

Hitchin Town Hall Hire Policy and Conditions of Contract

Purpose and Scope

Hitchin Town Hall is a recently refurbished Grade II listed building which offers a first class community facility which is available to hire. This hire policy seeks to set out clear guidelines for the hire and use of the Mountford Hall, Lucas Room and Terrace Gallery.

1.0 Building Information

Hitchin Town Hall has recently undergone a multi-million pound refurbishment and now adjoins the newly built North Hertfordshire Museum. The original Town Hall was built in 1900-1901 in the neo-Georgian style, to the designs of architects Edward Mountford and Geoffry Lucas. It cost £7300, and replaced an earlier Town Hall of 1840, which may still be seen on the opposite side of Brand Street.

Mountford Hall

Hire Rates

Community	£55 per hour
Private	£85 per hour
Commercial	£115 per hour

The Mountford Hall is a multi-purpose events space that is available to rent with audio/visual equipment, in house catering and bar facilities, round tables, chairs and staff on hand to facilitate your event. When requesting to hire the venue, please indicate which of these facilities you require. The hall has retained its original barrel-vaulted ceiling, with an attractive cornice decorated with roses and lavender, both of which have historically been grown locally. The sprung floor is also original.

Hall Size	225 sq. metres
Maximum Capacity: Banquet (15 round tables seating 10 per table)	150 guests
Maximum Capacity: Theatre or Auditorium (rows of seats)	300
Maximum Capacity: Standing (no furniture)	350

Lucas Room

Hire Rates

Community	£30 per hour
Private	£40 per hour
Commercial	£55 per hour

The Lucas Room offers an intimate events space that is available to hire with audio visual equipment available as standard, The Lucas Room is suitable for holding many types of events, from yoga classes to business conferences, afternoon teas and baby showers. Conferencing materials and catering are available upon request subject to availability and further charges. The room is located on the first floor and has a lift located nearby.

The main feature of the Lucas Room is the splendid tiled fireplace, with its carved wooden surround, and decorative plaster cartouche above, said to represent the Lucas family arms. The attractive wrought iron window catches and door plates are original fittings.

When requesting to hire the venue, please indicate the nature of your hire and we will try to meet your requirements as best we can.

Size	53 metres sq.
Capacity: Conference Style (one large central table)	30
Capacity: Theatre Style (Rows of seats)	65
Capacity: Standing (no furniture)	80

Terrace Gallery

Hire Rates

Community	£60
Private	£95
Commercial	£130

The Terrace Gallery is located in the newly built North Hertfordshire Museum, which forms part of the overall facility. The Gallery is suitable for many types of events from canapé receptions to art exhibitions and afternoon teas. All of the exhibits are enclosed behind glass casings which allow food and drink to be consumed in the room without damage to items on display being sustained. The room itself is a large, versatile open space which includes an outside patio area equipped with modern Rattan furniture and parasols.

The Terrace Gallery is available to hire after 4:30pm Tuesday-Sunday and from 9am-12pm Monday.

Size	
Capacity: Conference Style (one large central table)	N/A
Capacity: Theatre Style (Rows of seats)	N/A
Capacity: Standing (no furniture)	120

2.0 Types of Hire

Hire rates are determined by the nature of hire and are designed to balance use of the facility by subsidising community use with commercial hire, as well as providing a range of commercial, private and community uses. As a guideline, definitions of the three categories of hire are provided below.

Commercial Hire

Hirers whose activity within the Town Hall is for the purposes of their own financial gain and/or the development of commercial activities. Rates are agreed on the basis of the nature of activity at the discretion of Hitchin Town Hall staff and are subject to the conditions listed below.

Private Hire

Hirers whose purpose of hire is solely for private use, who shall receive no financial benefit from activity within the Town Hall at the time of hire.

Community Use

Hirers whose purpose is demonstrably community oriented, shows clear benefit to the community and yields no financial benefit to the organiser, or any party affiliated with the hirer excluding registered or recognised charitable organisations.

2.1 Block Bookings/Long Term Hire

Block bookings and long terms hire arrangements are at the Council's discretion.

2.2 Bank Holiday Bookings

Bookings on Bank Holidays are at the Council's discretion.

2.3 Hire Agreements

An Online Hire Request Form must be completed and sent to Hitchin Town Hall for review. This form must be completed in its entirety, via our online booking system or via telephone, with **all** information relating to the hire included. The application will subsequently be reviewed and a member of the Hitchin Town Hall team will contact you to provide a quote and make arrangements for your hire.

2.4 Combined Hire

Combined hire rates for multiple areas are available on request at the discretion of Hitchin Town Hall Management, subject to availability and terms of hire.

