

Report of: **Executive Member for Community Development**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Voluntary and Community Sector Committee	30 March 2021		All
Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt	

SUBJECT: Islington Council Venues Free Community Use Scheme Round 2 2019-20: Request to carry forward summer 2020 awards for use of free hire during summer 2022

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Each year, Islington Council is pleased to offer eight community groups, schools and colleges, arts and cultural organisations based in Islington the chance to have free use of Islington Assembly Hall and selected Town Hall meeting rooms for five hours.
- 1.2 The scheme allows for free hire of civic space to community groups with no hidden costs/or minimal additional costs.
- 1.3 On 16 March 2020, Central Government stated that social distancing was advised to stop the spread of coronavirus Covid-19 and to protect older and vulnerable residents.
- 1.4 Therefore, at the Executive of 30 April 2020 it was agreed that the timescale for successful organisations for round 2 (2020) be changed to June to mid-September 2021.
- 1.5 The social distancing requirement is likely to continue to affect all of the events recommended for awards in the previous year (2020) during the summer 2021, and event organisers will need to temporarily suspend, change, postpone or scale back their events for another year (until summer 2022).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** To carry forward any awards from previous year (summer 2020 Round 2 of the scheme) to take place during summer 2022, one free hire of the Islington Assembly Hall to each of the following:
- Islington Faith Forum
 - Yaram Arts CIC
- 2.2** To hold the following applicant in reserve, in case of inability of the above applicants to negotiate appropriate dates and timings:
- Octopus Community Network
- 2.3** To agree that the timescale for successful organisations for this round be changed to June to mid-September 2022 as detailed in section 4.4; 4.5; and 4.6 of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1** There are two different packages available to organizations depending on the nature of the event and/or number of guests and audiences. The Council reserves the right to decide on the option more suitable for events:
- The Assembly Hall - for fairs, conferences and networking events with an audience of over 100 people, musical performances with a small number of performers, and other simple performances. The free hire scheme is offered on selected Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in January – February (1st round), and between June to mid- September (2nd round).
 - The Town Hall rooms - for smaller conferences, workshops and collaborative networking events with an audience between 25 to 80 people - depending on layout of the room, and whether attendees are seated or standing up. The Town Hall free hire is offered on working days Monday – Friday, between 9am and 5pm from 2 January – 31 May (1st round); and 1 June to 21 December (2nd round) subject to availability.
- 3.2** The second round of the 2019-20 scheme was launched on 17 January 2020 and was promoted during 6 weeks through LBI Communications on the council external website, Schools Bulletin, as well as through Voluntary Action Islington news group, directly to Housing Estates and Community Centres, to the wider sector via LBI departments (Youth Services, Housing, VCS Team, BME Forum, School Improvement Service, Libraries), and direct mailings to previous applicants and arts sector organisations.
- 3.3** The scheme received 4 applications from organisations supporting a range of events (see Appendix 1).
- 3.4** Applications were assessed against the published criteria (see Appendix 2).

4. Free Hire

4.1 The following organisations and events most closely met the criteria and were agreed by the Committee the free use of the Assembly Hall in 2020:

Islington Faith Forum	Celebrate Islington - Community Festival 2020 – A big celebration of Islington’s rich diversity, with stalls and performances throughout the day
Yaram Arts CiC	Yaram SeneGambambian Fest 2020 - Mboka Literary Arts Showcase – A music and poetry evening as part of the Yaram festival, featuring some of UK’s leading black poets.

4.2 No applications were received for free use of the Town Hall rooms.

4.3 The following organisations and events met the criteria and was recommended to be held in reserve, in case of inability of organisations recommended for free hires listed in 4.1 to negotiate dates and timings with Assembly Hall management.

Octopus Community Network	Stay Well, Live Well Health Fair – Summer party with a series of mind & body wellbeing activity-tasters.
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4.4 On 16 March 2020, Central Government stated that social distancing was advised to stop the spread of coronavirus Covid-19 and to protect older and vulnerable residents.

The social distancing requirement is likely to continue to affect all of the events recommended for awards in the previous year (2020) during the summer 2021, and event organisers will need to temporarily suspend, change, postpone or scale back their events for another year (to summer 2022).

4.5 There are two application rounds each year, one for the period July-September and one for January-March, amounting to a total of four free hires of the Assembly Hall annually.

