

MEETING REPORT

Meeting: Watermark, 26th March 2024
Agenda item: WM23/034
Report subject: Watermark hire fees
Report author: M Lord, Watermark Manager

PROPOSAL

To increase charges for hire of rooms within The Watermark, from 1st April 2024, as per attached proposed charges list.

Background

The charges for hire of rooms and equipment within the Watermark have not been reviewed since 2016. Since then costs to operate the facility have significantly increased, such as utilities and staffing.

Following a recent review of our charges, it is clear that they do not meet our costs, and more often than not it can actually cost us to hire out.

For clarification, we do not operate a keyholder system, where a staff member arrives to open, and then leaves the building and returns to lock up and is paid for those two keyholding operations.

Our staff member arrives to open and remains on site throughout the hire session, and therefore they are paid for that full hire session. The benefit of this is that they are able to carry out other jobs within the shift, which might include kitchen/cellar cleaning, kitchen prep, office-related work such as updating Facebook, creating posters, etc, and any other jobs that are required to help the facility run smoothly.

Depending on the type of hire, it may require more than one staff member to be present. Some of our hirers also book the bar and food, in addition to room hire. So, in this example, staffing might be one of our supervisors (with keyholding responsibilities) plus one or more casual staff members to operate the bar.

When a hirer also books the bar and food, we are usually able to make a profit over our drink and food costs.

Current position

Some examples based on current charging rates:

Party - evening in December

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Charge for hire of Beeson Suite | £70.00 |
| | minus |
| Cost to provide staff during hire | £81.05 |
| Cost to provide bar staff during hire | <u>£72.65</u> |
| | - £83.70 |

This example shows that in terms of staff provision only against hire charge, there was a cost to the council of £83.70.

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Rehearsal – Sunday

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Charge for hire of Stowford Halls | £80.00 |
| | minus |
| Cost to provide staff during hire | <u>£113.47</u> |
| | - £33.47 |

Although not that frequent an occurrence, some of our hire sessions may be quite lengthy – in this example we shall refer to a party. This party could be just one session, for example in the evening, the hirer may wish to set up for that event or party, so could come in during the morning to set up.

This in effect blocks the room from being hired by anyone else for the morning and afternoon before the evening party. However, they are currently only charged for the evening session.

It is suggested therefore that a charge is levied for the set-up booking and through to the start of the actual 'event'. So as not to make hire of our facilities cost prohibitive, it is suggested that is a significant discounted rate; it wouldn't necessarily cover a potential lost hire, but would be a charge to recognise the full time the room is held for that hirer.

Proposed charges from 1st April 2024

| Proposed increases with an applied 10% increase, excl. VAT | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Room hire | Current charges | Proposed charges |
| One session Beeson/Stow 1/Stow 2 | £70.00 | £77.00 |
| One session Stowford Halls combined | £160.00 | £176.00 |
| Two sessions Beeson/Stow 1/Stow 2 | £140.00 | £154.00 |
| Two sessions Stowford Halls combined | £310.00 | £341.00 |
| Three sessions Beeson/Stow 1/Stow 2 | £210.00 | £231.00 |
| Three sessions Stowford Halls combined | £450.00 | £495.00 |

Sessions are:

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Morning 08:30 to 12.30 | Afternoon 13:30 to 17:30 | Evening 18:30 to 22:30 |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|

Proposed discounted charge of £10 per hour per room, for room set up, until an event later in the day, or following day.

A 30% discounted rate is available Monday and Tuesday evenings for community and charity use.

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Income is also derived from ticket sales, with a split of 70/30 in artist's favour as a guide, but is negotiable. Tickets are subject to VAT.

Current costs and policy for events being held at The Watermark – these can be live music/theatrical events – it is proposed to leave this charge as current:

Our usual hire rate for an event in the evening is £300 plus VAT

Hire of the Stowford Hall between 2pm and midnight, includes use of a fully staffed bar, stewards and dressing rooms

Also use of our PA and lighting system if required (subject to usual certificates and insurances) THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE AN ENGINEER

We take a 10% cut of the box office takings if they use our box as this also gives them access to our website including facility to book in person, online and on the telephone and we often do some social media, posters and include in our what's on.