

Meeting	Community Development Committee
Date	1 st April 2025
Report Title	Community Room Hire
Agenda Reference	5
Author	Laura Cutter, Deputy Clerk/RFO, HR & Services Manager Jackie Fawcett, Community & Office Administrator Councillor R Ross, Chair of Community Development

Recommendations

- 1) To offer reduced room hire rate of £10.00 per hour for community initiatives that have grown off the back of Haydon Wick Parish Council's (HWPC) Community Choices programmes.

Background

Two popular and well attended exercise programmes were designed and delivered using external contracts paid for via the community choices initiatives in 2023 and 2024. The aim of the sessions was to reduce loneliness and isolation, improve mental health and wellbeing, whilst offering fitness classes locally at a low cost to improve movement and mobility. To begin with, the sessions were paid for by HWPC and free for residents to attend and as the sessions gained momentum the participants were charged a small token fee for commitment at the sessions and extend the programmes by paying for the external trainer's time.

Room Hire

At the end of 2024, Officers met with the external trainers and suggested cutting out the middle administration from HWPC (bookings and charging) for the external trainers to conduct their own bookings with participants paying them directly. As a gesture of good will and to keep the costs down to participants during the transition, the Community Choices budget was used to continue to fund the room hire elements until the end of the financial year March 2025. There was an offer of helping with marketing still, as the posters were already designed, and the Council was happy that these bookings took place in its premises. This went well.

On 12th March 2025, the Officers touched base with the external trainers and reminded them of the agreement. It became apparent that one did not know about the minimum charge of 1 hour and the session is only 30 minutes, this would increase the costs to the participants by over £1.60 per session. The other advised that room hire locally is a lot cheaper than the £16.00 per hour minimum booking fee that HWPC charges, although the prices are benchmarked with other facilities on an annual basis. This would increase the cost by £0.60 per session, but as they did not wish to increase the cost to the residents, most of which are retired, advised that if this is the cost then they would have to utilise this themselves.

The classes are well attended, some people attend from outside of the parish but as the activity is paid for this doesn't present any issues with not having enough spaces for the local community.

Suggestions

After discussion, it was considered that HWPC could offer a reduced room hire rate for the community initiatives and review this on an annual basis. At the moment, some income is better than no income and it is nice to see the room being used to offer different activities. This could be in the form of £10.00 per hour (a £6.00 discount). This would then meet in the middle of the 30 minute session costing



£8.00 half price instead of £16.00. Bookings of 12+ sessions already receive a 10% discount, so the Officers will ensure that this is being applied.

The community choices initiative for 2025/2026 is 'celebrating community' but it is undecided what the outcome has been and what programme will be put in place to accommodate the winning project.

To avoid setting a precedent and having multiple classes of the same nature, future initiatives will be charged – for example the upcoming community yoga – and the room hire elements will be included.