

# Castle House Concessions Policy

CASTLE HOUSE

Policy relating to concession offered on desk  
licences for Castle House

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## **Context**

The move to Castle House provided the council with the opportunity to consider how it worked with partner organisations and the option for relevant organisations to deliver a service from Castle House. As well as being efficient, modern and inviting the aim of the new building was to create a space which enabled collaborative working with partners, in one place providing a holistic customer offer.

This has provided a unique opportunity to co-locate with partners which has enabled public services to be joined-up around the needs of customers. Experience tells us that if customers have to move from one location to another to access services that they often fail to do so. Having organisations based in Castle House reduces this risk.

The council's most vulnerable customers have complex needs and lead chaotic lives, often having to liaise with many agencies for support and advice. Many of the customers to Castle House visit more than one agency e.g. they may contact the council, DWP and Citizens Advice during one visit.

Partner agencies work closely together and find it extremely beneficial in being able to go and talk to a colleague located in the same building instead of having to email or spend valuable time visiting them. A prime example is how Home-Start have worked in conjunction with the housing business unit in supporting the Syrian families.

Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) has a defined approach and fee for occupation of Castle House by partners. Occupation is by desk licence. This means a charge is made per desk rather than leasing a set square metre of space. This has proved to be prudent as it allows a level of control for the council, it allows for reconfiguration of space at a later date, ensures a level of consistency on look and feel of fixtures and fittings, creates a smart unified appearance and prevents segmentation and delineation. The signing of a desk licence agreement also gives full protection to the council and partners in terms of a shared approach to how the building is utilised and the confidentiality required from everyone who works in Castle House.

The price for a desk is calculated annually and is currently set to be £4,420 for 2020/21.

The desk charge includes (but is not limited to):-

- Desk (either back office or front booth)
- Chair
- Utilities (gas, water, electricity)
- Use of communal facilities (toilets, kitchen, rest areas for staff)
- Use of meeting rooms (on a booking basis, control remaining with the council)
- Reception and postal services

A range of organisations currently occupy Castle House these are all either public or third sector providers.

There is significant demand for space within Castle House and it is not in the council's interest to let space to partners who do not contribute to delivering for our residents.

### **Criteria for application of a concession on the desk licence fee**

Concessions would NOT apply to public sector bodies. Any arrangement for discretion on a desk licence fee or a differing approach with a public sector body would be subject to separate determination and must be approved by SLT and then Policy and Finance Committee.

This concession policy is for the granting of a concession against the agreed desk licence fee and is applicable ONLY to third sector organisations.

There are three levels of criteria which must be satisfied for a concession to be applied.

1. Does the aims of the organisation and its approach generally fit with the council's community plan?
2. Does the organisation have a sufficient financial challenge that it is unlikely that they could pay the full price of a desk licence?
3. Does the organisation have a track record of effective delivery of services?

Whilst to some degree these could all be subjective, all three must be demonstrated to enable a concession to be applied.

### **Evidential requirements**

All of the three criteria should be detailed in the report and have some evidential base. It is expected that the officer recommending a concession would have sufficient knowledge of the 'what and how' the organisation delivers. There should be a form of 'proof' of sufficient financial challenge which would satisfy the S151 or deputy S151 officer, this can be through bank statements or final accounts for instance. There should be a track record of effective service delivery, this can be

demonstrated through case studies or by using specific projects as examples. Schedule A to this policy sets out documents that should be received by the Council in order for it to assess the eligibility of each claimant.

### **Range of Concessions and discretion**

The maximum concession given to any organisation would be 50% of the desk licence fee. To offer a concession greater than this would mean that the council would be actively subsidising a third party organisation as the fee would no longer cover the basic utilities and direct expenses of the council.

This maximum would only be offered where there is a demonstrated significant synergy between the aims of the organisation and the council, and where it would diminish the integrity of service delivery if the organisation was not located with the council and that the organisation had demonstrated that financially they would be unable to afford to pay any greater than 50% of the desk licence fee.

The S151 Officer (or their nominated deputy) will have discretion to be able to award the maximum available 50% concession, with awards at 25% or 10% respectively also based on their assessment of the financial information presented to them. All three of the eligibility criteria still must be satisfied prior to award of any of the three levels of concession.

### **Who has authority to determine and apply concessions and the process?**

The award of a concession will be renewable annually and as such will require applications to be received by 1 December each year for the following financial year. The third party organisation must complete a claim form, an example of which is attached at Schedule B. This will be addressed to the S151 Officer for their review. Responses in relation to eligibility criteria's one and three should be passed to the Business Manager Organisational Improvement and Development for their review.

The S151 Officer will then receive the assessment of responses for eligibility criteria's one and three in order for them to complete a report to SLT for approval to determine the level of concession to be awarded. Responses to partners will be made during January prior to the year –end process.

Schedule A

Examples of evidence requirements relating to the eligibility criteria questions

1. Does the aims of the organisation and its approach generally fit with the council's community plan?
  - Corporate Plan
  - Mission Statement
  - Vision Statement
  - Director/Committee Statement
2. Does the organisation have a sufficient financial challenge that it is unlikely that they could pay the full price of a desk licence?
  - Bank Statements
  - Financial Accounts for the previous two financial years
  - Forward looking budget Statement
3. Does the organisation have a track record of effective delivery of services?
  - Outturn performance information for the previous two financial years (may include case studies)