



## Parish Council

### Finance and General Purposes Working Group

**Document:** Notes of Community Centres Financial Review (PTCC)

**Date:** 13.10.2026

**Time:** 18:00 – 19:00

#### 1. Purpose of the meeting

The Working Group met to review the financial performance and use of the Council's community centres, with this meeting focusing on Pinetrees Community Centre.

The review considered income, expenditure, bookings and opportunities to improve financial performance while maintaining accessible facilities for community use. A Briggs provided a financial report, supported by booking information supplied by L Whatley.

#### Attendance:

Cllr J Ballman

Cllr D Patey

A Briggs

L Whatley

A Reeves

#### 2. Pinetrees financial position

Members noted reported income of approximately £55,000 and expenditure of approximately £65,000 for the first half of the financial year, representing net expenditure of approximately £10,000.

Overall income was approaching 50% of the annual budget, although this included some unbudgeted income. The library rental income budget had already been achieved, with no further income anticipated against that line during the year. Tenant income was slightly behind the anticipated position, while room-hire income was approximately 30% of its annual budget.

The importance of tenant income in supporting the centre's running costs was recognised. Officers advised that annual tenant income was approximately £60,000–£70,000, having increased substantially through better use of the available office accommodation.

Members supported retaining a balance between reliable tenant income and space available for community activities, private functions and occasional bookings.

### 3. Maintenance and future expenditure

Members highlighted the need to consider planned maintenance and future replacement costs alongside day-to-day operating expenditure.

Reference was made to previous building condition assessments and asset management work identifying significant future expenditure across the community centres. Concerns were also raised about historic fire compartmentation issues and the need to ensure necessary building works remained within the Council's maintenance planning.

Officers explained that essential works to roofs, building fabric, access and other infrastructure were being prioritised through the capital programme. External funding was being pursued to support improvements that would make the centres more attractive and suitable for a wider range of activities.

The discussion recognised that short-term operating figures alone did not represent the full long-term cost of providing community facilities.

### 4. Bookings and available capacity

Louise provided information on regular bookings and occasional hires. Members considered opportunities to increase use of the main hall and meeting room.

Blood donation bookings for the following year were being discussed, with Mondays offering the most suitable extended availability. Immunisation bookings were expected to reduce compared with the current year, reflecting greater provision through schools.

Members supported identifying the remaining available slots once these bookings were confirmed, followed by targeted promotion of those spaces.

A coordinated campaign could promote availability across Pinetrees, John Moulton Hall and Moredon Community Centre, linking this with refurbishment works and improvements to facilities.

**Action:** Louise to confirm forthcoming bookings and identify available hire slots, working with Andrew and Aaron C on targeted promotion.

### 5. Support for community activities

The Group discussed the difficulties experienced by Little Angels in securing enough volunteers to continue operating. Members supported offering assistance with volunteer recruitment and promoting opportunities more widely.

Louise also advised that she had been approached by a prospective baby and toddler group and would meet with the organisers to discuss suitable premises.

The possibility of employing a flexible member of staff to support voluntary community activities across different sites was raised. Members recognised that any arrangement would require further consideration of cost, duties, training and the organisations eligible for support. No staffing commitment was made.

**Action:** Louise to establish whether Little Angels would benefit from Council assistance with volunteer advertising and progress discussions with the prospective group.

## 6. Marketing and communications

Members considered that improved promotion could increase awareness, participation and income across the Council's facilities.

The discussion identified a need to advertise available spaces more actively and demonstrate what completed improvements had delivered. Promotion should help prospective hirers understand the facilities available, the activities they could accommodate and how to make a booking.

Members recognised existing pressure on communications capacity and discussed several possible approaches:

- Additional marketing or digital media support.
- A college student undertaking relevant project work or a placement.
- An apprenticeship.
- Professional support to establish a marketing framework and reusable materials.
- Learning from neighbouring councils and other facility operators.

Any additional paid resource should have a clear role description and measurable objectives linked to enquiries, bookings, participation and income. Members emphasised that the number of posts produced would not, by itself, demonstrate value.

