

Abbots Road

United Reformed Church

LETTINGS POLICY

2022

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LETTINGS POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the Policy of Abbots Road URC letting of Church premises. It sets out in detail the facilities available; how to book them; and the responsibilities that any potential user must accept.

2.0 POLICY

2.1 Abbots Road United Reformed Church. (hereafter called the ARURC) as part of its Vision sees the use that it makes of its buildings and other facilities as an important part of its Mission to reach out to the local community. The ARURC seeks to develop its buildings in ways that promote that objective and the projected needs of church and community. Whilst wishing to be open and welcoming, the ARURC represents the Christian faith & seeks to support its advancement. Therefore, the ARURC states that any religious activity or ceremony that takes place in the hall has to be within the Christian Faith.

In considering any letting the ARURC must ensure that its buildings will be respected by the Hirer and will not be misused in any way. Any decision will have due regard to the likelihood of any damage being caused to the premises, or neighbouring premises, and any nuisance that may arise, as a result of accepting the booking.

ARURC reserves the right to accept or reject any booking. It may at its discretion require a suitable organisation or character reference to be provided before any booking is accepted.

2.2 MAIN CHURCH WORSHIP BUILDINGS

ARURC main worship sanctuary is **NOT** available for hire. Any use of the church worship building is purely at the discretion of the Minister in consultation with the church Elders.

2.3 CHURCH HALL BUILDINGS – the following rooms are available for hire:

- ARURC - Main Hall (Main Kitchen also available to Hire)
- ARURC – Laburnham room (Small Hall with kitchenette)
- ARURC - Lounge (small room at rear of halls)

Toilets, etc. is included in the hire.

The Hall Booking Manager (hereafter called the HBM) is appointed by the ARURC to act on its behalf in the day to day running of the **CHURCH Building**, including the acceptance of bookings. In the event of any dispute the final decision rests with the ARURC.

2.4 CHURCH GROUNDS

The church grounds are not hired out in their own right but only as a part of a HALL/ ROOM LETTING. Their use must always have due regard to the needs of other church and hall/room users.

2.5 CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The Halls are primarily for the use of church activities (e.g. Lunch Box, Social Group events, youth and children groups, ARURC Elders and Church meetings, etc.) and church endorsed activities (e.g. ARK).

Existing and future church-endorsed activities must have a direct link to the vision and purpose of the church and support the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

Inevitably there will be occasions where church and church endorsed activities are planned which clash with proposed and existing external bookings. Sensitivity is required by all parties in handling these issues.

Where a church endorsed activity is planned then this should be given priority when considering any external booking.

Sensitivity is required where a church activity temporarily curtails a non-church booking (e.g. Special Christian/Church events, building maintenance, etc.) or where a new church led initiative

means drawing a longstanding external booking to a close.

Where there is a straight church/non-church new booking, it is expected that the church requirement will take priority.

2.6 CHILDREN and Vulnerable Adults

ARURC has a Safeguarding Policy. Under this policy ARURC is committed to the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and the relevant statutory legislation and guidance for the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. An upto date copy of this Policy is always available for consultation and reference via the HBM.

All church activities involving children must, without exception, comply with the Safeguarding Policy. If church buildings are let to outside organisations then it is normally a requirement of the Standard Conditions of Hire that they have their own Policy (equivalent to ARURC Safeguarding Policy) or they also comply with this Policy in its entirety.

It is recognised that certain organisations (e.g. Rainbows, Brownies and Guides Associations, etc.) have their own recognised safeguarding policies. These are acceptable to ARURC in place of the ARURC Safeguarding Policy where their conditions are either equal to or exceed the latter. In all cases any alternative policy must be approved by ARURC. This policy will be regularly reviewed by the Elders to ensure that it is kept up to date.

In the case of occasional, ad hoc or “One Off” bookings (e.g. children’s parties, ARURC authorised family parties, etc.) where parents or legal guardians will be present a Safeguarding Policy is not appropriate. However, the covering letter to the Hiring Agreement will require the Hirer to “ensure that children are protected at all times by taking reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any injury, loss, damage or harm”. This will include the recommended minimum adult/child ratio.

2.7 TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF HIRE

ARURC has a set of Standard Conditions of Hire that are applicable to all Church Hall bookings. These form an integral part of its Hiring Agreement and are regularly reviewed. The Hiring Agreement and Standard Conditions of Hire are attached as Appendix A to this policy.

