

Policy & Resources Committee

Title:	Fees and Charges
Date:	20 April 2021
Contact Officer:	Cassie Pinnells, Acting Town Clerk

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the proposed Schedule of Charges for 2021-22 for the hire of the Upper Chamber and Southern Road Recreational Ground football pitch.

Background

2. The hiring fees for the Upper Chamber, Meeting Room and Southern Road Recreational Ground (SRRG) were last reviewed in April 2019. It makes sense to appraise these charges at the start of the financial year for the forthcoming year as all hiring fees should be reviewed annually to comply with good financial management.

Upper Chamber

3. The Upper Chamber is available for hire to commercial and non-commercial hirers at an hourly fee of £27.00 and £14.00, respectively. A review of local organisations has shown that local venues hire out their facilities at a similar hourly charge. The Barns Centre, for example, hires out the large hall which is of a comparable size at a cost of £25.00 per hour that reduces to £24.00 after the first hour.
4. It is noted that the Barns Centre has kept its hire charges the same for 2021-22 and there is now increased competition from the Cricket Pavilion.
5. It is proposed that the hourly hiring fee for the Upper Chamber remains the same to ensure the Council offers a venue at an hourly fee which is competitive with other local establishments. The current offer of a 10% discount to hirers who block book and pay for at least ten separate bookings in advance should remain.
6. During the pandemic, between March 2020 and May 2021, the Acting Town Clerk agreed to reduce the cost of hiring the Upper Chamber for the regular craft fairs and exercise classes. This was to ensure they could operate in a Covid secure way as they had to reduce the number of participants they could safely accommodate.

Meeting Room

7. Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 the meeting room has been used by the Acting Town Clerk as additional office space and is currently unavailable to hire.

Southern Road Recreational Ground football pitch

8. The changing rooms heating system is not fit for purpose preventing the hire of the changing room facilities. This year Phoenix FC have hired the football pitch on several Sunday mornings (when permitted due to Covid restrictions), although they have not required use of the changing rooms. Because of this a reduced fee of £18.00 per match was agreed. This building is currently being considered as a possible Community/Youth Centre which could include new changing facilities, kiosk, and public toilets.

9. A review of hiring costs of other football pitches has been undertaken and the results yet again are inconclusive as football venues vary so much e.g. Oxford City Council charge £42 per hour pitch hire, Long Crendon charge £25 per game plus £16 for cleaning (£41) whilst Didcot Town Council charge £58 per game.
10. It is proposed not to increase the hiring fees for the football season 2021-22 maintaining the reduced fee of £18 per match, whilst the future refurbishment of the facilities is considered. It should also be noted that the hire of the football pitch is offered as a community facility and not as a commercial enterprise.

Resource Appraisal

11. There are no resource implications other than the day-to-day administration costs associated with the hiring of the facilities.

Risk Assessment

12. The fees and charges must be reviewed annually to ensure good financial management of Council assets.

Legal Powers:

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s 19
- Local Government Act 1972, s144

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- i) The charge for hiring the Upper Chamber remains at £27.00 and £14.00 per hour.***
- ii) The charge for hiring SRRG football pitch at £18.00 per game (inclusive of VAT).***