COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject:	*Public WC Management: Opening Hours and Charging Arrangements*
Committee:	*Full Council*
Item Number:	*22*
Date:	*9 November 2026*
Author:	*Jay Gawthorpe, Head of Environment*
Report Status:	*Decision*
Confidential / Exempt:	*No*

1. Report Summary

1.1 This report seeks a decision on the future management of Salisbury City Council's (SCC) public toilets. Overnight anti-social behaviour is resulting in damage, extensive cleaning requirements and complaints about the condition of facilities, particularly from early-morning users. The present arrangements expose the Council to continuing repair costs and reputational damage amongst residents and visitors.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Full Council is asked to select one of the following three options. **Option 1 is recommended; Option 2 is an acceptable alternative.**

2.1.1. **Option 1 — recommended**: Remove the tariff for use of SCC-owned public toilets at Lush House, Coach Station, Churchill Gardens, Fisherton Recreation Ground and Market Square, and secure all five facilities overnight between 8pm and 8am. Retain the payment machines so that charging could be reinstated following a future Council decision. Support a £12,000 one-off bid through the forthcoming budget-setting process to cover the difference between projected full-year tariff income and income already received at Period 5 (P5), with implementation subject to confirmation of the ongoing revenue position. Opening and closing will be delivered under the existing contract.

2.1.2. **Option 2 — acceptable alternative**: Retain the existing tariff and secure SCC-owned public toilets at Lush House, Coach Station, Churchill Gardens, Fisherton Recreation Ground and Market Square overnight between 8pm and 8am. Opening and closing will be delivered under the existing contract, with practical arrangements agreed before implementation.

2.1.3. **Option 3 — not recommended**: Make no change to the current charging and opening arrangements. The existing toilet-bowl replacement programme would continue independently of this decision.

3. Background

3.1 Since taking up post in early July 2026, the Head of Environment has received approximately one complaint per week about public toilets. The vast majority relate to residents using the facilities first thing in the morning. Overnight anti-social behaviour frequently leaves the cleaning contractor facing extensive additional cleaning at the start of the day, affecting the condition encountered by early users.

3.2 Reported incidents include fires, drug use, defecation and deliberate damage to doors, sinks and other fixtures. These incidents create costs beyond routine cleaning and maintenance and undermine public confidence in the Council's management of the facilities. The tariff was intended primarily to deter anti-social behaviour rather than to generate substantial income; the continuing incidents indicate that it has not provided an effective deterrent.

3.3 SCC is already replacing aged and stained composite toilet bowls with stainless steel bowls across its owned facilities. Market Square is excluded because refurbishment is scheduled for January 2027. Cleaning standards delivered under the existing contract have at times fallen below expectations. The replacement programme will provide a fresh baseline for maintaining the facilities and enable officers to assess and manage compliance with the cleaning contract more effectively. Replacement fixtures do not, however, remove the need to address overnight damage or maintain appropriate cleaning standards.

4. Proposal

4.1 **Option 1: remove the tariff and introduce overnight closure — recommended.** Securing facilities between 8pm and 8am directly targets the period associated with the reported damage and extensive morning cleaning. Removing the tariff would also address the unfairness of requiring a person to pay 50p to enter an unusable cubicle and a further 50p to try another. Together with the fixture replacements and effective contract management, this offers the strongest overall response to the service concerns described in this report.

4.2 Option 1 would forgo tariff income. Opening and closing will be delivered under the existing contract, and the contractor supports implementing the change. A reduction in damage and associated expenditure is anticipated, but its scale cannot be guaranteed or treated as an established saving. Its principal advantage over Option 2 is the removal of a charging arrangement that compounds dissatisfaction when facilities are unusable; the overnight security measure is common to both options.

4.3 **Option 2: retain the tariff and introduce overnight closure — acceptable alternative.** This would address overnight access while retaining the charging mechanism. It is a reasonable alternative if Members are not prepared to accept the

financial implications of removing the tariff. However, it would leave unresolved the repeated-payment issue and the associated dissatisfaction when a paid-for cubicle cannot be used. Retaining a tariff would not guarantee income at existing levels once opening hours change.

4.4 **Option 3: no change — not recommended.** This would avoid a change to opening hours or tariffs but retain the circumstances associated with overnight damage, morning complaints and continuing repair expenditure. Although the bowl replacement programme would improve the condition of fixtures, it would not itself prevent further anti-social behaviour. On the evidence presented, maintaining the current management arrangements is the least satisfactory response.

5. Additional Relevant Information

5.1 The single-access cubicle layout means that payment relates to entry to an individual cubicle. If that cubicle is unusable, the customer must currently make a further payment to access another. This is a legitimate source of complaint and strengthens the case for removing the tariff, alongside measures to improve the condition and reliability of the service.

5.2 The proposed overnight closure applies to all five facilities: Lush House, Coach Station, Churchill Gardens, Fisherton Recreation Ground and Market Square. Market Square is included in the same 8pm–8am closure arrangements, with no exception following refurbishment. Under Option 1, payment machines would remain in place, preserving the ability to reinstate charging if the Council subsequently decided to do so.