2.5 Catering, Bar and additional services

Hitchin Town Hall are able to offer a bespoke in house catering service. We cater for all types of functions, from three course sit down meals through to finger buffets. Once we are in receipt of your hire request stating that you wish to use our catering team, Town Hall staff will arrange for you to discuss your requirements further with the Catering Manager.

Alternatively, hirers are welcome to bring in their own pre prepared/cooked food (i.e. cold buffet). If pre prepared/cooked food is brought on site, we charge the fee appropriate to the hirer as follows:

Community	60p per head
Private	70p per head
Commercial	80p per head

Please note there are no on site kitchen facilities available for hirers use.

Any charges are to be agreed and paid for in advance of the event.

Please note that any allergies or dietary requirements must be made in advance of the booking.

Bar

Hitchin Town Hall operate an in house bar service. If you would like to arrange pre-ordered wine to be placed on any tables in advance of your event, this can be arranged with Hitchin Town Hall staff. Or alternatively, wine corkage fees are charged at £4.00 per 70cl bottle.

Security

Being in a central town location Hitchin Town Hall requires hirers to pay for security during an event. The basic matrix is outlined below.

0-80 guests with alcohol	1 guard
80-150 guests with alcohol	2 guards
150-300 guests with alcohol	3 guards

Security is charged to the hirer at £20 per hour. The above is a guideline only and can be reduced or increased at management's discretion.

Decoration

Hitchin Town Hall are able to hire out chair covers, sashes and centrepieces as well as balloon arches and other forms of decoration during your event. Please make us aware at your earliest opportunity if you are interested in hiring any of the below items.

Chair cover and sash colour of your choice	£1.00 per chair
Centrepieces	From £5.00 per item
Balloon Arch	From £30.00 per arch

Furniture and Glassware

Hitchin Town Hall is a dry hire venue. We can provide table glassware and cutlery when booking our catering services, however if you require glassware and additional equipment these will be charged per item. Prices for glassware and additional tables, cloths and equipment can be quoted during your initial enquiry.

3.0 Conditions of Hire

3.1 All letting arrangements shall be at the discretion of the Council, which reserves the right to cancel, curtail or modify an event in the event of, or due to misuse of the facility.

3.2 All hirers are required to pay the Council's fixed scale of charges in full upon demand (without prejudice to any right to apply for a refund of such charges or any part thereof). Hitchin Town Hall reserves the right to ask for a deposit of 20% of the total hire fee to confirm the booking. The remaining fee needs to be received by the Council and be cleared funds 28 days prior to the booking whether or not formally demanded by the Council.

A refundable hire bond will be charged on a fixed scale in accordance with the time of hire, nature of hire, number of attendees and whether or not any alcohol or catering is consumed on the premises. This will be charged for in advance of the booking and refunded after the event on the condition that the room(s) have been left in a clear and damage free state.

3.3 Where a booking is cancelled by the hirer, and the period of notice given of the cancellation is 28 days or less, then the whole of the hire fee will be forfeited.

3.4 Any alcohol consumed on the premises must be purchased from the venue or wine corkage fees agreed in advance.

3.5 The Council cannot accept any responsibility for loss, damage or theft of any property belonging to the hirer or to a third party whilst it is in the Town Hall. Hirers leaving property unattended and/or overnight (the latter to be pre-arranged) do so entirely at their own risk.

3.6 The hirers are responsible for providing appointed responsible persons. For a private party the minimum is two. Duties include control of admission; checking that exits are not obstructed; and general supervision of patrons conduct in the building. These individuals will liaise directly with Hitchin Town Hall's appointed Duty Manager during the event.

3.7 Hirers shall not use or permit the rooms to be used for a performance in public that may bring the council into disrepute, of any dramatic musical or other work which copyright exists or for the delivery in public of any lecture in which copyright subsists without the consent of the owner of the said copyright, nor shall they in any other manner infringe any subsisting copyright. Hirers shall indemnify the Council against all sums of money which the Council may have to pay for reason of any infringement of copyright occurring during periods of hire.

3.8 It is a condition of letting that no advertisements may be displayed on the exterior of the building without the express consent of Hitchin Town Hall. Hitchin Town Hall staff are empowered to remove any unsuitable notices posted within the building. Hirers are also

reminded that formal consent from the Local Planning Authority may be necessary for any advertisements/notices relating to events/functions taking place in Hitchin Town Hall, which the hirer or others may wish to display, except within the building, the Town Hall steps, or on a public notice board. Should any external advertising be intended, hirers are, therefore, requested to contact Hitchin Town Hall in order that details can be discussed and agreed before such advertising takes place.