It is recommended that the timescale for successful organisations delivering their events is changed, offering the possibility to successful applicants of the 2nd round in 2020 to use the hall for their events to take place in June to mid-September 2022 instead - if they cannot take place in the summer 2021.

4.6 The flexibility of offering the free hire for their events next year would allow applicants to recover and plan better their events after the pandemic. This is intended to be a short term temporary measure in response to Covid-19 and in order to support arts and community sector organisations.

4.7 Officers will prepare a press release announcing the free hires. Organisations will have to submit information about their events to the Council’s events diary.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 There are no financial implications other than the loss of income as a result of waiving the fees for the four hires of the Assembly Hall which has been built into the business plan for the venue.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The Council can support voluntary and community sector organisations under the wellbeing power in Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. This gives the Council the power to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the whole or part of its area or all or any of the persons resident or present in that area.

5.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

5.3.1 None applicable to this report.

5.4 Residents Impact Assessment

5.4.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life.

5.4.2 The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding and when considering proposals, the Executive will take relevant equalities implications into account.

5.4.3 The proposed events serve a wide range of communities and support the Council, Voluntary Community Sector and Cultural Enrichment Team priorities, providing local residents with creative ways of improving health outcomes such as through mindfulness and craft. Yarams Arts is a cultural organisation which prioritises the presentation of work by BME writers and that addresses BME themes. Islington Faith Forum will run an event that fits the criteria for the scheme by having a clear borough wide impact and meeting the council's overall objectives of community cohesion.

9 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

9.1 The scheme provides an opportunity for the council to support local organisations through free use of the Assembly Hall and civic space. Applications have been assessed through a clear and transparent process.

Appendices: Appendix 1 - Table of all applicants 2nd Round 2019-20
Appendix 2 - Eligibility Criteria and Guidance Notes 2nd Round 2019-20

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:



Signed by: Executive Member for Community Development

Date: 16 March 2021

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APPENDIX 1
Islington Council Venues Free Community Use Scheme
All Applicants Round 2 2019-2020

Organisation	Event Title	Event Description	Expected Audience	Recommended
Islington Faiths Forum	Celebrate Islington - Community Festival 2020	A big celebration of Islington's rich diversity, with stalls and performances throughout the day.	260 (throughout the evening)	YES (ASSEMBLY HALL)
Yaram Arts CiC	Yaram SeneGambian Fest 2020 - Mboka Literary Arts Showcase	A music and poetry evening as part of the Yaram festival, featuring some of UK's leading black poets.	150	YES (ASSEMBLY HALL)
Octopus Community Network	Stay Well, Live Well Health Fair	Summer party with a series of mind & body wellbeing activity-tasters.	150 - 200	RESERVE (ASSEMBLY HALL)
Pioneer	LXPALOOZA Convention	Conference and information stalls for people who have lived experience of health or social issue and would like to learn how to use Lived Experience Practitioners or LXP.	200-250	NO

APPENDIX 2

Islington Council Venues Free Community Use Scheme Eligibility Criteria and Guidance Notes - Round 2 2019-20

Each year, Islington Council is pleased to offer eight community groups, schools and colleges, arts and cultural organisations based in Islington the chance to have free use of Islington Assembly Hall and selected Town Hall meeting rooms for five hours.

There are two different packages available to organizations depending on the nature of the event and/or number of guests and audiences. The Council reserves the right to decide on the option more suitable for your event. Therefore, it is important that the information you provide is detailed and accurate. Please read carefully the information below before completing an application form

Option 1 - Islington Assembly Hall

The Assembly Hall is suitable for fairs, conferences and networking events with an audience of over 100 people, musical performances with a small number of performers, and other simple performances. Please note that Islington Assembly Hall is not a theatre and if you're looking to put on a stage performance with multiple acts, props, sets or other complex lighting or audio-visual effects within a limited budget, then this scheme might not be suitable for your event and other venues might provide a better and cost-effective alternative.

Please email assemblyhall@islington.gov.uk if you would like to check if this is the right venue for you.

The free hire scheme will be offered on selected **Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays** between **June to mid-September 2020 (2nd Round)**. Two free hires of Islington Assembly Hall will be offered in this round. Successful applicants will get free hire of the main hall **for a maximum of five consecutive hours**.

