

Report to Executive Board – Monday 11th November 2002

TOWN HALL FEES AND CHARGES & ARCHIVES

<p>Report of: Strategic Director Finance and Corporate Services</p> <p>Report Author: David Clark, Town Hall Manager, Ext. 2559.</p> <p>Portfolio Holder: Cllr W Baker</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility: Finance</p> <p>Key Decision: No</p>	<p>WARDS AFFECTED All</p>
<p>SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>This report recommends the Town Hall fees and concessions for room hire for the financial year 2003/2004 together with storage proposals for the City's historic archives. There are no additional staffing implications.</p> <p>I have estimated an extra income of £17,000 for 2003/2004, which would be achieved by increases in fees, a reduction in discounts and a continued increase in commercial use. If the reduction in concessionary discounts recommended in paragraph 7 of the report are not approved I estimate the extra income would reduce to £10,500.</p> <p>The fees recommended for the Main Hall, Assembly Room Old Library and meeting rooms reflect a 7½% increase and bring the accommodation fees into line with open market charges. This will be the first increase in the meeting room fees since April 2000. This increase would include any inflation figure as yet to be set.</p> <p>The Executive Board is ASKED to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the hire fees, discounts, concessions, and other recommendations at paragraph 21 below. 2. Approve the removal of the City's historic archives to the care of the County archivist. 	

1. At its meeting on 29 January 2002 the Executive Board agreed an 8% increase in Main Hall, Assembly Room and Old Library fees for this financial year. Meeting room fees were not increased. In addition the Board agreed to fees being charged on an hourly basis rather than 4 hour sessions.
2. At that time I estimated an additional income of £20,000 however, with increased commercial and University use of the premises, the additional income should reach £45,000 (a projected income of £121,000).
3. Fees are set to reflect the open market rates for similar accommodation. One venue capable of accommodating 1000 charges £850 for 8½ hour's use, the Main Hall would cost £884 (after a 20% discount for over 6 hours use). Another location charges up to £1,750 for a half-day ballroom rental. Clients hiring the Main Hall for major social events are charged a flat rate of £1,750 covering their use of the hall from 18.00 to 01.00 hours.
4. Meeting room charges average £120 for a half-day/evening period. A four-hour reservation of a Town Hall meeting room would be £118.
5. I recommend the following standard hourly fees for 2003/2004 (current fees are shown in brackets) for reservations Monday to Saturday inclusive 09:00 to 22:00 hours.

Main Hall	£130 (£125)
Assembly Room	£80 (£75)
Old Library	£80 (£75)
Meeting Rooms	£29.50 (£27.50)

6. In January 2002 I recommended to the Board a fee of £150 per hour for use of the accommodation after 22.00 hours, the Board set a fee of £250. This rate has discouraged use of the premises after 22.00 hours and has lost the Town Hall bookings on at least two occasions. I propose that this fee be reduced to £150 per hour and that there be no concessions or discounts on this fee.
7. The concessionary discount for registered charity and community organisations is 70% off the standard price. This discount would reduce the hire fee, for a four-hour reservation of the Main Hall, to £156. City council costs for preparation, staffing, clearance cleaning etc. would be approximately £256. I propose a two-tier discount for the above clients of 50% and 60%. Non fund raising activities e.g. AGM's would receive the 50% discount whilst clearly identified fund raising activities receive a 60% discount. These discounts would reduce a 4-hour reservation of the Main Hall to £260 and £208 respectively.
8. If the concessionary discount continues at 70% I would reduce the estimated extra income from £17,000 to £10,500.
9. Preparation clearance and rehearsal times attract no discount in the majority of the commercial market or at Town Halls such as Winchester or Reading.

Town Hall clients currently receive a 60% discount on fees, I propose to reduce that discount to 50% with the long-term intention to bring this price into line with the standard hire charges.

10. Sunday bookings should continue to be by negotiation with the client and only agreed if of substantial value to the Council. I propose that fees are subject to a 25% increase on the above standard fees and that no concessions or discounts are allowed for Sunday reservations.

11. The Town Hall has become a popular location for civil marriages. Since December 2000 there has been 21 ceremonies with a further 11 reservations for this financial year. Room fees for ceremonies are slightly higher than other local venues. I propose no change in the fees for the next financial year. Our current fees are:

Main Hall	£250
Assembly Room or Old Library	£200
St Aldate's or Plowman Room	£150

12. A wide range of community groups has free use of the meeting rooms Monday to Friday evenings between 18.00 and 2130 hours. There are occasions where the only evening use of the premises is for a single free meeting. I propose that this use of the meeting rooms be restricted to Tuesday and Thursday evenings ensuring maximum use of the facility on those days. This would make accommodation on other nights available for commercial use or release staff early.