2.8 FINANCIAL

Financial issues are secondary but not insignificant. ARURC considers it to be a good objective for hiring income to cover the running costs and maintenance of its buildings as recommended by the charity commission.

However direct church bookings (e.g. Elders/Church meetings) will incur no booking costs and church-endorsed activities will be given concessionary rates.

These rates need to be annually approved by ARURC or, when a new booking is made.

3.0 PROCEDURES

3.1 CHURCH AND HALL MANAGEMENT

ARURC retains overall responsibility for ALL the Church's buildings at all times. The day to day running of the church worship building is managed by the Management Committee.

The day to day running of the two Halls and room is delegated to the Hall Bookings Manager (HBM).

ARURC Hall Bookings Manager (HBM)

Co-ordinates all aspects of lettings, running the diary of Hall bookings, ensuring the smooth daily operation of the lettings schedule. The Hall Bookings Manager is the primary point of contact for all Hall users.

ARURC Management committee

Is Responsible for the co-ordination of the maintenance of the Hall fabric, fixtures and fittings. Any proposed maintenance works should go to the Management committee of which the Hall Buildings Manager is a member of.

3.2 HALL BUILDING BOOKING PROCEDURE

1. Enquiry by telephone or e-mail forwarded to Hall Booking Manager. (HBM)
2. HBM checks availability in conjunction with the church calendar and assesses suitability of event and hirer in accordance with the Hall Letting Policy.
3. HBM enters hirer's name, address and telephone number into spreadsheet calendar, which is circulated to all Elders.
4. HBM sends personalised letter/email noting the booking, enclosing 2 copies of booking agreement and conditions of hire/letting, (see Appendix A) and child protection booklet.
5. Hirer returns one signed copy of booking form with deposit to HBM at least 7 days before event. Hirer keeps the 2nd copy for their reference. The booking is not definite until booking form and deposit is received by HBM. Deposit is retained by HBM.
6. HBM contacts hirer within 5 days of receipt of booking form if there are any problems with hire.
7. HBM meets hirer on day of booking as arranged in the letter to unlock hall, go through fire procedures, end of hire checklist and collect hire fee as outlined in the letter. If this is a regular booking then the HBM will arrange to ensure the hirer is familiar with all the procedures and may even provide a key.
8. HBM checks hirer is aware of where to place checklist envelope/plastic wallet after the event.
9. HBM checks with hirer arrangements for return of deposit on completion of satisfactory hire. Payment is recorded in receipt book for ad hoc bookings and on bookings spreadsheet held by HBM for ad hoc bookings and regular hirers.

10. HBM ensures deposit is returned as agreed with hirer, once envelope with checklist has been received to HBM and hall condition left as it should be.

3.3 Weddings Funerals and Baptisms

Any enquiry about possible use of the church worship space will be referred to the Minister and Elders.

The Minister is to be consulted before any booking is taken for a wedding or funeral. Special fee arrangements are applicable (e.g. for minister, organist, etc.) for both weddings and funerals. The Minister will normally advise any such fees to the couple being married or to the undertaker. Once approved by the Minister, the lettings administrator will normally deal with routine correspondence relating to the availability and use of the premises.

Note: Baptism/Thanksgiving/and Christening are normally conducted during Sunday worship.

Dates and Times

We will not normally accept bookings for a Sunday event, or on major Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas. We will not normally accept bookings outside the hours of 09.00 to 22.30. Evening events must be finished by 22.00 to enable the premises to be fully vacated by 22.30. The Elders are to be consulted prior to agreeing any request for use outside these times.

3.4 INVOICING

The general premise of all regular lettings is that except in exceptional circumstances previously agreed with the HBM, hirers are to pay in advance of their booking.

One off bookings, such as children's parties and the like, are to follow the booking procedures above and ensure that deposits are paid on time and the balance of their hire charge is available on the day of hire. The deposit will be disposed of as agreed with the hirer, once the HBM is satisfied that all conditions of the hire have been met and that no further charges are likely to be incurred.

Regular bookings will be invoiced in advance, whether termly or monthly, after consultation and agreement with the HBM.

3.5 CANCELLATIONS

The Hall and rooms are in regular use and requests are frequently turned down if the Hall has already been booked. Regular hall hirers being invoiced in advance per term or monthly must give at least 28 days notice of their intention to cancel. Failure to do so will result in the retention of the hire fee for the required 28 days notice.

One off (ad hoc) users must consider that the payment of their deposit constitutes an undertaking to proceed with the hire. Cancellations, within 14 days from the hire date, will result in the deposit being retained.