3.9 No driving or fixing of nails, screws or bolts into the floors or panelling or other parts of any of the rooms; no hanging of any items from any part of the internal finishes i.e. no banners, pictures, balloons etc.; nor any alterations in the electric, gas or other fittings, seats, tables, platforms or otherwise is allowed without express permission of Hitchin Town Hall staff. No tac, tape or other adhesive shall be used to fix decorations etc. to the walls/fixtures and fittings.

3.10 In case any damage other than by accidental fire, shall be done to the rooms, to the gas, electric or other fittings, seats, tables, platforms, during the occupancy by any hirer by himself/herself or by their guests or any other person, the amount of damage (to be assessed by Hitchin Town Hall staff in consultation with the Commercial Director) and charges for estimates that need to be obtained from specialists restorers/contractors shall be forthwith paid by the hirer. We reserve the right to withhold a hirers bond, should any damage be caused to the facility or its reputation as a result of the activities (such as use of narcotics in or around the premises) or due to the misuse by hirers, guests or appointed third parties. In addition, Hitchin Town Hall staff, in consultation with the Commercial Director, shall be entitled, at their discretion, to cancel any subsequent letting or lettings to that hirer or such person or persons believed by the Council to be responsible for any damage.

3.11 With regards to cleanliness of the facility, it is the responsibility of the hirer and nominated responsible persons, unless otherwise expressly stated, to return the facility in a clean and acceptable state, which shall be assessed by Hitchin Town Hall staff. Should Town Hall staff deem the cleanliness of the facility to be inadequate; the hirer will be charged for the cost to clean and any subsequent loss of income as a result of the inability to hire. These costs will be taken out of the refundable Bond charge and/or invoiced as appropriate as outlined with clause 3.10.

3.12 To comply with the Electricity at Work Act 1989 all items of electrical equipment brought onto the Council's premises by outside agencies and hirers must have a current test certificate. Copies of test certificates for each item of electrical equipment must be forwarded to Hitchin Town Hall staff prior to the hire period. The council will not allow the use of uncertified electrical apparatus on the premises. The hirers must on no account undertake any works or alterations to the fixed electrical installation of the building.

3.13 No naked flame candles, firearms, explosives, chemicals or other materials likely to cause harm to individuals, fumes or damage in or to the rooms, or to the pictures, paintings, artefacts or windows therein, will be allowed to be used therein.

3.14 Any access to areas of the premises not covered under the hire agreement or without the express permission of Hitchin Town Hall staff is strictly forbidden. Failure to comply may result in the withholding of any hire bond agreed with Hitchin Town Hall staff and, in addition, it is at the Council's discretion to cancel any subsequent letting or lettings to that hirer or

such person or persons believed by the Council to be responsible for any damage. Early entry and late exit from the facility will be charged at the hourly rate along with associated staffing and security costs. Hitchin Town Hall reserves the right to withhold a bond payment to recoup these monies.

3.15 The Council reserves the right to use any event for its own marketing and promotional purposes. In the event that the Council chooses to do this, organisers will be notified of any photographs, marketing and/or promotional material produced relating to the event.

3.16 Hitchin Town Hall is licensed for the consumption of alcohol and performance of live music. If, however, further licenses are required then the appropriate License Fee must be paid by the hirer.

It is the responsibility of the hirer to ensure that any performers, operators or third parties at their event (i.e. DJ, band etc.) forward a copy of their current Public Liability Insurance documents to Town Hall staff in advance of the event. This must cover the date of the event.

3.17 Hitchin Town Hall reserves the right to operate or not operate its own paid bar.

3.18 Abuse, physical or verbal of our staff and team will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Hitchin Town Hall reserves the right to withhold a Hire Bond due to abuse of staff.

3.19 The Council shall not be in breach of this agreement nor liable for delay in performing, or failure to perform, any of its obligations under this agreement if such delay or failure results from events, circumstances or causes beyond its reasonable control. For the purposes of this clause, events, circumstances or causes beyond the Council's reasonable control include (but are not limited to) the following:-

- i. Damage to Hitchin Town Hall (including its fixtures and fittings) or access to Hitchin Town Hall;
- ii. Disruption to power and/or utility supplies;
- iii. Informal or formal strike action; or
- iv. Disruption to food, drink and general catering supplies

4.0 Contact Officers

Operations and Events Manager: katie.hasler@north-herts.gov.uk

Culture and Facilities Service Manager: robert.orchard@north-herts.gov.uk

5.0 Background Papers

5.1 Reported to Council 16 July 2015: North Hertfordshire Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall

5.2 Reported to Cabinet 28 July 2015: North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility at Hitchin Town Hall