13. The following organisations have traditionally been granted free use of accommodation. I propose that the room hire fees be waived for the forthcoming year.

Citizen's Advice Bureau	15 weekday meetings
City of Oxford Charities	26 weekday meetings
Committee for Over 70' Tea Party	20 approx. Tea Dances p.a.
Committee for Over 70' Tea Party	Two days in January for the party
Headington Quarry Folk Dance Club	One Saturday in March
(Children's Day of Dance)	
Oxford Carer's Forum	6 weekday meetings
Oxford City Duke of Edinburgh's Awards	One evening in March
Oxford Gang Show	One Saturday in January
Oxford International Women's Festival	One weekday in March
Oxford Pensioner's Action Group	Four p.a. daytime meetings
Twining Associations	One fund raising event each

14. During the year some organisations that should pay for the use of the accommodation ask for the fees to be waived. In September 2000 the former Strategy and Resources (Civic and Property) Sub-Committee agreed that the Town Hall manager should decide on such requests and report his decisions to the sub-committee. I propose that this policy should continue with the decisions on any such requests being reported to the portfolio holder. In view

of the considerable increase in income targets it is important that waiving of fees is managed in such a way as to ensure that any fees waived do not prevent the income targets being achieved.

15. **Clients consultation.** I have consulted with 37 clients who have had free or concessionary use of the premises over the last year. There has been no objection to the proposal to restrict free evening use to Tuesday and Thursday evenings. I have had no response to the proposed changes to the concessionary discount. The City of Oxford Charities and Oxford Carer's Forum have written justifying their continued free use of the accommodation (see paragraph 13 above).
16. **Organ Recitals.** Organists invited to play at the annual recital series are paid a £50 performance fee. This was set in 1996 and in several instances does not cover their travel costs. Most organists receive performance fees in the region of £150/£200. One local college pays a £100 fee as well as providing overnight accommodation and breakfast. Currently there is no admission fee to recitals, the audience is asked to donate £1 to a retiring collection. Although recital attendance is regularly about 80 the retiring collection rarely reflects the recommended amount for the numbers attending the recital.
17. I propose increasing the performance payment to the organist to £100. This would increase the budget expenditure by £700 p.a. To cover this increase plus general administrative recital cost such as printing programmes I propose charging an admission fee of £2 per recital. I have consulted people attending the event and 51% have supported an admission fee of £2 or £2.50 whilst 22% proposed a £1.50 fee. 27% wished to have the voluntary donation continue. A £2 admission fee would include VAT that would reduce the Council income to £1.70 per person.
18. **City Archives.** The City's historic archives are currently stored in the Town Hall basement and are maintained by a member of the Oxfordshire County Council's archivist staff. The archivist normally attends two days per week. This post is currently vacant and the County archivist has as yet been unable to recruit to cover this post. The basement storage area is not suitable for such records being prone to dampness and on some occasions water damage from damaged water pipes. The City has no suitable viewing area and researchers wishing to view documents have to do so at the County archives at St Luke's Church. In addition the basement storage area is inadequate for further expansion.
19. I have discussed the relocation of the historic archives to the recently opened County archives at St Luke's Church with the County archivist. Whilst taking on an additional 191 linear meters of archive material would cause serious difficulty for the archivist our records could nevertheless be accommodated. Storage would be charged at £6 per linear metre (£4,572 p.a.) rising in line with inflation. Such a move would ease the staffing, storage and presentation problems associated with continued storage in the Town Hall.

20. I propose that, subject to funding being identified to cover the storage charges (and removal costs involved) that the County archivist be asked to take on the responsibility for the storage of the City historic archives. The Town Hall and Museum best value review group supports this proposal.

21. The Executive board is asked to agree:

- The proposed hourly fees at paragraph 5 above.
- £150 per hour fee for use after 22.00 hours.
- A concessionary discount for registered charities and community organisations of 50% and 60%.
- A discount of 50% for preparation, clearance and rehearsal use.
- To Sunday reservations incurring a 25% surcharge on the standard price and that no concessions or discounts are made on Sunday reservation fees.
- Restricting free evening use of meeting rooms to Tuesday and Thursday evenings.
- Free use of the accommodation for those organisations listed in paragraph 13 above.
- The Town Hall manager deciding on requests for accommodation fees to be waived.
- Organ recital performance fees being increased to £100.
- An admission fee of £2 to organ recitals.
- The relocation of the City historic archive material to the care of the County Council archives at St Luke's Church once funding has been identified.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY:

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Councillor W Baker, Portfolio Holder

Background papers:

Letters from clients on the revision of fees and discounts.

Replies from organ recital supporters on admission fees.