

DRAFT TEMPLATE

Checklist of questions all managers will need to consider when setting income charges:

1. Do we need to provide this service at all and if not please explain why we are providing it?

This is a non statutory service.

Room lettings provide a significant additional income to the adult education service. The Widmore Centre also provides a useful and convenient service to a broad range of sections of the Council, particularly since the closure of the EDC at Princes Plain, particularly when suitable accommodation for training activities and meetings is not available at the Civic Centre.

2. Is this a new charge to be considered or an amendment/change to our existing charging policy?

Any proposals would be an amendment to existing fees and charging rates, which are reviewed on an annual basis once the service has been notified of the LBB inflationary increase being applied to budgets.

3. Is the charge set by statute?

No.

4. Is the level of charge set by statute?

No.

5. If 3 & 4 above are not applicable, is the proposed charge based on full cost recovery and if not please specify why not?

- **Political**
- **Means Tested**
- **Statutory**
- **Negative impact on the environment**
- **Other – please specify**

Charges are based on a full cost recovery model, taking into account the cost of admin time, caretaking, cleaning, utilities and general maintenance.

6. Who uses the service and when and can they go elsewhere?

The service is used by private sector organisations, the third sector and departments / teams within Bromley Council.

Bookings predominantly occur Monday – Friday between 9.00 – 16.00 hrs, with some occasional Saturday morning usage. One private sector organisation uses a significant number of rooms at the Kentwood Centre during July and August for the teaching of English to overseas students on cultural exchange visits.

There are private organisations that offer room hire for training and conference purposes. In addition, other departments within Bromley Council, such as the library service and the BEECHE, offer rooms for hire and there are various local community halls across the borough also available, some of which would be suitable for meetings and training activities.

Bromley Adult Education – Lettings

Within the neighbouring boroughs, the adult education services of both Bexley and Croydon Council offer room hire services.

7. What impact will any change in charging have on the service?

Historical data indicates that increases in line with inflation have no discernible change on the service, other than a slight increase in the income from this funding stream.

8. Will consultation need to be undertaken out and how long will this take?

Consultation on charges are not required.

9. Is there evidence that there will be a disproportionate impact on some customer groups? If yes, a full equality impact assessment will need to be undertaken.

N/A

10. How acceptable are the proposals to the public?

Providing increases are in line with inflation, they are generally accepted by users.

11. Is the charge subject to VAT? If you are not sure please seek advice from the VAT officer in finance.

Not subject to VAT, except for the hire of the Sports Hall which is subject to VAT for casual users.

12. Impact on service demand – if demand increases/falls can the Council adjust its provision accordingly?

Lettings are a secondary service to the provision of adult learning and training activities, which are given priority. As such, the offer of rooms for hire is limited at any given time to those spaces not in use for learning and training activities. This places an upper limit on both the type and volume of accommodation available. A decrease in demand will have a negative impact on the service income that is not derived from public grants.

13. Which services do we offer concessions on? Please state if this happens in your area.

No concessions available.

Benchmarking**14a. Are third party commercial providers operating similar services in competition with the Council?**

There are a variety of other providers offering venues and rooms for hire, both in the private and public sector. Hotels, private clubs and training organisations advertise room hire stated as suitable for meetings, conferences and training activities. However, the majority of those advertised are large spaces more suited to conferences and private functions than small team meetings. Other smaller organisations, such as local churches and Bromley Arts Council also advertise rooms and halls for hire for a range of activities. There are also a wide range of community and village halls available for hire across the borough, mostly run by the voluntary sector.

14b. If yes, what/how do our charges compare and why are they different?

Room hire charges vary considerably across the borough, depending on facilities available, standard of accommodation and the market being targeted. For example, charges for room hire at the commercial hotels are considerably higher than at BAEC. Rates are usually charged by the day or half day, rather than at an hourly rate, and include refreshments and stationary (pads, pens etc). In some cases, day rates also include the use of other hotel leisure facilities such as gym, steam room etc.

