

Community Engagement and Wellbeing
Islington Town Hall, Upper Street
N1 2UD

Report of: Executive Member for Community Development

Meeting of: Voluntary and Community Sector Committee

Date: 25 March 2024

Ward(s): All

Islington Council Venues Community Free Hires Scheme Round 2 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. The application window for Round 2 was offered over January and February 2024 for hall hires June – Mid September 2024 (Assembly Hall) and June to December 2024 (Town Hall Rooms)..
- 1.3. Fourteen applications were received in total for Round 2 2024. Eleven were received for the Assembly Hall and three for the Town Hall.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That these organisation be offered a free hire use of the Assembly Hall between June and September 2024:
 - Proud Sports
 - Prior Weston Primary School
- 2.2. To hold the following applicant in reserve, in case of inability of the above applicants to negotiate appropriate dates and timings:

- Britain's Got Reggae CIC
- 2.3. That these two organisations be offered a free hire use of the Town Hall Committee Rooms between June and December 2024:
- Imece Women's Centre
 - Cape Adventure Playground
- 2.4. To hold the following applicant in reserve, in case of inability of the above applicants to negotiate appropriate dates and timings:
- Artbox London

Background

- 2.5. There are two different packages available to organisations 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 second round of the 2023-24 scheme was launched on 18 January 2024 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, schools bulletins and the wider sector via LBI departments.
- 2.9. The scheme received 14 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>Proud Sports</p> <p>All-inclusive Yoga and Thai Chi event</p>	<p>The Proud Sports All-Inclusive Yoga and Tai Chi event offers a welcoming and inclusive space for individuals of all backgrounds (particularly from the LGBTQ+ Community, minority groups and, individuals facing vulnerabilities) to come together and experience the benefits of these ancient practices. This event aims to promote physical well-being, mental relaxation, and community connection, fostering a sense of unity and inclusivity among all attendees.</p>
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<p>Prior Weston Primary School</p> <p>Whole School Community Summer Music Concert</p>	<p>Summer Music Concert for children from year 1 - 6 to perform in a violin and cello concert for their families and the rest of the school. This will involve around 400 attendees in total, which includes approximately 200 children and their families + school staff. Music teaching is provided by the Charity, Music Masters and all children take part in the provision - including children from deprived backgrounds and those with SEND. This would be an amazing opportunity for our children to perform in a local, but very special venue - something most of them will never get the chance to do.</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>Imece Women's Centre</p> <p>16 Days of Action event</p>	<p>16 Days of Action event to bring together front-line professionals and service providers to increase awareness and capacity on Violence against Women and Girls</p>
<p>Cape Adventure Playground</p> <p>Awesome annual away day</p>	<p>Awesome annual away day intends to train and develop all staff looking at our main mission and values for young children. The day also builds morale and lifts spirits for the staff, as workers look forward to company away days because it's a chance to let loose and break away from the confines of their usual working environment</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.

<p>Britain's Got Reggae CIC</p> <p>International Reggae Day Meets Windrush event</p>	<p>International Reggae Day Meets Windrush event, including a production about a family that comes over from the Caribbean to the UK. This is a 13-cast production of adults and children that deliver the play in a comical way. We will have previous artists perform that have come through the Britain's Got Reggae Competition. We will have some talks from the Windrush elders about their experiences of arriving in the UK and what it was like.</p>
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- 2.16. 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.

