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Title	Draft Fees & Charges 2027-28
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OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

1. **That the proposed schedule of fees and charges be adopted for the 2027/28 financial year.**

1. Purpose

1. To review the Council's fees and charges for 2027/28 and consider whether increases are appropriate in light of the costs of providing its facilities and services.
2. The review covers Town Hall hire, markets, allotments, public toilets, recreation agreements and miscellaneous charges.

2. Background

1. The Council last undertook a comprehensive review of its fees and charges in 2025. Following consideration by a working party, Full Council approved a revised schedule on 22 October 2025 (WTCM385).
2. The revised charges took effect on 1 January 2026, with bookings already paid for remaining at the previous rates.
3. The Council continues to face considerable costs in maintaining its buildings and providing services. Electricity, heating, business rates, staffing and maintenance are significant areas of expenditure.
4. While fees and charges are not intended to recover the full cost of every service, it is reasonable that those using chargeable facilities make an appropriate contribution towards their running costs.
5. The review must also take account of affordability and competition. The Council provides facilities used by local charities, community groups and small businesses, and excessive increases could discourage use.

3. Financial Considerations

1. The Town Hall is one of the Council's most expensive assets to operate. The 2026/27 budget includes £25,000 for electricity and £30,000 for gas.
2. By the end of October 2026, electricity expenditure had reached £16,843, representing approximately 67% of the annual budget.
3. Draft 1 of the 27/28 budget includes £30k for electricity, £22k for gas, £33k for business rates and £3k for water.
4. Although the gas provision has been reduced, electricity remains a substantial cost. The proposed electricity budget represents an increase of 20% on the current year's provision.
5. The Council must also meet the costs of opening, securing and cleaning rooms for hire. A typical booking requiring separate opening and locking-up attendances, together with cleaning, can incur approximately £23–£30 in direct staffing costs before employer on-costs and utilities.
6. These figures support reviewing the charges. However, an increase in fees will only recover a relatively small proportion of the Town Hall's overall expenditure.

4. Town Hall Room Hire

1. The current charges were reviewed during 2025, but the Council's operating costs have continued to change. An increase for 2027/28 would help meet these costs without substantially altering the affordability of the facilities.
2. The Council's booking register records approximately £14,800 in Town Hall booking charges during 2025/26.
3. By way of illustration, a 5% increase applied to £15,000 of annual booking receipts would generate approximately £750 before allowing for VAT, changes in demand or other adjustments. The additional income would not offset the full increase in electricity expenditure, but would make a contribution.
4. The Council must also remain competitive. Competing local venues increased their prices - e.g. COWSHACC September 2026 charges included £23 per hour for non-commercial hire of its full main hall and £35 per hour for commercial hire.
5. The Town Hall offers different facilities and has the advantage of a central location, but does not have comparable on-site parking. This should be taken into account when considering prices.
6. It is proposed to increase selected room hire charges, principally for commercial bookings, while retaining affordable rates for community and non-commercial use. The revised charges are set out in the Schedule.
7. The proposed increases would leave commercial hire of the Assembly Room below COWSHACC's current full-hall commercial rate.
8. Alongside the revised charges, officers should continue to promote use of the Council Chamber, Courtroom and Judges' Retirement Room. Increasing the number of bookings remains an important means of improving income.

5. Indoor and Outdoor Markets

1. The indoor and outdoor markets support local traders and contribute to activity in the town centre.
2. The indoor market currently weekly with rates ranging from £20 to £50. These charges were retained during the previous review. The 2025/26 financial records show indoor market stall income of approximately £14,600.

3. A modest increase of around 5% would make a contribution towards the costs of operating the Town Hall. On the previous year's income, a 5% increase would represent approximately £730 before allowing for VAT treatment or any change in occupancy.

4. The Monday Charter Market currently charges £1 per foot. The income generated is low and is a uniform set rate across Powys.

6. Allotments

1. The Council currently charges £25 for a half plot and £50 for a full plot at the Hospital and Burgess Land sites.

2. These charges are relatively modest, and the Council incurs expenditure in maintaining the allotment sites.

3. However, the Council also wishes to encourage greater use of the available plots. Where plots remain vacant, increasing rents could be counterproductive. We are currently exploring similar allotments and their fees.

7. Public Toilets

1. The Council currently provides free public toilets at the Town Hall and Welshpool Information Centre.

2. Although these facilities have significant running costs, they provide a public service to residents and visitors and support the town centre.

3. Introducing charges would require additional collection arrangements and could discourage use.

4. It is proposed that the facilities remain free of charge.

8. Other Charges

1. The Council charges for a small number of other services, including photocopying, bag storage and Welshpool Information Centre administration.

2. Some of these charges have remained unchanged for several years. Modest increases would be reasonable where they reflect the cost of providing the service.

3. The proposed changes are set out in the Schedule.

9. VAT

1. The Council currently charges VAT on Town Hall room hire. The current invoicing arrangements mean that part of the advertised charge is accounted for as output VAT rather than retained as income.

2. The Council should establish whether this treatment is correct, including whether a valid option to tax exists for the Town Hall.

3. This is particularly important given the proposed Town Hall Transformation Project. Changes to the VAT treatment of room hire could affect the Council's ability to recover VAT on building expenditure.