At Bromley Parish Church room hire rates vary from £9.00 ph for a small committee room that seats up to 15, up to £80.00 for a minimum 4 hour session in a small hall that can accommodate up to 80 people. Rooms are available for hire at the Bromley Arts Council, Ripley Centre, from £8.50 ph up to £68.65, depending on size and type of room required. All bookings are for a minimum period of three hours and charges are in 6 bands based around peak/off peak charges and hirer category, with affiliated members in the lowest bands and commercial organisations in the most expensive.

15a. Is there a planned rate of increase for charges (above inflation) and how frequently are charges increased above inflation?

Charges at BAEC are reviewed annually and are usually increased in line with inflation.

15b. Is member approval needed for new charges or increases above inflation? (The scheme of delegation allows chief officers to increase by inflation only, unless specifically agreed).

Yes.

15c. Is this consistent with third party commercial providers?

Insufficient information available.

16. How do charges compare to:

- **Similar councils?**
- **Neighbouring councils?**
- **Other service providers?**

The adult education services in the neighbouring boroughs of Bexley and Croydon both offer a room hire service. There are also other departments in Bromley Council that offer room hire, including the Library service, BEECHE and various local community halls. Charges tend to vary and are structured around the organisation or departments main business needs and hours of operation.

Charges in neighbouring councils

Hourly room hire charges at the adult education service in Bexley range from £15.75 to £23.50 per hour depending on the type of room and specialist equipment required. Croydon adult education services charges range from £25.00 ph (minimum 2 hrs) up to £60.00 depending on the type of room and the times required.

Bromley Adult Education – Lettings

Charges in other LBB departments

Room rental rates in Bromley libraries generally range from £9.50 ph up to £41.00 ph depending on the size of room and the times required. However, Bromley Central Library also has on offer a small interview room from £3.40 ph and a small training room (max 8 people) from £4.75 ph. All room hire is for a minimum of 2 hours.

Charges are based around three bands with the lowest rates applied to charities, local government and local play groups, 60+ groups etc and the highest band applied to the commercial sector.

At the BEECHE charges are usually applied on a half or full day basis and range from £115.57 (half day, off peak) up to 220.63 (full day, peak season). Additional charges are made for use of equipment.

There are a wide range of community and village halls available for hire across the borough.

- **How are charges structured, and why?**
- **How and when will we evaluate the impact of charges?**
- **What data will we need?**
- **Can we collect this data cost effectively?**
- **When should we next review our approach?**

Please see Appendix for current room hire charges at BAEC. Charges are routinely reviewed on an annual basis as part of the review of all fees and charges in the adult education service. Recommendations by service officers are discussed at Governors meetings before being seeking chief officer approval.

Payment Methods

17. Income collection method – does it advantage/disadvantage or encourage/discourage use?

- a) Is a prompt/advance payment discount appropriate/desirable?**
- b) Is the administrative process involved economic and/or efficient?**

Payment is required in advance upon receipt of invoice, or by internal journal transfer where the hirer is part of Bromley Council.

Where the room hire contract is for a regular booking across an academic year (or similar period of time) such as in the case of the U3A or WEA, invoices are raised on a termly basis. All processes comply with LBB financial regulations.

Other

18. Please identify if there are any risks or unintended consequences as a result of the proposals?

N/A

Bromley Adult Education – Lettings

Room letting charges BAEC 2014/15

Organisation	Hourly Rate	Daily Rate
Standard Classroom Rate	£22.50	£160
Conference Room (KW)	£45.00	£322
EDC 3 Rate (Widmore)	£45.00	£322
Main Hall Rate (Widmore)	£55.00	£428
Sports Hall Rate (Widmore)	£28.00	N/A

Fees are per hour, with a 15 minute lead time either side of booking made.
Please note that the hourly rates are for room hire only.