applications to the fund.

3. Background

- 3.1** The B-listed Clydebank Town Hall is the Council's premier events venue, providing bespoke space for a range of corporate, civic and cultural events and also hosting museum and gallery space.
- 3.2** The Town Hall is currently open to the public and regularly staffed from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Events space can be hired seven-days-a-week until midnight, subject to licensing. The annual cost of operating the building is circa £417,000 with income significantly impacted by Covid and at year end anticipated to be around £80,000.
- 3.3** The service has undergone a restructure which has reduced overall operating costs from £518,000 in 2020/21 to £417,000 in 2022/23. Typically bookings for events are received around 12 months in advance and bookings for wedding are received up to two years in advance. The extended closure as a result of Covid, has impacted on bookings for 2022/23 and 23/24 particularly for weddings. The building, due to its age and size, is costly to run and in order to offset this, it is

essential that all bookings are cost effective.

- 3.4** Constituted community groups and charities are offered a 25% discount on room bookings during normal operational hours, 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Local amateur dramatic groups are among those which benefit from this discount. Groups have also been signposted to West Dunbartonshire Community and Volunteering Services for support and have successfully applied for funding for running costs in previous years. Lower cost room hire rates are available at venues operated by West Dunbartonshire Leisure, and free room bookings are on offer at several Council libraries.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** A motion was passed at Council in September 2022 requesting that a report be brought forward to enable Elected Members to consider a review of all hire costs associated with Clydebank Town Hall events and what level of charitable discount or reduction is appropriate. The current schedule of charges is included as Appendix 1.
- 4.2** As highlighted above, charities and constituted groups utilising the Town Hall currently receive a 25% discount on room hire rates during normal operational hours, and in addition some groups have successfully applied for external funding to offset the costs of venue hire.
- 4.3** Since reopening in 2022/23, the focus has been on implementing the staffing restructure and recruiting to vacant posts. With staffing in place, the team is now set to resume implementation of the marketing plan developed pre-Covid with a wedding show planned for March 2023. A number of bookings have been received for 2024 and the focus is on restoring booking levels to pre-pandemic levels.
- 4.4** The revised staffing model has reduced costs however operational costs and in particular utility costs remain high. The new leaner staffing structure ensures efficient delivery during normal operational hours with the ability to supplement with additional staffing for events including on evenings and weekends. The type and scale of the event dictates the staffing numbers but typically for a show in the Grand Hall with upwards of 200 people, the cost of staffing including cleaning would be circa £73 an hour with £45 an hour for utilities. The current hourly rate for hire of the Grand Hall is £108 per hour and from 1 April 2023 will be £119. It is difficult in the circumstances and with the current financial climate to suggest a further discount for community groups and charities without incurring costs to the Council.
- 4.5** Post pandemic the Council is committed to supporting health and wellbeing and it is recognised that a key factor in achieving this is working with communities and community groups.
- 4.6** As part of the 2023/24 budget, a £20,000 wellbeing fund was created

to support local community groups with the hire of venues and facilities to stage one-off events in West Dunbartonshire.

- 4.7** Officers would under delegated authority consider each application against set criteria including that the fund would be open to community groups resident in West Dunbartonshire and providing activities for the benefit of communities in the area. Each group could apply for funding of up to £2,000 each to offset costs relating to hall and facility hire for one-off activities such as shows, festivals and events at Council venues including Clydebank Town Hall.
- 4.8** Groups would outline the details of the event and benefit provided within the application and would also be required to submit the quotation for the venue. Each group would be required to confirm their organisation does not exist to make a profit and would be limited to one grant per financial year. Applications meeting the criteria would be granted until the fund was exhausted for that calendar year. Grants meeting the criteria but submitted after the fund has been exhausted could be considered in the following financial year.
- 4.9** Council is asked to delegate authority to the Chief Officer - Citizen, Culture, & Facilities and/or the Chief Officer – Resources to make the final decision on whether to approve an application. This will ensure that applications can be reviewed, approved, or rejected and payments made within a reasonable timeframe.
- 4.10** If the report and proposal is approved, officers would look to launch the fund during April 2023 and this would be advertised through the Council's channels.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no personnel implications from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1** The current charging structure ensures costs are met for the building while also providing local charities and community groups with a discount during periods when the building requires to be open to support Council functions including elected member access and business. A £20,000 fund has been created for 23/24 as part of the budget set on 1 March. Any decision to reduce charges or increase discounts at the Town Hall would result in additional costs to the Council.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** The Council has a duty to ensure best value. Failing to ensure a cost effective charging structure would have a financial impact on the Council.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

8.1 An EIA screening has been undertaken and no further action is required.

9. Consultation

9.1 Officers within legal, finance and communications have been consulted in the development of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The report reflects the 2022 -27 Strategic Plan and in particular the following Strategic Priorities:

- Our Communities - Resilient and Thriving
- Our Council - Inclusive and Adaptable

Amanda Graham
Chief Officer - CCF
3 March 2023

Person to Contact: **Amanda Graham**
Chief Officer - CCF
Email: amanda.graham@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1: Charging structure

Background Papers: N/A

Wards Affected: All Wards