Due consideration will be given to all circumstances that give rise to a cancellation, and in so far as practicable, the HBM is empowered to exercise a degree of discretion as to whether a charge will be applied to any short notice cancellation.

Either party may terminate the hire agreement at any time by giving 28 days notice and without giving any reason for such termination.

3.6 BOOKING TIMES

The rooms and Halls are very much in demand from regular users, adhoc hirers and church groups. It is essential for the satisfactory running of these groups that people respect the timings associated with their particular hire.

To avoid conflicts of hire, there will be no access to the premises before the commencement of the hire period. Hirers must allow sufficient time for preparation before the event when booking the time of the let.

It is similarly unfair to overrun a booking, as that will impact the next hirer. Hirers must have left the premises by the end of the booked period. Sufficient time must be included to allow for clearing away, cleaning and for all participants to leave the premises by the end of the booked period.

In all cases, the venue should be left in a suitable condition for hire within the allotted hire period. This is particularly important when hiring the Hall for a party, where consideration should be given for the following users that day or later.

3.7 AVAILABILITY & CHARGES

The availability and scale of charges for the hire of the Church Hall are displayed on the website. These are reviewed and updated annually by ARURC. See Appendix C.

3.8 CHURCH GROUPS

Church Groups do not pay a hire charge and therefore do not need to pay a deposit.

They do however need to comply with all non-monetary aspects of this policy, in particular ensuring that they inform the HBM as soon as possible as to their requirements and in their use of the Hall or associated Rooms.

3.9 COMPLAINT PROCEDURE (code of conduct towards the HBM/Church members).

3.9.1 Complaint by Hirer

In the event of any complaint this shall in the first instance be addressed to the HBM. If the HBM is unable to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction, the matter should be addressed in writing to the Church Elders.

3.9.2 Complaint by Third Party

The matter will be investigated by the Church Elders as a representative of the ARURC. After consultations with the HBM and other interested parties a written response will be sent to the complainant as early as possible after the investigation..

APPENDIX A

Terms and conditions

STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF HIRE

1. SUPERVISION The Hirer will, during the period of the hiring be responsible for supervision of the premises, the fabric and the contents; their care, safety from damage however slight; or change of any sort and the behaviour of all persons using the premises whatever their capacity; including proper supervision of car parking arrangements so as to avoid obstruction of the highway and access to the premises and taking in to consideration the neighbouring houses.

2. USE OF PREMISES The hirer should inspect the premises and ensure that they are suitable for the purpose for which they are to be hired. The hirer must restrict their activity to the accommodation agreed for letting and for the purpose indicated on the Lettings Application Form. The Hirer shall not use the premises for any purpose other than that described in the hiring agreement and shall not sub-hire or use the premises or allow the premises to be used for any unlawful purpose or in any unlawful way nor do anything or bring onto the premises anything which may endanger the same or render invalid any insurance policies in respect thereof.

The hirer will allow no more than the agreed maximum number of people to attend the premises. Proper steps will

be taken by the hirer to control admittance to the function and ensure that there is no intrusion or hindrance to any other event or function taking place in the building.

The Hirer should carryout a full risk assessment in relation to the premises and those who will be attending.

Use of the church's equipment is only permitted by prior agreement and by suitably qualified persons.

3. Alcohol, SMOKING/ VAPING and non-prescribed drugs are not permitted in the hall, church or grounds.

4. LICENCES The Hirer shall be responsible for obtaining such licences as may be needed

such as Performing Rights or Music permissions or otherwise and shall be responsible for the observance of same. **NB: the church does NOT have a television licence. (NB live television cannot therefore be watched in the premises via the internet).**

5. GAMING BETTING AND LOTTERIES the Hirer shall ensure that nothing is done on or in relation to the premises in contravention of the law relating to gaming, betting and lotteries. No betting and gambling is allowed on the premises.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLIANCE The Hirer shall comply with all conditions and regulations made in respect of the premises by the Fire Authority, Local Authority, the local Magistrate's Court, Health and Safety Executive or otherwise, particularly in connection with any event which includes public dancing or music or similar public entertainment or stage plays.

7. HEALTH AND HYGIENE the Hirer shall, if preparing, serving or selling food observe all relevant food health and hygiene legislation and regulations. All considerations should be

taken in to account including allergies such as (but not limited to) Natasha's Law.

8. ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE SAFETY The Hirer shall ensure that any electrical appliance

brought by him/her on to the premises and used there shall be safe and in good working order and used in a safe manner, the equipment should conform to British Standards and hold a current PAT certificate. The Hirer shall also ensure that any such appliances brought onto the premises by another party for use at the event shall comply with the foregoing.

9. INDEMNITY The Hirer shall indemnify ARURC for the cost of repair of any damage done to any part of the property including the curtilage thereof or the contents of the buildings which may occur during the period of the hiring as a result of the hiring. The Hirer shall be responsible for making arrangements to insure against any third party liability claims which may lie against him or her (or the organisation if acting as a representative) whilst using the premises.

10. ACCIDENTS AND DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES the Hirer must report all accidents involving injury to the public as outlined in the Church's Health & Safety Policy. In the first instance, the HBM as appropriate should be informed. Any failure of equipment belonging to the Hall or Church Building must also be reported as soon as possible.

11. ANIMALS The Hirer shall ensure that no animals (including birds) except guide dogs are brought into the premises other than for a special event agreed to by the HBM and no animals whatsoever are to enter the kitchen at any time.

12. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN and Vulnerable Adults The Hirer shall ensure that any activities involving children comply with the provisions of the Children Act of 1989 and 2004. The Hirer is required under this legislation to ensure that children are protected at all times by taking all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of any injury, loss, damage or harm. This includes ensuring that at all times only fit and proper persons have access to the children. All Hirers who are Regular Users are required to have in place an approved Child Safeguarding Policy on commencement of each period of Hire

a) For Organisations with No Safeguarding Policy of their own

ARURC has a Safeguarding Policy for Children and vulnerable Adults, which is available to view through the link on the church website, and forms an integral part of this Agreement and to follow current national practice guidelines. Acceptance of the booking is conditional upon the Hirer agreeing to work within the terms and conditions of this policy.

b) For Organisations with their own Safeguarding Policy

ARURC will accept an Organisation's own Safeguarding Policy but will require evidence that it is properly formulated, that a current version exists and that it is no less stringent than ARURC own. In the event that there are any concerns or allegations arising about children in the course of the Hirer's activities the ARURC Safeguarding Representative shall be contacted.

All Hirers who are Occasional or “One Off” Users (e.g. Children’s Parties) are not required to have a Safeguarding Policy but must comply with the general requirements stated in the first part of this clause.

13. FLY POSTING The Hirer shall not carry out any fly posting or any other form of unauthorised advertisements for any event taking place at the premises and shall indemnify the Committee accordingly against all action, claims, and proceedings arising from any breach of this condition.

14. SALE OF GOODS The Hirer shall, if selling goods on the premises, comply with the Fair Trading Laws and any code of practice used in connection with such sales and ARURC reserves the right to refuse permission for any sales of goods to take place during any hiring of the premises.

15. CANCELLATION As far as practicable, the hirer must give 28 days notice if they wish to cancel the booking before the date of the event to receive a full refund. Notice less than 28 days may incur a penalty. If ARURC is unable to conclude a replacement booking, the question of the payment or repayment of the fee shall be at the discretion of the HBM.

16. UNFIT FOR USE. In the event that the premises or any part thereof being rendered unfit for the use for which it has been hired, the ARURC shall not be liable to the Hirer for any resulting loss or damage whatsoever other than the cost of the hire.

17. REFUSAL OF BOOKING. ARURC reserves the right to refuse a booking without notice or to cancel this hiring agreement at any time before or during the term of the agreement. The Hirer shall be entitled to reimbursement of any monies paid up until the point of cancellation. ARURC shall not be liable to make any further payment to the Hirer.

18. Dates and Times We will not normally accept bookings for a Sunday event, or on major Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas. We will not normally accept bookings outside the hours of 09.00 to 22.30. Evening events must be finished by 22.00 to enable the premises to be fully vacated by 22.30. Failure to vacate by the agreed time may result in the loss of deposit. The Elders are to be consulted prior to agreeing any request for use outside these times.

UNSUITABLE BOOKING

Buildings are let as an integral part of the Church Mission within the community. ARURC reserve the right to refuse or cancel any booking without notice or explanation, deemed to be unsuitable or offensive to the Church.

19. TEENAGE OR ADULT PARTIES. Due to the urban location of the buildings and their proximity to neighbours, teenage and adult parties are not permitted except where the Hirer is known personally by Elders, bookings manager or Minister and acceptance of the booking is at their discretion. In this instance the hall must be vacated by 22.30.

