

Meeting	Finance & Policy Committee
Date	14 th July 2026
Report Title	Room Hire Analysis April-June 2026
Agenda Reference	13
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Recommendations:

1. To note the report.

Background

In July 2025 Committee agreed to increase the room hire charges after a benchmarking exercise was conducted.

The Committee agreed to increase the LMR hire fee by 10% (from £16.00 to £17.60 per hour) and the SMR hire fee from £5.00 to £10.00 per hour, both effective from 1st September 2025, alongside the related recommendations on refreshment and equipment charges.

This report compares usage from April – June 2025 over the same period in 2026.

Booking Statistics: April–June 2025 vs April–June 2026

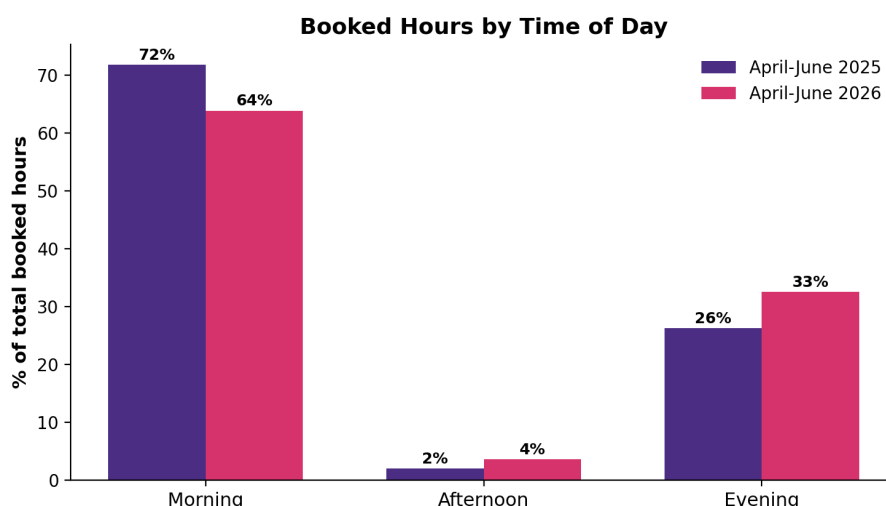
Across the comparable 13-week period from 1st April to 30th June, total booked hours were:

Period	Total Hours Booked	Weekly Average
April–June 2025	179.0 hours	13.8 hours/week
April–June 2026	167.5 hours	12.9 hours/week
Change	–11.5 hours	–6.4%

Total booked hours were broadly similar between the two periods, down slightly by 6.4%.

Usage by Time of Day

Bookings were grouped into Morning (before 12:00), Afternoon (12:00–17:00) and Evening (after 17:00) to understand when the rooms are most and least used.





In both periods, most of the bookings take place in the morning, with evening bookings making up most of the remainder. Afternoon bookings remain minimal in both periods, at just 2% and 4% respectively – confirming that the early-to-mid-afternoon period is where the rooms have the most significant spare capacity.

Gaps in Hire Times by Day of Week

Breaking usage down by day of week and time of day for April–June 2026 shows a clear and consistent pattern:

- Mornings are booked on every day of the week, including Saturday (in 2025) and Sunday (Church Service).
- Evenings are well used Monday to Thursday, and Sunday evening is now also booked (Evening Prayer Service, introduced in 2026).
- Afternoons remain largely vacant across all seven days – the only afternoon activity recorded is a small amount of Friday and Saturday use.
- Friday and Saturday are the lightest-used days overall, with Saturday usage falling sharply in 2026 following the loss of a regular Saturday-morning booking (Socatots, previously running weekly throughout April–June 2025, contributing 22 hours in that period).

This consistent gap in afternoon usage, and the lighter use of Friday and Saturday, represents the clearest opportunity for growing room hire income without displacing existing regular bookers.

Advertising and New Bookings

No significant advertising activity has been undertaken since the July 2025 report. Despite this, new regular bookings have been secured organically during the period, including Baby Boppers and the Evening Prayer Service – demonstrating continued demand for the space even without active promotion.

Given the clear and consistent afternoon gap identified above, there is further opportunity to run a targeted advertising effort – aimed specifically at filling afternoon slots and increasing Friday/Saturday usage.

Benchmarking – Reconfirmation of July 2025 Position

The benchmarking exercise reported in July 2025 compared Haydon Wick Parish Council's room hire rates with comparable venues across Swindon. That comparison is reconfirmed below and continues to support the rates agreed for implementation from 1st September 2025.

Venue	Room	Max. Capacity	Cost (per hour)	Cost/Person
HWPC	LMR (proposed)	50	£17.60	0.35
HWPC	SMR (proposed)	10	£10.00	1.10
Ellendune Community Centre	Main Hall	200	£28.00 (avg)	0.14
Ellendune Community Centre	Multi-use Stage Area	40	£19.50 (avg)	0.48
Ellendune Community Centre	Alexandra Room	30	£18.50 (avg)	0.61
Swindon Heritage Preservation	Central CC Main Hall	80	£24.00 (comm.)	0.30
Swindon Heritage Preservation	Central CC (SMR)	10	£13.00 (comm.)	1.30
Redhouse Community Centre	Main Hall	90	£20.50 (avg)	0.23



Redhouse Community Centre	Pre-school Room	65	£16.25 (avg)	0.25
Eastcott Community Centre	Main Hall	100	£16.20 (avg)	0.16
Eastcott Community Centre	Savernake Hall (activity)	40	£13.50 (avg)	0.33

Even at the new approved rates, the LMR (£17.60 per hour, 50-person capacity) remains positioned below several comparable venues of similar or smaller capacity, such as Ellendune Community Centre's Multi-use Stage Area and Alexandra Room. The SMR's new rate of £10.00 per hour sits comfortably within the range charged by Swindon Heritage Preservation for a similarly sized room (£10.50–£13.00 depending on booking category), and below Swindon Heritage Preservation's standard commercial rate. The benchmarking position set out in July 2025 therefore continues to hold.

Financial Summary

Room hire is now an established source of income for the Council and is performing well against budget. 2025/26 ended significantly above the original budget. 2026/27 income to date is tracking slightly above expectation. This suggests room hire is currently strong, but there is still scope to build further income from unused time slots.

Financial Year	Budget / Projection	Income Achieved / YTD	Variance	% of Budget
2025/26 full year	£5,000	£7,552	+£2,552	151%
2026/27 to 31 May 2026	£6,120	£1,188	Slightly ahead of budget	19.2%

Ideas to further increase bookings

1. Targeted advertising for afternoon hire slots
2. Promotions for quieter periods, such as reduced afternoon rates, block booking discounts, and introductory offers for new users
3. Direct contact with local groups that may need daytime space
4. Promoting Friday and Saturday availability
5. Encouraging regular users to expand into quieter times

Conclusion

Room hire income remains strong and is currently slightly above budget for 2026/27. Booking levels are broadly stable, but the Council still has unused capacity in the afternoons and on some Fridays and Saturdays.

The current pricing remains supported by benchmarking. A small, focused promotional effort may help to increase income further without undermining existing regular hire users.