

CHESTERFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSING SERVICES COMMUNITY ROOMS

1.0 Background

1.1 Housing Services currently manages 6 community rooms in the Chesterfield borough, located in areas of flats and bungalows initially designated for occupation by older people.

1.2 The Community Rooms are located at:

- Bonsall Court Bowness Road, Newbold. S41 8AW;
- Burns Close Grangewood. S40 2SW;
- Edensor Court Wensley Way, Middlecroft. S43 3NW;
- Monkwood Road Dunston. S41 8DG;
- Wimborne Crescent Pevensey. S41 8PT;
- Winster Court Brunswick Street, Newland Dale. S41 7QJ.

1.3 All the Community Rooms have the following facilities:

- a room for activities or meetings;
- kitchen facilities;
- toilet facilities;
- heating, lighting, and electricity.

1.4 Some of the Community Rooms also have additional space outside of the main room, and/or storage rooms.

1.5 The main intention of the community rooms is to encourage local participation that meets the social inclusion agenda, promote tenant and resident involvement in the community, improve health and well-being opportunities, and to increase social value. Charges and concessions have been reflective of these aims.

2.0 Usage, Charges, and Running Costs of Community Rooms

2.1 Usage varies between the venues. At April 2016, there was an average usage of 48.5 hours per week across all the venues from regular groups or activities, approximately half of which generated

a payment of £5.50 per hour, the rest involved groups who were granted a concession to use the venue free of charge.

There is currently no clear guidance on which groups should receive a part or full concession.

- 2.2 The venues are free-standing, but are located around properties which are generally occupied by older people. There is currently no restriction on the times that each venue can be utilised, but bookings would not be generally accepted before 9.00 am or after 10.00 pm on any day (there can be exceptions to this, for example if a venue was used as a polling station).
- 2.3 Assuming the venues were available for seven days in a normal week, at the times stated above, this would give a total of 546 available hours for hiring. Based on usage at April 2016, the venues are only being used for less than 10% of their capacity.
- 2.4 Groups that currently use the Rooms include a local Church for a service, Support Groups, arts/craft groups, and various resident groups.
- 2.5 There is a current charge of £5.50 per hour (plus VAT where applicable), which generated £6,000 income in 2015/16.
- 2.6 A contribution is made from the General Fund towards the running costs of Community Rooms, firstly for use of rooms by the council for services such as Elections (£10K), and secondly as part of a long standing agreement with Derbyshire County council to allow usage for statutory or voluntary organisations which provide services linked to County Council run services or groups (£8K).
- 2.7 The 2016/17 budget for managing the Community Rooms is £45,420, including the following costs:

Electrical Testing	350
Grass Cutting	18,480
Electricity	18,890
Heat Charges	530
NNDR	4,260
Water and Sewerage Charges	2,400

Fire Precaution Appliances	180
Window Cleaning	<u>330</u>
Premises Related Expenses	<u>45,420</u>

2.8 In addition to the above, there are also management costs associated with the Community Rooms, and the cost of any maintenance or improvement works, or the provision of furniture, furnishings and equipment is from the Housing Revenue Account.

3.0 Proposals for Charging

3.1 The current charge of £5.50 per hour (plus VAT) has been in place for some time.

3.2 Activities or groups that are aimed at local residents, or Charitable groups, are normally able to use the Community Rooms 'free of charge'. Other groups have also been using the Rooms without a payment as part of a long standing agreement with Derbyshire County Council (see 2.6).

3.3 The Chesterfield Borough Council Concessions Working Group (2016) has reviewed the availability of concessions across all council services, and one of the Group's recommendation is that any charging and concession policy must be reported to Cabinet at least annually as part of the council's budget setting process, and the outcome of any concession must contribute to the council's priorities, including:

- Improving the quality of life for local people, by encouraging people to lead healthy and active lifestyles;
- Providing value for money services, by providing effective services that put customers first.