<p>Artbox London Art Exhibition</p>	<p>Art Exhibition to support adults with learning disabilities and autism to develop and grow as artists and individuals, find fulfilment through art, and be accepted and appreciated.</p>
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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 2 23-24
 - Appendix 2 - Eligibility Criteria and Guidance Notes Round 2 2023-24

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Authorised by Executive Member for Homes and Communities

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APPENDIX 1

Islington Council Venues Free Community Use Scheme

All Applicants VCS Committee 25 March 2024

Organisation	Event Title	Event Description	Expected Audience	Recommended
Artbox London	Display of Artwork	Art Exhibition	100	RESERVE (Town Hall Rooms)
Britain's Got Reggae CIC	International Reggae Day Meets Windrush	Production about a family that comes over from the Caribbean to the UK and talks from Windrush elders about their experiences of arriving in the UK and what it was like.	400	RESERVE (Assembly Hall)
Cape Adventure Playground	Annual service away day	Away day to train and develop all staff towards achieving mission and values for young children as well as building morale and lifting spirit of staff	25	YES (Town Hall Rooms)
Company Three	Film Project	Creative film project and screening with young Muslim women's group.	80	NO (Assembly Hall)
Coram Shakespeare School's Foundation	Coram Shakespeare Schools Festival	Theatre Festival culminating in grand performances at various professional theatres across the country, where typically 3 to 4 schools present, with casts of up to 35 pupils each.	200	NO (Assembly Hall)
Cult. Ass. Hathor	Lullaby- Album release concert	Lullaby album launch event	700	NO (Assembly Hall)
Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School	A Starry Night at the Met Gala	Year 11 Leavers Prom - This is an awards ceremony and celebration of the 5yrs of hard work from our Covid Cohort.	180	NO (Assembly Hall)

Imece Women's Centre	VAWG BAME NETWORKING EVENT	16 Days of Action event to bring together front line professionals and service providers to increase awareness and capacity on Violence against Women and Girls	40	YES (Town Hall Rooms)
Islington NHS Talking Therapies	Islington iCope NHS Talking Therapies Team Event	team meeting to give us the rare opportunity to bring our whole team together, to help with team bonding and wellbeing as well as offer a CPD event to our team.	100	NO (Assembly Hall)
Prior Weston Primary School	Summer Music Concert	Children from year 1 - 6 to perform in a violin and cello concert for their families and the rest of the school, attended by 400 members of the school community (200 children and their families + school staff)	400	YES (Assembly Hall)
Proud Sports	Proud Sports all-inclusive Yoga and Thai Chi	The Proud Sports All-Inclusive Yoga and Tai Chi event offers a welcoming and inclusive space for individuals of all backgrounds and abilities to come together and experience the benefits of these ancient practices.	50 <i>(we will work with the organisation to increase the reach of this event)</i>	YES (Assembly Hall)
ReachOut	ReachOut Graduation	We run our mentoring projects during term time in primary and secondary schools across London. This event will celebrate the end of the projects, recognizing the work that each young person has put in and celebrating their achievements.	400	NO (Assembly Hall)
The Courtyard school, SMMA	Performance of 'Curious Incident of the dog in the night time'	To perform the school's end of year drama production 'Curious Incident of the dog in the night time'.	70	NO (Assembly Hall)
The Kids Network	Child panels/Group mentoring	We have child panels where we take advice from the children on our programme.	20	NO (Assembly Hall)

APPENDIX 2

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

Round 2 2023-24

Each year, we are pleased to offer eight Islington community groups, schools and colleges, arts and cultural organisations free hire of Islington Assembly Hall and Town Hall meeting rooms.

There are two different packages depending on the nature of the event and the number of guests and audiences. We reserve the right to decide on the option most suitable for your event.

Application dates

The free hire scheme round two applications open on **Thursday 18 January 2024** for hiring in:

- June to mid-September 2024 (Islington Assembly Hall)
- June to December 2024 (Islington Town Hall rooms).

If your event takes place after December 2024, applications for round one in 2025 will open in summer 2024.

Year and application round	Application dates	Event period at Assembly Hall	Event period at Town Hall
2024 - round two	Thursday 18 January to Thursday 15 February 2024	June to mid-September 2024	June to December 2024
2025 - round one	July to August 2024 (exact dates to be confirmed)	January to mid-March 2025	January to May 2025
2025 - round two	January to February 2025 (exact dates to be confirmed)	June to mid-December 2025	June to December 2025

How to apply

Complete the application form to apply for round two (2024) if you would like space during June to mid-September or June to December 2024. You must submit the form by **12pm noon on Thursday 15 February 2024**.

