

Community Engagement and Wellbeing
222 Upper Street
N1 1XR

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of: Voluntary and Community Sector Committee

Date: 14 September 2023

Ward(s): All

Islington Council Venues Community Free Hires Scheme Round 1 2023-24

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. Due to measures to deal with the Covid pandemic, Hall Hire was suspended in 2020. 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 and these were again deferred until Summer 2023.
- 1.3. We have since cleared all deferred events due to covid 19, so will return to offering the full amount of free hires for Round 1 and 2 2023-24.
- 1.4. The application window for Round 1 was offered over July and August 2023 for hall hires January to March 2024.
- 1.5. Five applications for free hire were received for the Assembly Hall and six for the Town Hall, Round 1 2024.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That these organisation be offered a free hire use of the Assembly Hall between January and March
 - Angel Comedy Ltd.
 - Voices Foundation
- 2.2. To hold the following applicant in reserve, in case of inability of the above applicants to negotiate appropriate dates and timings:
 - Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association
- 2.3. That these two organisations be offered a free hire use of the Town Hall Committee Rooms between June and September
 - Home-Start Camden and Islington
 - North London Cares
- 2.4. To hold the following applicant in reserve, in case of inability of the above applicants to negotiate appropriate dates and timings:
 - Islington Bamer Advice Alliance

Background

- 2.5. 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:
- 2.6. 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, January to Mid-March 2024 (1st round), and between June to Mid-September 2024 (2nd round).
- 2.7. 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 January – May 2024 (1st round); and June - December 2024 (2nd round) subject to availability.
- 2.8. The first round of the 2023-24 scheme was launched on 10 July 2023 and was promoted during 4 weeks through LBI Communications on the council external website, as well as through Voluntary Action Islington news group, to the 11 by 11 partnership of cultural organisations and the wider sector via LBI departments.

- 2.9. The scheme received 11 applications from organisations supporting a range of events (see Appendix 1).
- 2.10. Applications have been assessed against the published criteria (see Appendix 2) which requires applicants to 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:
1. community cohesion
 2. children and young people
 3. diversity
 4. creative ways of engaging local residents and, in particular, those who might otherwise miss out on cultural opportunities.
 5. Have a borough-wide impact
 6. Demonstrate a commitment to good practice (events that are viable, of high quality, well managed and evaluated)
 7. 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
- 2.11. **The scheme does not support:**
- Groups that are not based in the borough of Islington
 - Events or activities from commercial organisation
 - More than one usage per applicant per year
 - Organisations who do not have the funding in place to support their event at the time of application
 - Applications from organisations who have previously cancelled a slot once accepted
 - Applications from departments of Islington Council
- 2.12. Wherever possible, unsuccessful applicants will be supported, to secure alternative premises for their work.
- 2.13. The following organisations and events most closely meet the criteria and are recommended for free use of the Assembly Hall.

<p>Angel Comedy Ltd.</p>	<p>A free stand-up comedy event with some of the countries finest comedians to raise money for good causes through donations. A world class stand-up event that brings together the local community in both Islington and beyond. We have strong connections with a diverse range of the biggest comedians across the UK. The event will be completely free, and we will ask for people to donate what they can afford for good causes at the end, but totally without 'guilting' people if they don't have the money.</p>
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<p>Voices Foundation</p>	<p>30th Anniversary Big Sing, Concert and Reception in partnership with Music Education Islington. During the day, workshops will feature singing games and choral performances from Islington primary and secondary schools. In the evening, a prestigious event will comprise select Islington primary and secondary schools, in addition to a massed choir of primary school children and teachers from Voices Foundation schools (past and present), a Voices Foundation practitioner choir and one of our secondary partner choirs. All of this will shine a light on our work in primary schools, our amazing practitioner team and the more recent work in secondary education – as well as celebrating the progress made by Islington pupils and teachers participating in preceding Voices Foundation workshops.</p>
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2.14. The following two organisations and events most closely meet the criteria and are recommended for free use of the Town Hall rooms

<p>Home-Start Camden and Islington</p>	<p>A "stay and play" coffee morning for the families in Islington who are the hardest to reach, and who lack the confidence and resources to attend general family groups available in the borough.</p>
<p>North London Cares</p>	<p>A free intergenerational social club focusing on celebrating Spring and hope.</p>

2.15. The following organisation and event met the criteria and are recommended to be **held in reserve for the Assembly Hall**, in case of inability of organisations recommended for free hires listed in 3.9 to negotiate dates and timings with Assembly Hall management.

2.16.

<p>Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association</p>	<p>To celebrate the ISHA community through a festival and provide continued information, advice and guidance at the event. Family-friendly entertainment, such as face-painting, live music, and creative workshops will be provided, along with more practical skill-based workshops around money management and repairs, as delivered by ISHA teams and contractors. ISHA residents stories will be displayed in the hall, and residents will be invited to speak about their experience at the event, as well as advertise their skills and services to other residents - to promote community cohesion and connection. ISHA Community Awards will also</p>
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	be presented to celebrate residents' associations and achievements for their local area.
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- 2.17. The following organisation and event met the criteria and are recommended to be **held in reserve for the Committee Rooms**, in case of inability of organisations recommended for free hires listed in 3.10 to negotiate dates and timings with Town Hall management.

