

# CABINET

## Public Toilet Review

17 February 2009

### Report of Corporate Director (Community Services)

| PURPOSE OF REPORT                                     |                                     |   |                          |                              |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| To provide options for toilet provision in 2009/2010. |                                     |   |                          |                              |
| Key Decision  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Non-Key Decision  | <input type="checkbox"/> | Referral from Cabinet Member |
| Date Included in Forward Plan                         |                                     | <a href="#">[Click here and type date included in Forward Plan]</a> |                          |                              |
| This report is public                                 |                                     |   |                          |                              |

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR BARRY

- (1) That the 14 toilets listed in the report (para 2.2) are 'mothballed' with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 and the draft revenue budget is updated accordingly.
- (2) That the draft capital programme is updated to reflect the proposed changes highlighted in paragraph 2.4 of this report.
- (3) That a 'Community Toilet' scheme is put in place from April 2009 and that £20,000 is allocated to this in 2009/10.
- (4) That a further report is brought to Cabinet in 2009/10 to make further recommendations for the medium / long term future of these toilets and to make recommendations for the future of the 'Community Toilet' scheme. In the meantime, if Parish Councils express an interest in acquiring toilets in their Parish, Cabinet would support this.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the 2009/2010 budget exercise cabinet have requested a report that provides further options for toilet provision within the District. This follows on from a previous review in 2005 that focussed mainly on improving the most used facilities.
- 1.2 The Public Health Act 1936 (Section 87) gives local authorities a 'power' to install 'public sanitary conveniences', but there is no 'duty' to do so. Provision of public toilets does not feature as a priority within the Corporate Plan or Community Strategy.

1.3 The 2009/2010 draft revenue budget for this service area is £381,700. Following a review in 2005 over £300,000 of capital has been spent on improving toilet provision.

1.4 In 2008 the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) produced a report 'Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets'. The report outlines several examples of best practice of particular note is the 'Community Toilet' scheme. The scheme provides an excellent means by which local authorities, working in partnership with local businesses, can transform public access to toilets in their areas. Originally devised by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and now being adopted elsewhere, the scheme allows the public to use toilet facilities in participating businesses, which receive an annual payment in return to cover their costs. The scheme is cheaper to run than the Council's previous arrangement, and ensures access to a greater range of toilets that are clean and safe, located within managed buildings and available when people need them.

1.5 This report will provide options for toilet provision that-

- take account of this particular example of best practice ;
- take account of the projections of the medium term financial strategy (MTFS).

## 2.0 Proposal Details

2.1 Current details of public toilet provision are set out in appendix 1.

2.2 As can be seen there are a number of toilets that have already been provided / refurbished / replaced as a result of previous reviews of toilet provision and the Council has contractual obligations. There are also some toilets that complement another Council operation. In order to provide options that will have a budgetary impact in 2009/2010 there is immediate scope for reviewing the following 14 toilets-

|  |
|--|
| West End (Regent Road) Morecambe               |
| Toilets adjacent to the Dome- Morecambe        |
| Heysham Village                                |
| Sunderland point                               |
| Glasson Dock                                   |
| Cockerham                                      |
| Silverdale                                     |
| Warton   |
| Red bank shore                                 |
| Carnforth                                      |
| Bolton Le Sands                                |
| Hest Bank                                      |
| Bull Beck                                      |
| Victoria Institute- Caton (cleaned by Council) |

2.3 Taking account of the MTFS the most significant immediate savings could be made by 'mothballing' these toilets. This would mean that the toilets would still incur some ongoing costs eg- rates, standing utility charges etc. They would also incur some one off costs required to secure their closure (boarding up etc). Merely mothballing the toilets would provide a further opportunity to review their medium term / long term future.

