

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCIVIC HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE29 September 2021Report by Deputy Chief ExecutiveCIVIC HOSPITALITY COSTS AND USE OF COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To advise the committee of the costs of various recurring civic events, the current estimated level of funding available for new events, and the extent to which, under delegated powers, authority has been granted to outside bodies to use Council accommodation for meetings and functions which fall outwith the letting arrangements managed by other departments. In addition, to seek the committee's views on the threshold for the approval of hospitality costs under delegated powers, and which anniversaries of organisations the committee should consider providing civic hospitality for in future. Finally, to comment on the option to hold some civic events in organisations' own premises, where possible to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the committee:-
- (a) decides which anniversaries of organisations the committee should consider providing civic hospitality for in future, and if the current threshold of £400 for approval of the provision of civic hospitality under delegated powers should be increased, such as possibly to £750;
 - (b) notes that arranging civic events in an organisation's own premises or one used by it can be considered whenever possible to help reduce costs; and
 - (c) otherwise, notes the report.

CIVIC HOSPITALITY COSTS

3. On 26 June 2013 the Council approved the establishment of a Civic Hospitality Committee responsible for all civic hospitality matters on behalf of the Council including the:-

- consideration and determination of all requests for the provision of civic hospitality by the Council with an estimated cost of over £400;
- consideration and determination of any proposed new Council events to be funded from the civic hospitality budget; and
- consideration and approval of all protocols and procedures associated with civic hospitality.

4. The 2020/21 budget approved for civic hospitality was £18,000 as in 2019/20. However, COVID-19 impacted very heavily on the organisation of civic events throughout 2020/21, many of which were unable to take place or had to be organised virtually instead, resulting in much reduced expenditure.

5. As well as being used to fund events organised in response to new external requests for civic hospitality, the decision was taken in June 2013 that various annual events organised by the Council, such as the Holocaust event, Remembrance and the Senior Citizens' Concerts for example, were to be funded from the civic hospitality budget. Examples of other things also normally funded from this budget are the costs of attendance at any charity events such as dinners, the costs associated with school debates and the purchase of flowers for those known to be celebrating a special wedding anniversary or birthday (e.g. 100th birthday, diamond wedding anniversary etc.) in East Renfrewshire. Expenditure for a wide range of these things was significantly reduced in 2020/21.

6. Taking account of the financial challenges faced by the Council, during discussions on the Council's budget proposals for 2021/22, a review of various civic events and related costs was carried out. Whilst in some cases there was considered to be little, if any, scope to reduce expenditure, a number of areas were identified where cost reductions were considered achievable. Ultimately, the Council agreed to reduce the civic hospitality budget by over a third from £18,000 to £11,300 for 2021/22 by no longer arranging the Senior Citizens' Concerts, the most recent such event having taken place in September 2018 and demand for these having reduced, and also no longer supporting a Rotary Club charity event which had also not taken place for a few years.

7. Furthermore, during the budget discussions, it was noted that there was no consistency regarding when the Council grants a local organisation a civic reception to recognise a significant anniversary. Restricting this, such as to centenary celebrations for example, could contribute to savings by reducing the number of events the Council might host. The committee's views on this issue are now sought.

8. It was also commented that some events are hosted in Council or Leisure Trust buildings and that considering the scope that exists for some events to be held, where possible, in an organisation's own premises to reduce venue costs could be helpful also. It is suggested that this is explored whenever it is an option to do so.

9. As was the case prior to the establishment of the committee, all requests for hospitality with an estimated value of less than £400 are currently continuing to be dealt with through delegated powers, subject to consultation taking place with the Provost and Deputy Provost. Since 2013 proposals for the introduction of any additional Council hosted events to be funded from the civic hospitality budget, either on a one-off or recurring basis, are now submitted to the committee for consideration. However, the threshold of £400 referred to above has not been reviewed for over 9 years. In recognition of this, to avoid the need for the approval of the committee to be sought for some smaller events, and to enable them to be organised more quickly when required, it is proposed that the committee consider increasing the threshold, possibly to £750.

COST ESTIMATES ETC.