20. END OF HIRE The Hirer shall be responsible for leaving the premises and surrounding area in a clean and tidy condition This includes the washrooms where these are used solely by the hirer., properly locked and secured unless directed otherwise and any contents temporarily removed

from their usual positions shall be properly replaced. **The Hirer must complete the day of hire checklist and place this in the envelope provided.**

Hirer shall remove from the premises all equipment and other materials brought into the Hall/Church by the Hirer or whomsoever for use during the booking.

This includes the washrooms where these are used solely by the hirer.

21. **RUBBISH.** The hirer shall likewise remove from the premises all refuse arising from the booking. ARURC shall be at liberty to make an additional charge if this is not done.

22. **NOISE** the Hirer shall ensure that the minimum of noise is made on arrival and departure of those attending the event. Furthermore the Hirer shall ensure that noise levels on the premises and in the curtilage of the premises shall not cause a nuisance to neighbouring properties.

23. **EMERGENCY.** In the event of an emergency, the Hirer should ensure the emergency service is notified and contact is made with the HBM by a phone call.

24. **PARKING.** Car parking is available on the forecourt of the Church Hall. Great care must be taken to reduce any inconvenience to our neighbours, and all cars must be removed at the end of the letting. Particular care must be taken at the end of a booking. Parking will always be free when it is in association with a letting within the Church premises.

25. **HALL KITCHEN/SERVERY.** If the Kitchen/Servery is part of the letting, it is the responsibility of the hirer to ensure that

the items are left in good condition at the end of the let. Particular care must be taken with the flasks and kettles which may be hot from the previous hirer. If hot drinks have been served, the kettles and flasks should be emptied or turned off on completion of the hire.

26. HALL/CHURCH BUILDING FLOOR. Floors are regularly cleaned and polished. Please take care when moving furniture across it.

27. KEYS. it is the hirers responsibility to ensure the key is kept safe and returned after use.

One off hirers will not have a key as arrangements will be made to open the remises prior to use and lock up after use.

APPENDIX B

ABBOTS ROAD UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Hiring Agreement

To:

Address:

Telephone No:

Mobile telephone No: _____ E-mail address:

Date(s): _____ Time:

Purpose: _____

Main Hall Kitchen Laburnham hall Lounge room

Rate: _____ Deposit (if applicable)

Safeguarding Policy (See Clause 12 of attached Standard Conditions of Hire)

ARURC Policy Hirer's Policy Not Applicable

Will there be professional entertainment e.g. a bouncy castle or clown* Yes/No (please delete)

Additional Information:

Abbots Road United Reformed Church welcomes the use of its Hall/Rooms Building and grounds by and for the benefit of the local community. However, Abbots Road United Reformed Church requires the Hirer whether it is an organisation or an individual to comply with certain rules and regulations. These are summarised in the attached Standard Conditions of Hire. If the Hirer has any doubts as to the meaning of any of these conditions the Hall Bookings Manager should be contacted immediately.

* Professional entertainment may require a Risk Assessment/Public Liability Insurance by the service provider. The Hall Manager will advise.

For the purposes of these conditions, the term Hirer shall mean an individual Hirer or, where the Hirer is an organisation, their authorised representative.

I, the Hirer, agree to abide by Abbots Road United Reformed attached Standard Conditions of Hire:

Signed _____

Designation _____

Organisation _____

Date _____

Signed on behalf of the ARURC _____

APPENDIX C

Availability of Rooms for Letting.

The halls and room at Abbots Road United Reformed Church are available for hire as detailed below. The latest period of hire is up to 22.00 and the building vacated by 22.30 but due to the proximity of our neighbours, there must be no excessive noise after 22.00.

Potential Hirer's must check with the Hall Bookings Manager to verify if the desired booking slot is available as the diary often fills quickly.

Scale of Charges

Main Hall ☒ £35.00 per hour PARTY BOOKING £75 FOR 3 HOURS – Any additional time £35.00 per hour ☒

Capacity 80 people

Kitchen £15.00 per hour ☒

Laburnham Hall with Kitchenette £25.00 per hour ☒

Capacity 35 people

Lounge room 15.00 per hour ☒

Capacity 14 people

Wedding

Church £150.00

Minister £150.00

Organist £100.00

Registrar £50.00

Funeral

Church £150.00

Minister £150.00

Organist £100.00

Hire of Main Church by special agreement with Minister and Elders

Regular Church members benefit from a discount as agreed with the Minister/Elders.

