

Policy & Resources Committee

Title:	Fees and Charges
Date:	18 April 2023
Contact Officer:	Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the proposed Schedule of Charges for 2023-24 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 2022. 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 £24.00/£28.00 per hour.
4. The Cricket Club have increased their charges this year from £27.00 to £28.00 per hour for their top floor and from £22.00 to £24.00 per hour for the ground floor.
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.

Meeting Room

6. The hire of the meeting room is no longer an option, as since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, it has been used as an additional office space, which is now the permanent office for the Town Clerk. The second-floor meeting space is now used for working group meetings, Officer/Councillor meetings and an additional working space.

Southern Road Changing Rooms

7. The changing rooms heating system is not fit for purpose, preventing the hire of the changing room facilities, however we have received no enquiries from any teams looking to hire the football pitch.
8. 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. Wallingford Town Council charge for the pitch only per quarter to one team £393.

9. It is proposed not to increase the hiring fees for the football season 2023-24 but to reduce the fee from £25, to £20 per match whilst the future redevelopment of the Southern Road Recreational Ground facilities is being 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.

Holding an Event on Thame Town Council Land Policy

10. If a formal request is received to use any area or land that is owned by Thame Town Council, the Holding an Event on Thame Town Council Land Policy is referred to, where the hirer is required to provide a detailed event plan, risk assessment, appropriate licenses, and public liability. The Council reserves the right to charge £20 per hour +VAT if the event is agreed, subject to a decision from the Town Clerk or Community, Leisure, and Recreation Committee.

Resource Appraisal

11. There are no resource implications other than the day-to-day administration costs associated with the hiring of the facilities.
12. Income hire has increased to before the pandemic, highlighting that the normal hirings have resumed:

2019-20	£11,494
2020-21	£1,951
2021-22	£6,849
2022-23	£12,784 (Feb)

Risk Assessment

13. 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 (commercial) per hour and a small increase of £2.00 from £14.00 to £16.00 (non-commercial) per hour.***
- ii) The charge for hiring SRRG football pitch at £20.00 per game (inclusive of VAT).***
- iii) As per the "Holding an Event on Thame Town Council Land Policy" a fee of £20 (plus VAT) per hour is charged subject to a decision from the Town Clerk or Community, Leisure and Recreation Committee.***