More consistent scheduling of promotional content was supported. Members also highlighted the value of authentic photographs, videos and stories about local people and activities.

Digital design and AI-assisted tools were discussed as possible supporting resources, subject to appropriate controls and protection of personal information.

**Action:** Officers to discuss support requirements with Aaron C and explore suitable options, including local colleges and education providers, with costs and supervision requirements brought back for consideration.

## 7. Partnership opportunities

Officers outlined work through Get Swindon Active to explore a shared resource promoting activities across Swindon. Members supported linking Council activities and suitable third-party sessions into this work.

The potential for Pride in Place investment to improve awareness and use of facilities serving Penhill was also discussed, particularly John Moulton Hall.

It was noted that the proposed Sport England-supported role at Moredon would focus on Moredon Community Centre and Pembroke Gardens, rather than provide a general staffing resource across all centres.

**Action:** Officers to continue engagement with Get Swindon Active and explore relevant opportunities through Pride in Place.

## 8. Budget and accounting matters

Most expenditure lines were reported to be broadly in line with expectations, subject to the following matters:

| Budget area         | Matter discussed                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| General rates       | An increased provision was likely to be required in the next annual budget.                                                                                                       |
| Waste and recycling | Expenditure had exceeded budget. The change of contractor was expected to improve the position, with Pinetrees due to transfer at the end of October.                             |
| Utilities           | Remaining budgets needed to be considered against expected winter consumption.                                                                                                    |
| Licences            | TV and music licence expenditure appeared to have been coded elsewhere. Total costs were estimated at approximately £1,500, potentially around £400 above the existing provision. |
| Hygiene services    | Credits remained outstanding for services reportedly charged for but not supplied, particularly at Chapel Street.                                                                 |

Officers clarified that a negative figure in the report's "budget remaining" column indicated expenditure above budget.

**Actions:** Andrew to arrange a review and correction of licence coding and reflect identified pressures in the next budget proposals. Officers to chase the outstanding hygiene-service credits and monitor waste collection costs following the contract change.

## 9. Tenant agreements and utility recovery

Officers explained that older tenancy agreements generally provided for RPI-linked increases, while newer agreements separated utility charges to allow these to be reviewed independently.

This approach was intended to prevent increases in energy costs from eroding rental income or creating additional subsidy from the Council. Revised provisions would be considered as existing agreements came up for renewal.

Members noted that future budget assumptions would need to reflect expected utility costs and the terms of the relevant agreements.

## 10. Improving the appeal of community centres

The Group discussed how refurbishment, decoration, flooring, furniture and lighting could improve the attractiveness of centres to potential hirers.

John Moulton Hall was identified as having further potential, although limited parking remained a constraint. Members noted the investment already being made and the opportunity to promote the venue as improvements were completed.

Acoustic conditions in the Pinetrees main hall were also raised. Previous sound-reduction proposals had been expensive, although alternative options could be explored.

The restriction on bouncy castles was discussed in the context of attracting children's parties. A Council-owned indoor inflatable was suggested for investigation, subject to suitability, safe operation and insurer acceptance. No change to the existing restriction was agreed.

## 11. Art exhibitions and cultural use

Members supported exploring temporary or rotating art exhibitions within community centres and libraries, including the possibility of borrowing suitable works from Swindon Borough Council's collection.

The proposal could attract new visitors, broaden the range of activities offered and provide opportunities to promote other Council services. Any arrangement would require consideration of insurance, transport, security and display requirements.

**Action:** Officers to reopen discussions with the Borough Council's arts service and report back on feasibility.

## 12. Recommendations to Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Working Group recommended that the Committee:

1. **Note** the review of Pinetrees Community Centre and the operational actions identified.
2. **Support further investigation of marketing and promotional support**, including student project work, placements and apprenticeships, with any resource or budget implications reported for consideration as part of 27/28 budget setting.
3. **Support exploration of temporary art exhibitions** within community centres and libraries, subject to suitable arrangements and costs.
4. **Consider the financial implications arising from the review within the forthcoming budget process**, including operating pressures, future maintenance and any proposals for additional promotional capacity.