6. Financial Position

6.1 Public toilet tariff income was £23,241 in 2025/26. Income in the current financial year, 2026/27, is projected to be approximately the same. Expenditure reported for 2026/27 to date is £13,589.48 on damage-related repairs, rising to £17,321.15 when the toilet-bowl replacement work is included. These expenditure figures exclude SCC officer time.

6.2 The difference between the two expenditure totals is £3,731.67, attributable to the bowl replacement work included in the higher figure. Members should distinguish this planned maintenance from damage-related repairs. The income figure covers a full financial year, whereas the expenditure figures are year-to-date amounts; they do not provide a like-for-like annual comparison or establish the net cost of the service.

6.3 Option 1 would require a £12,000 one-off bid through the forthcoming budget-setting process. This represents the difference between projected tariff income at the end of the current financial year and revenue already generated at Period 5 (P5) and is intended to offset that remaining projected income if charging is removed. From 2027/28 onwards, reductions in damage-related repair and maintenance expenditure are expected to offset part of the income forgone. The extent of this offset will depend on the effectiveness of the revised arrangements. Any remaining shortfall will need to be addressed through the Council’s annual budget-setting process or other Env cost centres.

6.4 If overnight closure is effective, lower future repair and maintenance expenditure could offset some of the income forgone. No quantified saving is confirmed, and the existing damage expenditure should not be assumed to be wholly avoidable.

7. Legal and Governance Considerations

7.1 Before implementation, officers will confirm the Council's requirements for changing charges and opening arrangements, together with any implications for existing cleaning, maintenance and access arrangements. Safe closure and reopening procedures, including checks to prevent users being locked inside, must be established.

8. Consultation and Engagement

8.1 Complaints received by the Head of Environment provide evidence of concerns about the current service, particularly in the morning. No formal consultation findings are supplied with this report. Before changes take effect, the proposed hours and charging arrangements across all five facilities should be clearly communicated to residents, visitors and relevant stakeholders. The existing contractor supports implementing the change and will undertake opening and closing under the existing contract. Practical arrangements for morning cleaning and reopening will be agreed before implementation.

9. Strategic and Policy Alignment

9.1 The proposal is intended to improve the experience of residents and visitors, protect Council assets and support more effective use of maintenance resources. Option 1 provides the clearest service improvement by combining protection against overnight misuse with removal of the tariff. These are service objectives rather than a statement of compliance with a specific adopted policy; no strategic or policy assessment has been supplied for this report.

10. Implementation and Next Steps

10.1 Subject to Members' decision, officers should confirm the financial provision, practical closure and reopening arrangements under the existing contract, and implementation timetable for all five facilities. For Option 1, this includes progressing the £12,000 one-off budget bid to cover the difference between projected full-year tariff income and revenue generated at P5 and establishing how the ongoing loss of tariff income will be addressed. Market Square will be subject to the same overnight closure arrangements following refurbishment, which is scheduled for January 2027. Payment machines should be retained if charging is suspended.

10.2 Any revised arrangements should be monitored against complaints, damage incidents, repair expenditure, morning cleanliness and the delivery of opening and closing under the existing contract. The review should also consider overnight access needs and incidents across all five facilities. This would enable Members to assess whether the anticipated benefits have been achieved and consider further changes on the basis of actual service and financial outcomes.

11. Additional Relevant Information

11.1 The report author may include any additional headings or sub-headings considered relevant to the subject matter of the report.

11.2 Any additional sections should support clarity, completeness, and informed decision-making.

12. Implications

Implication Area	Impact	Comments / Mitigation
Financial	Medium	Option 1 removes tariff income. The £12,000 one-off bid covers the difference between projected full-year income and revenue generated at P5. Future repair and maintenance savings are not confirmed; any remaining recurring shortfall will require provision through annual budget setting.
Legal	Low	Confirm authority, applicable requirements and safe closure arrangements before implementation.
Risk	Low	Overnight closure targets reported misuse but does not guarantee prevention. Monitor incidents, including at Market Square.
Personnel	Low	Opening and closing will be undertaken by the existing contractor under the existing contract. Agree practical responsibilities before implementation. Existing officer time is not included in reported repair expenditure.
Environmental Impact	Low	No environmental assessment is supplied. Any reduction in damaged fixtures and replacement materials remains unquantified.
Equalities Impact Statement	Low	Assess the effects of reduced overnight availability across all five facilities, including Market Square. Removing charges addresses the payment barrier but does not resolve every access need.
Community / Public Impact	High	Potential improvement in PWC conditions and public confidence, balanced against loss of overnight access at all five facilities. Communicate changes clearly.
Procurement / Contractual	Low	Opening and closing are included under the existing contract, and the contractor supports the change. Agree practical cleaning and access arrangements before implementation.
Property / Asset	High	Bowl replacements are already proceeding. Retain payment machines under Option 1. More manageable asset management.

Data Protection	Low	No new personal-data collection is proposed in this report. Handle complaint and incident monitoring through appropriate existing arrangements.