Islington Bamer Advice Alliance	In 2023, we delivered our first public AGM. We used the event to connect our communities with the councillors, MPs and other public figures, as well as to bring the whole IBAA team together to celebrate the diversity of BAMER communities in Islington. Next year, we want to expand the event and use the opportunity to hold a conference based around networking, and community cohesion building.
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3. Implications

3.1. Financial Implications

- 3.1.1. 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

3.2. Legal Implications

- 3.2.1. 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.

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

- 3.3.1. There are no environmental implications.

3.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 3.4.1. 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. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

- 3.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because the proposed events serve a wide range of communities and support the Council, Voluntary Community Sector and Cultural Enrichment Team priorities. They target local residents from diverse communities and children and young people, particularly those from low-income households, to engage in range of creative and cultural activities that celebrate the diversity of Islington's communities, as well as giving residents an opportunity to feedback on provision.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 4.1. 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:

- Appendices:
 - Appendix 1 - Table of all applicants, Round 1 23-24
 - Appendix 2 - Eligibility Criteria and Guidance Notes Round 1 2023-24

Background papers: None**Final report clearance:**

Signed by:

Executive Member for Homes and Communities

Date: 05/09/2023

Signed by:

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APPENDIX 1

Islington Council Venues Free Community Use Scheme

All Applicants VCS Committee 14 September 2023

Organisation	Event Title	Event Description	Expected Audience	Recommended
Action for Race Equality	Windrush75	Event to showcase talent within the Windrush community from an intergenerational perspective.	100	NO (Withdrew Application)
Angel Comedy Ltd.	Angel Comedy Big Gig	A free stand-up comedy event with some of the countries finest comedians to raise money for good causes through donations.	450	YES (Assembly Hall)
Hillside Clubhouse	Working Circle	A weekly employment support group for individuals with mental health conditions in Islington	15	NO (Withdrew Application)
Home-Start Camden and Islington	Connecting Families in Islington	A "stay and play" coffee morning for the families in Islington who are the hardest to reach, and who lack the confidence and resources to attend general family groups available in the borough.	30	YES (Town Hall Committee Rooms)
Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association	ISHA Festival	To celebrate the ISHA community through a festival and provide continued information, advice and guidance at the event.	200	RESERVE (Assembly Hall)
Islington Bamer Advice Alliance	Islington BAMER Advice Alliance: Annual General Meeting and Conference	Annual AGM and conference based around networking, and community cohesion building	80	RESERVE (Town Hall Committee Rooms)
Jade Su-Yun - Applying as individual	Auditions and cast get-together for "The Ventures of a Vindictive Vedette"	Auditions for young people interested in acting/performing who otherwise might not get the opportunity, to encourage creatives with marginalised identities to apply, in	30	NO (Town Hall Committee Rooms)

		particular trans and non-binary performers.		
North London Cares	Free Intergenerational Social Club Spring Celebration	A free intergenerational social club focusing on celebrating Spring and hope.	40	YES (Town Hall Committee Rooms)
The Courtauld Institute of Art	Courtauld Spring Party	A social event to bring together The Courtauld Community, inviting both students, staff, and those who are affiliated with The Courtauld Community, including artists and art historians. Music entertainment and a photographer will be present.	350	NO (Assembly Hall)
Voices Foundation	Voices Foundation 30th Anniversary Celebration in Partnership with Music Education Islington's annual Big Sing Event	30th Anniversary Big Sing, Concert and Reception to in partnership with Music Education Islington	600	YES (Assembly Hall)
Wholeness Journey	Peace and Paint	The event will have two key highlights, Painting element, at least 10 (a4) painting canvases on tables. The peace element, a section in the room for those who need a listening ear. (Opportunity to play soft music in the room)	10	NO (Town Hall Committee Rooms)

APPENDIX 2

Islington Council Venues Free Community Use Scheme Eligibility Criteria and Guidance Notes

Round 1 2023-24

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 and Wednesdays between January-mid-March 2024 (Round 1) and June to mid-September 2024 (Round 2)**. Two free hires of Islington Assembly Hall will be offered in each 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 £360 per hour
- Use of the balcony: £300 for a five-hour hire
- White tablecloths: £12 per tablecloth
- Additional security staff: from £156 per SIA for up to 5 hours, then £31.20 per hour thereafter

- 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 **2 January – 31 May 2024 (Round 1) and 3 June to 21 December 2024 (Round 2)** subject to availability*. Two free hires of Islington Town Hall rooms will be offered in each 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 endeavor 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
- Diversity¹
- 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:

¹ The Aspen Institute explains that “Diversity has come to refer to the various backgrounds...that comprise a community, nation or other grouping. In many cases the term diversity does not just acknowledge the existence of diversity of background, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and so on, but implies an appreciation of these differences.” Diversity is about promoting mutual respect and understanding, moving past tolerance to celebrating the rich dimensions within each individual or group and empowering our entire community. (Islington Challenging Inequality Strategy, March 2021)

- 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, your event 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
- events that charge for entry
- organisations who do not have the funding in place to support their event at the time of application
- 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 complete the application online for **Round 1 only by 12pm (noon) on Friday 11 August 2023.** The Council will contact all applicants from week commencing 18 September 2023 to offer available dates and issue terms and conditions of the booking, which must be completed to guarantee the free use of the venue.

If you would like more information about the scheme or if you need help completing an application, please email [culture @islington.gov.uk](mailto:culture@islington.gov.uk)