The five-hour hire of the Assembly Hall Free Hire will include:

- access to Islington Assembly Hall for you and/or your suppliers for your event
- Islington Assembly Hall set up to meet your requirements as agreed in pre-event discussions
- a named events coordinator leading up to the event
- at least one duty manager throughout your event
- a small PA system that can be used without additional support from an engineer
- a sound engineer (if required) for a period of five hours
- one member of Assembly Hall security team as a standard
- use of the kitchen for caterers

All other items and services – such as hire of the hall for additional hours, use of the venue's balcony, refreshments, extra security, equipment, table linen and specialized technical support – will incur additional costs, which your organisation will need to meet. Additional costs for the use of the Assembly Hall may include, but are not limited, to (costs below are inclusive of VAT):

- Hire of the hall for more than five consecutive hours: from £120 per hour
- Use of the balcony: £300 for a five-hour hire
- Tablecloths: £84 in total
- Additional security staff: from £93.90
- Refreshments: costs available on request

Option 2 - Islington Town Hall rooms

The Town Hall rooms are suitable for events with an audience between 25 to 80 people depending on layout of the room, and whether attendees are seated or standing up.

The Town Hall can be booked for **workshops, collaborative working sessions, networking, and small get-togethers for residents and community groups.**

The Town Hall free hire will be offered on working days **Monday – Friday, between 9am and 5pm** from **1 June to 21 December 2020 (2nd Round)** subject to availability*. Two free hires of Islington Town Hall rooms will be offered in this round.

Successful applicants will get free hire of the room **for a maximum of five consecutive hours.**

The five-hour Town Hall Free Hire will include:

- access to Islington civic spaces for you and/or your guests
- setting up the room to a layout of your preference
- at least one duty facility officer throughout your event
- use of in-house furniture, tables and chairs
- jars of drinking water
- use of large plasma LED monitor
- free Wi-Fi

Additional costs may include, but are not limited, to:

- hire of additional stationary such as flipcharts, flipchart paper, and pens
- hire of additional technical equipment such projectors, etc.
- any additional services which fall outside the normal working hours will have to be charged
- refreshments: costs available on request

*Please note that the Council has a right to cancel or postpone your event at any time due to exceptional circumstances without incurring liabilities for any losses or damages incurred by the hirer as a result of cancellation. Should the Council cancel your booking for reasons other than force majeure within two weeks of the date of the event, the council will at its sole discretion endeavour to assist the hirer in finding alternative accommodation for the event.

Criteria

Organisations must demonstrate a commitment to provide events and activities that have a strategic value, and in particular a focus on at least one of the following four areas:

- community cohesion
- children and young people

- diversity
- creative ways of engaging local residents and, in particular, those who might otherwise miss out on cultural opportunities.

Applications should be able to demonstrate your event achieve the following:

- have a borough-wide impact
- demonstrate a commitment to good practice (events that are viable, of high quality, well managed and evaluated)
- promote Islington Assembly Hall as a focus for high quality events, or demonstrating good use of the civic space at the Town Hall, making best use of the high quality facilities available in both venues

In addition, to be shortlisted for the scheme, you must be able to demonstrate how your organisation will cover any associated costs (if any), as the free hire scheme gives you use of the venue for free for up to five hours, but other additional costs must be covered by your organisation as indicated above.

The scheme will not support:

- groups that are not based in the borough of Islington
- events or activities from commercial organisations
- more than one usage per applicant per year
- applications from organisations who have previously cancelled a slot once accepted
- applications from departments of Islington Council

How to apply and additional support:

Please email your completed application to culture@islington.gov.uk by 12 noon on **Friday 21 February 2020**. The Council will contact all applicants from week commencing 1 April 2019 to offer available dates and issue terms and conditions of the booking, which must be completed to guarantee the free use of the venue.

Before you submit an application, we would like to invite you to meet us so that you can ask any questions and learn more about the scheme. We warmly invite you to attend a viewing of the Assembly Hall where staff will be available to welcome you and talk in more detail about the available space; potential additional costs; and technical requirements.

If you would like to attend the viewing, please email culture@islington.gov.uk. (Please note - attending the viewing is **optional** and does not form part of the shortlisting process)

If you cannot attend the viewing but would like more information about the scheme or if you need help completing an application, please call 020 7527 5243 or email culture@islington.gov.uk

