

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 9 MARCH 2020**

### **CASTLE HOUSE CONCESSIONS POLICY**

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Castle House Concessions Policy for use for the 2020/21 financial year. The proposed Policy is attached as an appendix to the report.

#### **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 The Council 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 metreage of space. This has proved to be prudent as it allows a level of control for the Council, 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.
- 2.6 The price for a desk is calculated annually and is currently set to be £4,420 for 2020/21. This considered appropriate by the Policy & Finance Committee at their meeting held on 23 January 2020 and is now being recommended to Full Council for approval.

### **3.0 Proposals**

- 3.1 The Council has developed a Castle House Concessions Policy in order to ensure a transparent process of approving concessions on desk licence fees for partners within the building.
- 3.2 The Policy seeks applicants where they are non-public sector bodies for renewal on an annual basis. Applicants would be assessed against three levels of criteria:
- Does the aims of the organisation and its approach generally fit with the Council's Community Plan?
  - Does the organisation have a sufficient financial challenge that it is unlikely that they could pay the full price of a desk licence?
  - Does the organisation have a track record of effective delivery of services?
- 3.3 Where all of these criteria are met the S151 Officer (or nominated deputy) will have discretion to award a maximum of 50% concession, with awards at 25% or 10% respectively also based on their assessment of the financial information presented to them.
- 3.4 A report will be tabled to the Council's Senior Leadership Team to finally determine the award based on the eligibility criteria being met and the assessment from the S151 Officer. This will then be communicated to the organisation.
- 3.5 This Policy has been created for use within the 2020/21 financial year and onwards. In future financial years, this process would start earlier in the financial year, which will allow earlier certainty of costs for partners.

### **4.0 Equalities Implications**

- 4.1 There are no equalities implications.

### **5.0 Financial Implications (FIN19-20/8975)**

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from approving this policy.
- 5.2 Once applications have been received from partners, and assessments made against the eligibility criteria there may be a reduction in income receivable for Castle House desk licence fees depending on the level of concession granted to each applicant.

### **6.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives**

- 6.1 By adopting this policy and hence granting concessions to partners in order to be able to enable them to co-locate within Castle House forging relationships with other partners, this contributes to several of the Community Plan objectives.

### **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Castle House Concessions Policy, as set out in the appendix to the report, be approved and delegated authority to agree concessions for partners at Council House**

**within the scope of the policy be granted to Chief Officers in accordance with the general delegation to Chief Officers under the Councils' Constitution (Part Two Paragraph 7.2).**

Background Papers

Nil.

For further information please contact Nick Wilson on Ext 5317.

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