10. As part of the new arrangements introduced in 2013, it was agreed that each year the committee would be provided with the details of the recurring events and associated indicative costs, as well as the amount of funding remaining for new civic hospitality requests. A copy of the relevant information is attached (see Appendix 1) to the extent it has been possible to prepare it thus far. The costs provided are largely estimates at present based on expenditure incurred in previous years, with the exception of 2020/21 given the impact of COVID-19 that year. It is highlighted that detailed arrangements for some events remain to be discussed in detail and finalised.

11. Based on current expenditure estimates, the funding left in the 2021/22 budget to deal with new requests for civic hospitality is currently approximately £5,385.

USE OF COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION GRANTED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

12. In terms of the Council's Scheme of Delegated Functions, the Deputy Chief Executive or Democratic Services Manager are authorised to grant the use of Council accommodation to outside bodies for the purpose of holding meetings and functions etc. which fall outwith the letting arrangements managed by other departments. It was agreed that, under the new arrangements, the committee would be provided with details of all requests granted in terms of these delegated powers. Since the last update on this was submitted to the committee in September 2019, no such requests are understood to have been granted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. It is recommended that the committee:-

- (a) decides which anniversaries of organisations the committee should consider providing civic hospitality for in future, and if the current threshold of £400 for approval of the provision of civic hospitality under delegated powers should be increased, such as possibly to £750;
- (b) notes that arranging civic events in an organisation's own premises or one used by it can be considered whenever possible to help reduce costs; and
- (c) otherwise, notes the report.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

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Background papers – Civic hospitality records

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2021/22 CIVIC HOSPITALITY BUDGET
COMMITTED EXPENDITURE

	TOTAL BUDGET		£11,300
<u>DATES</u>	<u>COMMITTED EXPENDITURE ON EVENTS</u> <i><u>(Largely Estimated Based on 2019/20 Costs)</u></i>		
26 June 2021	Armed Forces Day *	£ 200	
14 August 2021	Mearns Bowling Club - Centenary	£ 530	
3 September 2021	Merchant Navy Day 2019 and Related Flag Raising*	NIL	
20 September 2021	Neilston War Memorial Association - Veteran Event	£ 225	
14 November 2021	Remembrance * (See Note 1)	£ 1,100	
December 2021	Annual Citizen's Award *	£ 60	
27 January 2022	Holocaust Memorial Day (<i>cost subject to arranging joint event with Renfrewshire Council</i>) * (See Note 2)	£ 1,500	
14 March 2022	Fly the Flag for the Commonwealth *	£ 20	
Date to be Confirmed	Giffnock Bowling Club – 125 th Anniversary (See Note 3)	£ 830	
Date to be Confirmed	Unveiling of Thomas Donohoe Statue (See Note 4)	£ 400	
Various	Flowers etc. for East Renfrewshire Celebrants (<i>100th Birthdays, Diamond Wedding Anniversaries etc.</i>)*	£ 240	
Various	School Debates – Catering * (See Note 5)	£ 500	
Various	Miscellaneous (e.g. Other Flowers)	£ 60	
Various	Provost's Guests for Lunch/ Afternoon Tea etc.	£ 250	
	TOTAL ESTIMATED COMMITTED EXPENDITURE 2021/22		£5,915
	TOTAL ESTIMATED BALANCE REMAINING		£5,385

*** Recurring Events/Expenditure**

Notes

1. The 2021 Remembrance event at Barrhead is under discussion, the outcome of which will enable the final costs to be determined. For the time being the cost listed is an upper estimate based on expenditure in 2019.
2. Arrangements for Holocaust Memorial Day 2022 remain to be discussed, therefore the final costs remain to be determined. For the time being the cost listed is an upper estimate based on previous expenditure, such as in 2019.
3. The Civic Hospitality Committee has already approved the organisation of a civic event to recognise the 125th Anniversary of Giffnock Bowling Club. However the event, which was scheduled to take place in April 2020, could not proceed then due to COVID-19 restrictions. Discussions remain to be held with the Club regarding the way forward. The cost provided is based on the estimated expenditure approved by the Committee.
4. Costs associated with the unveiling of the Thomas Donohoe Statue remain to be confirmed and will be determined when the arrangements for the event are finalised. Any costs to be met from the civic hospitality budget would be for catering and are expected to fall below £400.
5. School debates are not taking place at present and it remains to be determined when they will resume.