4. Specialist advice should be obtained before any change is made to the VAT treatment of the Council's property income.

10. Links to Strategic Objectives and Interim Strategic Plan

1. FS4 - Develop a three year budget to balance savings with new income generation.

11. Resource & Legal Implications

1. The proposed increases would provide some additional income towards the Council's operating costs, particularly those associated with the Town Hall.
2. The amount cannot be calculated reliably until the Council's actual income by charge type is reconciled and the correct VAT treatment confirmed.
3. The Council should monitor the effect of the revised charges on booking numbers, market occupancy and income during 2027/28.
4. The Council also incurs staffing costs associated with opening, securing and cleaning the Town Hall for private bookings. Under the current arrangements, separate opening and locking-up attendances cost approximately £16.36 in total, with a further £6.91 – £13.81 for cleaning.
5. Where both attendances and additional cleaning are required, the direct staffing cost of a booking can therefore be between £23.27 and £30.17, before employer on-costs, utilities and other overheads.
6. By comparison, a two-hour non-commercial booking of the Corn Exchange currently generates £24, of which the Council retains £20 after VAT. In these circumstances, the direct staffing costs alone exceed the income received by approximately £3.27 - £10.17. This is particularly relevant to shorter bookings and lower-priced rooms, although costs will be lower where staff are already present or consecutive bookings can be accommodated.

12. Recommendation

1. That the proposed schedule of fees and charges be adopted for the 2027/28 financial year.

13. Decision

1. To resolve to adopt the recommendations as above.

SCHEDULE - Fees & Charges

Room Booking - Town Hall

All bookings remain at the Town Clerk's discretion and operational requirements of the Council.

Room Type/Booking Type	Current	2027/28
Any room hire after 10pm	Room hire rates increased to £35 per hour after 11pm which is fairly complicated	Late locking (bookings ending after 10pm) £30 per booking, in addition to normal room hire. Bookings extending beyond midnight may be subject to separately agreed arrangements.
Any room hire on weekends	N/A	TBC - flat fee per booking as a weekend supplement.

Corn Exchange	Non-Commercial £12 per hour (min 2 hours) Commercial £20 (min 2 hours)	Non-Commercial £12 per hour (min 2 hours) Commercial £21 (min 2 hours)
Assembly Room	Non-Commercial £20 per hour (min 2 hours) Commerical £30 per hour (min 2 hours)	Non-Commercial £20 per hour (min 2 hours) Commerical £31 per hour (min 2 hours)
Assembly Room - Kitchen Hire	£25	£27
Assembly Room - Bar Hire	£25	£27
Judges Retirement Room	Commercial £10 per hour (min 2 hours) Non-commercial £8 per hour (min 2 hours)	Commercial £11 per hour (min 2 hours) Non-commercial £9 per hour (min 2 hours)
Council Chamber	Flat rate £10 per hour at the Clerk's discretion (min 2 hours)	Flat rate £11 per hour (min 2 hours)
Courtroom	Non-Commercial £12 per hour, at clerks' discretion (min 2 hours) Commercial £20 per hour, at clerks' discretion (min 2 hours)	Non-Commercial £13 per hour (min 2 hours) Commercial £21 per hour (min 2 hours)
Tea, Coffee, Biscuits	£2.50 per person	£2.60 per person

Wedding and wake packages	Marriage package • Get married in any of the following rooms: Assembly Room, Council Chamber, Courtroom or Corn Exchange. • Hourly room rate + £100 licence fee Standard package - Wedding Breakfast • Nominal or full use of the kitchen and bar hire • Room set up to the organisers' specifications. • Hourly room rate + £100 licence fee Wedding package • Get married in any of the following rooms: Assembly Room, Council Chamber, Courtroom or Corn Exchange. • Exclusive use of the first floor. • Nominal or full use of the kitchen and bar hire • Room set up to the organisers' specifications. • £500 Wake package • Exclusive use of the first floor for up to	Marriage package • Get married in any of the following rooms: Assembly Room, Council Chamber, Courtroom or Corn Exchange. • Hourly room rate + £105 licence fee Standard package - Wedding Breakfast • Nominal or full use of the kitchen and bar hire • Room set up to the organisers' specifications. • Hourly room rate + £105 licence fee Wedding package • Get married in any of the following rooms: Assembly Room, Council Chamber, Courtroom or Corn Exchange. • Exclusive use of the first floor. • Nominal or full use of the kitchen and bar hire • Room set up to the organisers' specifications. • £500 Wake package • Exclusive use of the first floor for up to

Market Stalls

Site	Current	2027/28
Charter Market - Mondays	£1 per foot	£1 per foot
Indoor Market	Ranges from £10 a day, £20 or £30, or £40, or £50 per week.	Prices to increase by 5%

Allotments

Site	Current & 2027/28	2028/29
Hospital Site includes Water	Half Plot - £25, Full Plot - £50	TBC - pending review
Burgess Land Site includes Water	Half Plot - £25, Full Plot - £50	TBC - pending review

Toilets

Site	Current	2027/28
Town Hall Public Toilets	£0.00	£0.00
Information Centre Public Toilets	£0.00	£0.00

Recreation

These costs are fixed within seperate leases with each club.

Club	Current	2027/28
Welshpool Town Football Club	Set by licence	Set by licence/lease
Welshpool Rugby Club	Set by lease	Set by lease
Welshpool Cricket Club	Set by licence	Set by licence
Welshpool Bowling Club	£500	£500
Welshpool Rugby & Cricket Club	Set by lease	Set by lease
Waterloo Rovers Football Club	£700	£750

General/Other

Site	Current	2027/28
Bus Timetables	£0.50	£0.60
Photocopying	£0.50	£0.60
Annual return electors copy	£2.00	£2.00
Bag Storage	£5.00	£6.00
Admin fee for WIC services	£2.00	£2.20
Welshpool Voucher Postage Fee	£2.50	£2.50