

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2019**

LJ/2019

29th October 2019

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

AGENDA ITEM 10 – TOWN HALL – Rental of the Space ‘Under the Town Hall’

AIM

1. *To consider setting a fee for the exclusive use of the space under the Town Hall.*

BACKGROUND

2. The Town Council is receiving regular requests for exclusive use of the area under the Town Hall from both commercial activities (generally craft markets) and charitable or community groups.
3. Under the Town hall there are currently 23 ‘market pitches’ that are let out at £11 per pitch.
4. Charitable requests for the use of the space under the Town Hall are normally accompanied by a request to have the facility for free.

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

5. The use of the space under the Town Hall has some commercial value to the Town Council.
6. Often the space under the Town Hall is in effect public space whether it is people taking shelter from the elements or runners meeting in the evening before a club run. It provides some social utility where individuals can manage the use of the space by reasonable negotiation.
7. There are a number of Sunday craft markets (normally held fortnightly from March thru’ December) that generate around £200 a time.
8. Requests from charities to book the space (10k Run / Walk & Marathon) could be in competition with commercial activity. Where a charity event denies the opportunity for commercial activity the Council is not providing the service free of charge it is in effect depriving the Council of income of £200.

9. Short notice requests for use of the space under the Town Hall can be given without any likely financial consequence. However, bookings well in advance to secure exclusivity of the space are more likely to have an impact on Town Council finances.
10. Without a formal booking system there is likely to be an expectation by charities that once a one-off use of the Town hall has been approved then the use in future years becomes automatic.
11. While charities that have come to use the facility in recent years might argue that the Council should waive any fees, this does appear to be a form of 'grant' funding. Should the Town Council wish to make grant funding to an organisation then this is probably (for clarity) best done by awarding a grant. So, the charity pays the standard rate and applies separately to the Council for grant funding in a manner that is available to all others. Alternatively, the Council might wish to charge a 'discount rate' for local Bridgnorth Charities and Community Clubs

FINANCIALS

12. The exclusive use of the area under the Town Hall has some commercial value to the Council (currently £200 plus based on craft market).
13. The Town Council is under pressure from a host of costs to increase the precept and to combat this it is recommended that all potential income streams should be considered.

SUMMARY

14. A standard fee and booking form for all users would seem to be reasonable where a group is wanting of exclusive right to a particular space. It can help manage expectations and provide clarity to the Council and organisations wishing to book the space.
15. Short-notice charitable bookings (one or 2 weeks in advance) can be probably be approved without cost where there is no advanced booking (it is unlikely that a market trader/ craft fair would want to book the space at a few days' notice).

OPTIONS

16. Options include:
 - a. Do nothing; allow Town Clerk to manage free use of the space 'Under the Town Hall'.
 - b. Require all applicants to complete a standard form to use the space 'Under the Town Hall' and be charged a standard fee (where there is no prior arrangement)

- c. Require all applicants to complete a standard form to use the space 'Under the Town Hall' and be charged a standard fee (where there is no prior arrangement), with a discounted fee for local Bridgnorth Charities and Community groups.

RECOMMENDATION

17. It is recommended that the Town Council **RESOLVES:**

To introduce a standard daily fee for the use of the area 'Under the Town Hall' and for that fee to be set at £200 with a discounted rate of £75 being set for local Bridgnorth Charities and Community groups.



Lee Jakeman
Town Clerk