

## Public Question - APPENDIX A

Public question at Full Council on Wednesday 17 May 2023:

1. “On 29th April 2021 I received a reply to my Freedom of Information request following reticence by Chippenham Town Council to collaborate with Kandu Arts on the delivery of a celebratory festival to thank those who saw us through the pandemic by providing the Neeld Hall and Town Hall free of charge as a venue. I had asked in the knowledge that other organisations had been granted free usage of the Neeld Hall, for detail of those organisations who had benefitted from this.

The initial documentation I was sent “Free of charge hires by organisations of the Neeld Hall and Town Hall” listed the organisations 2014 -2021 this however was an incomplete return as it did not detail all the organisations who had it for free and who had agreed the free hires. In a meeting in January 2023 my colleagues were told that the Neeld and Town Halls were never let for free! My subsequent request from 31st March 2023 requesting further information has listed the information the Council holds on how the organisations were granted free usage. 12 of the 14 show that Council does not hold this information and that 2 of the bookings were approved, one by an unnamed Town Councillor who secured the Hall free of charge for the Chippenham Area Board and the other that it was approved free of charge by the Venues Manager for an event in aid of SSAFA.

It is of grave concern that it would appear that due accounting protocol, health & safety and recording of these bookings has not been followed and that the 14 “free” lettings appear entirely discretionary. In the interests of what appears to be hap-hazard appropriation of public funds, resources and very definite lack of transparency which has without a doubt impacted the local community, please can it be minuted how the position relating to the Council’s ability to consider reduced community rates has been clarified with the relevant staff and on what basis these decisions have been made.”

## Not Part of the Meeting - APPENDIX B

### Response to Public Question - Full Council 17 May 2023

1. Thank you for your public question asked at Full Council on 17 May 2023, this response will be appended to the minutes. As the Freedom of Information response noted, the Council does not hold the information relating to the exact manner that 14 free uses of the Neeld or Town Hall were granted, these were bookings from 13 April 2014 to 08 October 2018.

The Town Council hires spaces at commercial and community rates, the Council has a process outlined in the Fees and Charges Schedule that enables the Chief Executive to consider requests from community groups for subsidised room rates. This delegated authority to the Chief Executive was first considered by the Amenities, Culture and Leisure Committee in November 2018, and staff are aware of this process. Community groups seeking financial assistance should be referred to the procedure for grants and donations from the Town Council via application to the Council Donations Scheme.