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
- other simple performances.

Islington Assembly Hall is not suitable for a full theatrical performance (with multiple acts, props, sets, complex lighting or audio-visual effects) on a limited budget and other venues might provide a better, cost-effective alternative.

Email AssemblyHall@islington.gov.uk if you would like to check if this is the right venue for you.

We will offer:

- two free free hires of the Assembly Hall
- for a maximum of five-hours
- on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays
- between June to mid-September 2024.

What is included in your hire

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

- access to Islington Assembly Hall for you and your suppliers for your event
- set-up to meet your needs and furniture, as agreed before the event
- an events coordinator leading up to the event
- at least one duty manager during your event
- one member of the Assembly Hall security team
- a small public address (PA) system that you can use without support from an engineer
- a sound engineer (if needed) for five hours only
- jars of drinking water and three hot water urns
- parking for up to four cars, two vans OR one tour bus from load-in and up to load-out
- free Wi-Fi for production team only
- projector.

Security at Islington Assembly Hall

All events at the Assembly Hall need a risk assessment. We will book security staff based on the risk assessment, but any extra staff we need (one per 100 attendees) you will have to pay for.

Extra security staff start from £180 per member for up to five hours, then £36 per hour after that.

Security requirements are at the discretion of Islington Assembly Hall to ensure the safety of all attendees at the venue.

Items and services you must pay for

We will bill all other items and services to you. Extra costs for using the Assembly Hall may include, but are not limited to:

- hire of the hall for more than five hours in a row, from £360 per hour
- use of the balcony - £420 for a five-hour hire
- white tablecloths - £12 per tablecloth
- refreshments - costs available on request. You can bring catering in depending on approval from Islington Assembly Hall.

Other free facilities

- Accessible facilities: the hall has a step-free entrance and step-free bathroom facilities. The hall also has a hearing loop.
- Dressing rooms: there are three large dressing rooms available on request. Let us know your dressing room requirements when booking.

Option 2 - Islington Town Hall rooms

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

You can book the Town Hall for:

- workshops
- collaborative working sessions
- networking
- small get-togethers for residents and community groups.

We will offer:

- two free hires of Town Hall rooms
- for a maximum of five hours (all in one block of time)
- on working days from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- between 3 June and 21 December 2024 (round 2).

We will make offers depending on availability.

What is included in your hire

The five-hour Town Hall free hire will include:

- access to Islington Town Hall spaces for you and your guests
- setting up the room the way you want
- at least one duty facility officer during your event
- our furniture, tables and chairs
- jars of drinking water
- large plasma LED monitor
- free Wi-Fi.

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

- hire of extra stationery such as flipcharts, flipchart paper, and pens
- hire of extra technical equipment like projectors
- any other services that are outside normal working hours
- refreshments - costs available on request.

Cancelling or postponing your event

We can cancel or postpone your event at any time due to exceptional circumstances without incurring liabilities for any losses or damages to the hirer as a result of cancellation.

If we cancel your booking for reasons other than an extraordinary event outside of either party's control within two weeks of the date of the event, we will at our sole discretion try to help the hirer find alternative accommodation for the event.

Criteria

Organisations must demonstrate a commitment to provide events and activities that support the council's strategic priorities by focussing on at least one of the following:

1. community cohesion
2. children and young people
3. Diversity¹
4. 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 achieves the following:

- having a borough-wide impact
- demonstrating a commitment to good practice (events that are viable, of high quality, well-managed and evaluated)
- promoting 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.

You must also be able to demonstrate how your organisation will cover any associated costs (if any) alongside the free hire.

The scheme will not support:

- groups that are not based in Islington
- events or activities from commercial organisations
- events that charge entry fees
- organisations that don't have the funding in place to support their event at the time of application
- more than one hire per applicant, per year
- applications from organisations who have previously cancelled a slot after being accepted
- applications from departments of Islington Council.

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)