Cyngor Tref Trallwng Welshpool Town Council

Welshpool Town Council, The Vicarage Gardens, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 7DD
Tel: 01938 553142 Email: office@welshpooltowncouncil.gov.uk

Document / Report #743

Author	Richard Williams Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Title	Community Soft Play Trial
Date	5th June 2026

OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

1. **To approve the soft play trial project within the vacant Market Business Unit and to allocate a budget of up to £3000 for the purchase of equipment, signage and setup costs;**
2. **To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to implement the trial and undertake all neccessary risk assessments and operational arrangements;**
3. **To approve the proposal to operate entry fee of £1 per child with payments accepted via contactless payment facilities, QR code payments and cash collection, and with a proportionate and pragmatic approach taken to enforcement during the trial period; and**
4. **To request a trial evaluation report be presented to the Committee upon completion of the trial.**

1. Purpose

1. To consider the establishment of a temporary Community Play Space Pilot within the vacant Market Business Unit during Summer 2026.

2. Background

1. Welshpool Town Council continues to explore opportunities to increase activity within the Market Hall, support town-centre footfall, and make productive use of vacant Council-owned space.
2. The Market Business Unit is expected to become vacant and officers have explored the potential for a temporary family-focused Community Play Space within the unit during the summer holiday period.
3. The proposal would utilise modular and temporary soft play equipment suitable for younger children and families. The intention is not to establish a permanent soft play centre at this stage, but instead to undertake a low-cost pilot project to assess community demand, operational requirements and wider benefits.

4. The facility would operate on the basis that children remain under the active supervision and responsibility of accompanying parents or carers at all times.
5. The pilot would be established for a defined period during Summer 2026 and would be subject to formal review upon completion.

3. Operating Model

1. It is proposed that the Community Play Space operate as a free-to-access facility supported by voluntary donations. Visitors would be charged £1 per child during the trial period to minimise setup costs.
2. The proposed approach is intended to:
    1. maximise access for families
    2. encourage community involvement
    3. minimise administrative requirements
    4. avoid the need for booking systems or access control arrangements
3. Payment will be accepted through contactless payment facility outside the Market Business Unit.
4. The facility would operate only during advertised opening hours

4. Objectives

1. The pilot seeks to assess the demand for family recretional provision within the town centre, which is a constant query picked up online and through the Council's engagement on its Interim Strategic Plan last year.
2. It will also assess the operational and maintenance requirements for anything more long term.
3. The proposal would make productive temporary use of a currently vacant unit within the Market Hall and would encourage additional family visits to the town centre and increase dwell time. The pilot would provide an additional recreational activity for local families and visitors during the summer holiday period.
4. Should the pilot proceed, officers would ensure:
    1. appropriate risk assessments are completed
    2. insurance in place
    3. daily inspection procedures are implemented
    4. suitable cleaning arrangements are established
    5. adequate CCTV coverage is maintained.
5. Signage would make clear that children remain the responsibility of their parent or carer at all times and must be actively supervised whilst using the facility.

5. Financial Implications

1. The estimated setup cost is between £2,000 and £3,000. The proposal would utilise temporary and modular equipment to minimise financial risk and maximise flexibility.
2. It is proposed that funding be met from a new budget line with a virement from Special Projects and Community Events cost codes (Finance & Governance Committee to discuss the virement)

3. With a fee of £1 per child, the income will most likely not exceed expenditure however does help offset some of the setup costs involved and also keeps costs down for families during the cost of living crisis.

4. Use of the vacant Market Business Unit for the duration of the pilot will delay the re-letting of the unit and therefore will cause loss of rental income. However, officers consider that the pilot would provide valuable evidence to support future decision-making regarding family-focused activity within the Town Hall.

5. The Council has powers to provide recreational facilities and community amenities for the benefit of residents and visitors. Appropriate insurance arrangements and risk assessments would be completed prior to commencement.

6. Recommendation

1. To approve the soft play trial project within the vacant Market Business Unit and to allocate a budget of up to £3000 for the purchase of equipment, signage and setup costs;

2. To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to implement the trial and undertake all neccessary risk assessments and operational arrangements;

3. To approve the proposal to operate entry fee of £1 per child with payments accepted via contactless payment facilities, QR code payments and cash collection, and with a proportionate and pragmatic approach taken to enforcement during the trial period; and

4. To request a trial evaluation report be presented to the Committee upon completion of the trial.

7. Decision

1. To resolve the recommendations as above.