3.4 In practice, groups or activities normally require a booking for a period of one to three hours, and it is therefore proposed to offer three time slots per day at a fixed price for the usage of the rooms:

- 9.00 am to 1.00 pm
- 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm
- 5.00 pm to 9.00 pm

3.5 The following range of charges is proposed for 2017/18:

Type of Group	Comments	Proposed Charge per Slot
Tenant and Resident Group (including Neighbourhood Watch) Meetings	Groups which work on behalf of members of the community	0.00
Councillor Surgeries	Surgeries run by Chesterfield Borough Council or Derbyshire County Council Members	0.00
Activities which are for the benefit of vulnerable people, and for which funding is not available	For example, preparation for distribution of food hampers to vulnerable people	0.00
Activities for the benefit of local people	Activities where a charge can be made for the activity	8.00
Charitable Organisations	Organisations which have a Charitable Status and registration number	8.00
Support Groups	Groups which support vulnerable or disadvantaged people, and which are non-profit making	8.00
Other, non-commercial groups/organisations		12.00
Commercial organisations	Other organisations including statutory organisations who use the premises e.g. use of polling stations	20.00

Note:

- Charges are exclusive of VAT
- Each slot is for a time period of up to 4 hours

- 3.6 There has been limited marketing of the community rooms, though it should be noted that there has been very little investment in the rooms over a number of years. Most of the rooms do not currently offer an attractive venue for hire, and most do not conform with Disability Discrimination Act standards.
- 3.7 A refurbishment programme is due to start in February 2017, and over a 2-3 year period it is expected that all community rooms managed by the Housing Service will meet a good and attractive standard. Work will include ensuring that access to the building and its key facilities will meet the minimum DDA standards.
- 3.8 During 2017/18, it is intended to increase publicity relating to the community rooms, with the aim of attracting a greater level of usage which will both benefit local communities, and increase generated income.
- 3.9 This proposal would allow for up to 21 activities per week at each Centre. Assuming a 15% take up of bookings (a 50% increase on current usage) at an average of £8.00 per session, over a 50 week period this could generate an income of £1,260 per community room, and £7,560 across all of the six rooms, which would exceed the 2015/16 income for those rooms.
- 3.10 The proposed charges remain very low in comparison with other similar venues that are available to hire, but the aims of the community rooms (see 1.5) should be noted, and refurbishment work needs to be completed and available facilities reviewed before a detailed analysis and comparison can be made.

4.0 Refurbishment Programme

- 4.1 A refurbishment programme is due to start in February 2017. Plans have been set out for Winster Court and Wimborne Crescent, which include kitchen refurbishment, re-flooring, decorating, provision of disabled adapted W.C., and improved lighting. A new door entry and CCTV system will be fitted, linked to the 24/7 Careline Office, a Digi-board fitted to allow for advertisements and information, and consideration for wi-fi facilities.

- 4.2 All other rooms will be surveyed during 2017, with a view to completing similar work at Edensor Court and Monkwood Road during 2017/18, and making recommendations for the future use of Burns Close and Bonsall Court.

5.0 Sheltered Housing Schemes

- 5.1 There are 8 sheltered housing schemes (Parkside, Glebe Court, Brocklehurst Court, Catherine Court, Duewell Court, Aston Court, Mallard Court, Markham Court), all of which have a community room located within the building, linked to a communal kitchen and W.C.'s.
- 5.2 Residents of each scheme pay a service charge towards the running costs of the communal facilities, and the intention of this facility is for the benefit of residents living in the scheme. Residents will normally receive priority for using the community room, and no charge for usage will be imposed where an activity is primarily made available to those residents.
- 5.3 Where residents are not using the community room, it will be available for use by other groups on an hourly basis, at the rate of £6.00 per hour (or part of an hour) for commercial organisations, £4.00 per hour for non-commercial organisations, £3.00 per hour for charitable organisations/support groups/activities for local residents, and free to other groups listed in paragraph 3.5.
- 5.4 Any activities arranged for non-residents of a scheme must not cause any issue to scheme residents, or conflict with health and safety requirements at the schemes.