- 2.4 By doing this it is estimated that the 2009/ 2010 revenue budget for toilets could be reduced by £100,000. With regard to Capital, there is £10,000 remaining within the current financial year and £137,000 in 2009/2010 for toilet improvements. The bulk of this had been earmarked for refurbishment of Heysham Village toilets, within minor works (£8K) for Festival Market toilets. Officers have recently been informed, however, that refurbishment of Marketgate toilets is scheduled for this financial year. Based on the original planning agreement the Council is liable for 50% of the improvement costs of these toilets, which are estimated at £45,000. It is proposed, therefore, that this commitment be included in the current year's capital programme and the remaining unallocated capital resources of around £100K be retained as a general capital provision but in year 2010/11, pending a review of the outcome of mothballing.
- 2.5 Although the proposals will involve a reduction in staffing to 1 FTE it is not expected that there will be any redeployment / redundancy issues because the staff will be utilised elsewhere within the cleansing function either as a result of staff turnover or as a direct reduction in the contracted services budget.
- 2.6 Mothballing these toilets and providing no other alternatives would represent a significant reduction in service.
- 2.7 Cherry picking from the list would not provide the same level of savings. Leaving a few toilets open would then require staff and vehicles to clean them. As an example Bull Beck is a fairly well used toilet especially at weekends. The cost of just emptying the septic tank at this toilet is around £14,000 per annum with another £6,000 devoted to repairs following vandalism etc.
- 2.8 In order to improve service provision a 'Community Toilet' scheme originally successfully introduced in Richmond is proposed. This initiative would offer payment to public buildings (eg pubs, cafes, hotels etc) who were prepared to offer use of their toilets to all members of the public (as opposed to just customers). In return the Council would contribute an agreed amount (£750) per annum to the business and provide branding and street signage to raise public awareness (an example of this is provided in Appendix 2).
- 2.9 It is proposed that in 2009/2010 the Council allocates £20,000 to a 'Community Toilet' pilot scheme. This would allow officers to seek around 15 participants and allow for branding and signage for the scheme.
- 2.10 If the scheme is successful a further proposal for expansion to other areas of the District will be brought forward for 2010/2011.
- 2.11 Currently there are 3 sets of public toilets provided in Williamson Park. At this stage no options have been prepared for reducing toilet provision but they will be brought forward with other options for Williamson Park. In the previously approved Capital Programme a specific provision of £60,000 was included for refurbishment. Given recent developments, it is proposed to merge this with another intended park scheme, to make a general provision for future park investment. The allocation of this capital budget would be covered in future reports to Cabinet regarding the park's operations.

### **3.0 Details of Consultation**

- 3.1 None

#### 4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 The options and their analysis are as follows-

| Option   | Pros  | Cons  |
|--|---|---|
| 1- status quo  | Retains existing levels of toilet provision.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does nothing to meet requirements of MTFs.</li> <li>• Many of the toilets where City council are in need of major repair, suffer from ongoing vandalism and are in exposed locations.</li> </ul>   |
| 2- Mothball 14 toilets as listed in para 2.2 - from April 1 2009, with capital changes in para 2.4                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a £100,000 per year saving to revenue budget.</li> <li>• Provides a £100,000 general capital budget, for future works (including any demolition).</li> <li>• Mothballing toilets allows for medium term / long term consideration of their future.</li> <li>• Allows other bodies the opportunity to consider taking over the ongoing running of the facility.</li> <li>• Many of these toilets are in need of major repair, suffer from ongoing vandalism and are in exposed locations.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents a significant service reduction and will be unpopular with many.</li> <li>• Mothballed public buildings are unsightly and can attract vandalism.</li> <li>• Although the facility is mothballed it will still incur some service / maintenance charges.</li> <li>• If at a future date the decision is taken to reopen or demolish the mothballed toilets there will obviously be further financial implications to consider, and these might not be fully covered by the £100K capital provision.</li> </ul>   |
| 3- Mothball some toilets of the toilets in the list in para 2.2- from April 1 2009, with capital changes in para 2.4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would provide some savings to revenue budget.</li> <li>• As above.</li> <li>• Reduced service reduction.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mothballing proposal of 14 toilets has been designed to generate the maximum saving from the resources that are used (eg staff, transport etc). Leaving some open would greatly reduce the saving as it would not be as efficient (ie. staff and a vehicle still have to be allocated to cleaning a reduced amount of toilets).</li> <li>• If at a future date the decision is taken to reopen or demolish the mothballed toilets again there will obviously be further financial implications to consider.</li> </ul> |
| 4- Community Toilet Pilot - from April 2009  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retains levels of service provision.</li> <li>• Cheaper to run (Pilot, but assume £20,000 per annum).</li> <li>• Provides toilets that are clean, safe, located within managed</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businesses may not be willing to participate.</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | <p>buildings and available when people need them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will impact positively on the businesses that participate through an annual contribution, publicity and signage.</li> <li>• Using 2009/2010 as pilot year allows for time to assess effectiveness and then make recommendations for 2010/2011</li> </ul> |  |
|--|---|--|

## 5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 Because of the need to make savings the officer preferred option is option 2 (mothball 14 toilets as listed in para 2.2) combined with option 4 (Community Toilet Pilot). The effective date for this would be April 1 2009.

## 6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The report provides options for toilet provision that are consistent with best practice and the Council's financial position.

### RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Provision of public toilets does not feature as a priority within the Corporate Plan or Community Strategy.

### CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

[Click here and type conclusion of impact assesment]

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The draft revenue budget includes £381,700 for the provision of public toilets within the District. Currently 3 full time direct staff are employed on this function of cleansing

Option 1 (status-quo) would see no change to the budget requirement and therefore generate no savings.

The combination of the preferred options (2 and 4) would see a reduction in staffing to 1 full time employee and generate a saving of £100,000 along with a cost of £20,000 resulting in a net saving of £80,000 per annum. It is anticipated that there would be no redeployment/redundancy issues as the staff will be redirected within the cleansing function through natural wastage or a direct reduction to the contracted services budget.

The savings arising from option 3 are not quantifiable at this moment as there is no schedule of which toilets would potentially be kept. Should Members choose this option then a further appraisal would be required.

As detailed in the report, the latest Capital Programme, as reported to Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009, includes the sum of £245,000 (profiled £108,000 in 2008/2009 and £137,000 in 2009/2010) for toilet improvements within the District. To date £98,000 has been spent, leaving £147,000 available, but there is the need to provide funding for the Marketgate refurbishment, and provide in future for the outcome of any mothballing.

All options require the Capital Programme to be re-profiled, as follows :-

|                   | <b>2008/2009</b><br><b>£'000</b> | <b>2009/2010</b><br><b>£'000</b> | <b>2010/11</b><br><b>£'000</b> | <b>TOTAL</b><br><b>£'000</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| January Programme | 108                              | 137                              | --                             | 245                          |
| Option 1          | 153                              | 137                              | --                             | 290                          |
| Options 2 & 3     | 143                              | --                               | 100                            | 243                          |

If at a future date the decision is taken to reopen or demolish the mothballed toilets there will obviously be further financial implications to consider at that time, against remaining budget provisions.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

In reaching a decision, Members are advised to consider the options in context of the budget position and the need to make ongoing savings and achieve value for money, as well as proposed priorities and the impact on service users.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal have been consulted and have no further comments to make.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

DCLG- Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets

**Contact Officer:** Mark Davies

**Telephone:** 01524 582401

**E-mail:** MDavies@lancaster.gov.uk

**Ref:**

## Appendix 1- Current Provision of Public Toilets

| Location  | Notes  |
|---|--|
| St Nicholas Arcade-<br>Lancaster  | Operated by St Nicholas Arcade- <b>No cost to the Council</b>  |
| Bulk St car park- Lancaster   | Operated by Adshel- <b>No cost to the Council</b>  |
| Marketgate- Lancaster   | Operated by Marketgate as part of original planning agreement- Council pays an amount for cleaning and maintenance. Also liable for half of any capital improvements. Refurbishment due this year. |
| Bus Station- Lancaster  | Council pays an amount cleaning and maintenance. Part of original agreement when bus station built.  |
| Williamson Park- Lancaster  | Operated by Williamson park- 3 toilets café, prefab units, Wyresdale Rd  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happy Mount Park – Morecambe</li> <li>• Clock Tower- Morecambe</li> <li>• Library Car Park- Morecambe</li> </ul> | Newly refurbished 'pay as you go' toilets operated by Danfo. Council pays annual amount of for cleaning, maintenance etc. All income retained by Council   |
| West End Gardens-<br>Morecambe  | New facility open to public maintained by Council open daily. Formed part of proposal for external funding of café facility  |
| Stone Jetty- Morecambe  | Located within Stone Jetty café but maintained by Council as a public toilet- available all year round.  |
| Dome- Morecambe   | Located near to Dome. Maintained by Council only opened during the spring and summer.  |
| West End toilets-<br>Morecambe  | Maintained by council  |
| Festival Market-<br>Morecambe   | Public toilets attached to Festival Market open daily. Due for minor refurbishment this year.  |
| Bus Station- Morecambe  | Closed due to ongoing vandalism and anti social behaviour.   |
| Heysham Village   | Maintained by Council  |
| Sunderland point  | Maintained by Council  |
| Glasson Dock  | Maintained by Council  |
| Cockerham   | Maintained by Council  |
| Silverdale  | Maintained by Council  |
| Warton  | Maintained by Council  |
| Red bank shore  | Maintained by Council  |
| Carnforth   | Maintained by Council  |
| Bolton Le Sands   | Maintained by Council  |
| Hest Bank   | Maintained by Council  |
| Bull Beck   | Maintained by Council  |
| Victoria Institute- Caton   | Cleaned by Council   |
| Conder Green  | Provided by Lancashire County Council  |
| Crook O'Lune  | Provided by Lancashire County Council  |
|   |  |
|   |  |

APPENDIX 2- Example from Richmond

Participating premises display one of these stickers in their window:

