

Strategy requirement for the use of the St Paul's site

This document sets out in outline the background to a use strategy for the St Paul's site, and issues to be addressed in developing a full strategy.

Objectives

The primary objectives for the use of the St Paul's site, other than for worship and church events are:

1. To support and develop the mission of St Matthew's and St Paul's in witness and service to the community.
2. As part of (1), to establish the St Paul's site as a community hub, welcoming a wide range of local users.
3. To generate income for the parish, including from lettings to a broader range of users.

The St Paul's site

The facilities available for hire on the St Paul's site are the church, the hall and the parish rooms. The hall has some long-established users, especially the St Paul's Pre-school, which is highly valued as part of our community mission. The parish rooms are mainly used for church activities. Either could be used together with the church, for example to provide a green room for a performance in church.

Although the church has multiple spaces, the lack of sound insulation between them means that in practice only one use at a time is likely to be possible. Exceptions would include static displays (exhibitions) in the gallery area and some church uses.

The strategy needs to consider what times (including in special seasons such as Holy Week) need to be set aside for worship, for other church uses (e.g. the Coffee Pot café), and for ancillary activities (e.g. cleaning, organ practice). Which of these need to be fixed in advance and which can be moved to accommodate external users? Does any provision need to be made for occasional services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.) or can they be fitted around other uses?

The strategy needs to consider whether to set a target for the proportion of the time available for hiring that should be filled and/or for the proportion of this time that should be used for community as opposed to commercial hires and, if so, what these targets should be. It also needs to consider whether any other targets should be set, e.g. for income generation.

It also needs to consider what commitments may have been given to *Building for Life* donors. These may affect not only the substance of the policy but also the language in which it is expressed.

Possible users

In principle, the starting assumption is that a user will be regarded as acceptable unless there is a reason to the contrary. One obvious reason would be that the use would be likely to cause damage to the premises; a volleyball club might come into that category. If the premises were being used for purely commercial purposes, we should want to be reasonably sure of the integrity of the firm/charity using them. We should also not want the premises used, even for a non-public event, by a group whose ethics are opposed to our own principles; certain fringe political movements might fall into that category. The strategy needs to consider what, if any, other restrictions there should be. The operational processes will need to set out how to deal with any doubtful cases.

Other things being equal, we have a preference for local community users over more commercial ones. How is this preference to be expressed: in pricing, in priority for bookings, or both? If any organisations receive preferential treatment, how should we define who qualifies?

Pricing

A basic pricing matrix needs to be developed for the different spaces we have available.

The pricing structure will need to be developed taking account of the local market and the charges made for other similar or potentially competing spaces. This requires research into the alternative venues available, how they set their prices (per hour, per session, etc.) and the actual rates (which may vary by time of day).

We then need to determine how we set our own prices (per hour, per session, etc. and how they vary (time of day, day of the week, season, etc.). We also need to determine actual rates for each space and any standard discounts (for community as opposed to commercial use, regular bookings, longer periods of use, etc.). The process for dealing with marginal or unusual cases needs to be specified.

Hirers of the church (or parts of it) will have as inclusions the use of the toilets. It is for decision whether they will also have the use of the kitchen or whether this will be subject to an additional charge. What, if any, other facilities (e.g. AV equipment) will be included? What, if any, other facilities will be available at extra cost (e.g. livestreaming equipment)? Will any of these need to be operated by our own staff/volunteers and, if so, what charge might be made for this? In certain instances we may need to consider the legal implications of providing services for which we charge. If, for example, we were to provide any catering services this would be likely to attract food safety obligations.

Marketing

The strategy needs to identify our targets for active marketing. They are likely to be mainly non-commercial: schools, other educational establishments, charities, arts organisations, public services, etc. Some may come from outside the area. In some cases, the best lines of approach to them will be through our relationships in the community, some of which may need to be developed and managed with this specifically in mind. Some possible hirers may come through intermediary organisations, for example local arts groupings, or caterers who are sometimes approached about suitable venues, and the strategy should take this into account.

The marketing strategy needs to identify which routes (personal, written, website, social media, etc.) are appropriate to which types of user, how they should best be used, and what materials we need to support them. In the case of social media especially, this should be put in the context of a more general policy for social media use to raise awareness of the parish.

Operational processes

Although not forming part of the strategy itself, operational processes need to be developed to support delivery of all aspects of it. They will need, in particular, to address continuing responsibilities for marketing and social media activities, how questions (e.g. of acceptability, or pricing, are to be resolved) and how potential or actual users are to be handled at all stages from first contact through the letting itself to any post-letting issues. They will need to take account of the involvement of volunteers and part-time staff.