

CABINET

Options for Public Toilet Provision in the District from 2010/11

10 November 2009

Report of Head of City Council (Direct) Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To outline proposals for the toilet provision in the District.			
Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member
Date Included in Forward Plan	5 th October 2009		
This report is public			

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Cabinet approves the plan for future provision of toilets as outlined in appendix B.
- (2) That the elements of the plan that do not require capital funding are implemented from April 2010.
- (3) That the capital growth required is considered as part of the budget process. Subject to value for money considerations and availability of capital funding, the elements of the plan that require capital funding are implemented as soon as capital funding is available and the plan is subsequently updated accordingly.
- (4) That authority to negotiate with Parish and Town Councils on possible transfer of toilets and management of toilets is delegated to the Head of City Council (Direct) Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with special responsibility for CCDS.
- (5) That revenue and capital budgets are updated accordingly

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet (3 March 2009) resolved the following in relation to existing toilet provision in the District-

(1) That the toilets remain open with the exception of Regent Road and those adjacent to the Dome, Morecambe and that savings be made from the following budgets:

£12,000 savings from the mothballing of the 2 public toilets located at Regent Road and those adjacent to the Dome, Morecambe.

(2) That the Parish and Town Councils be consulted as to whether they would be prepared to take over the toilets in the long term.

(3) That with regard to the Community Toilet Scheme the Council continues to discuss proposals for the use of toilets with local businesses.

- 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 conveniences does not directly feature as a priority within the Corporate Plan or Community Strategy.
- 1.3 The 2009/2010 revenue budget for this service area is £374,500. Following a previous review in 2005 over £300,000 of capital has been spent on improving toilet provision.
- 1.4 The capital investment in toilets has greatly improved facilities at key locations within the District. It has also highlighted both the poor state of the remaining toilets and the high relative costs of these toilets in terms of ongoing maintenance, vandalism and necessary services.
- 1.5 Current public toilet provision within the district is set out in appendix A.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 Whilst owned and maintained by the City Council the majority of public toilets within the district are located within rural areas. The feedback from Parish and Town Councils in these areas is that they are well used and valued amenities. Many Parish Councils point to the use of toilets by day-trippers, cyclists and walkers. Annual estimated visitor figures to the District as a whole are 4.78million of which 919,000 are estimated to be visitors to the rural areas.
- 2.2 At this stage, and perhaps inevitably, no Parish Council has expressed a desire to take over the running of public toilets. The majority of Parish Councils do not think that the introduction of a community toilet scheme would work and in most cases have not been able to identify any businesses in their locality that want to take part. However, in Councils throughout the country there are numerous examples of Parish Councils successfully taking over the running of public toilets and community toilet schemes that work. In most of these cases it seems the Council has set out a clear strategy for the future of toilets before negotiating with Parish / Town Councils and businesses.
- 2.3 The toilets located in urban areas are well used and are often relied upon by both local people and visitors. Many due to health problems, plan their journeys out around proximity to public toilets.
- 2.4 Over the last few years a general direction of toilet provision has emerged, with provision being sited either at key locations for tourism or in the retail centres, for the benefit of the district and its visitors as a whole. This direction can be summarised as-
 - **Lancaster-** provide toilets in partnership with other providers- eg Marketgate, Bus station, Bulk St car park. Also allow others to provide toilets as part of planning process- St Nicholas arcade. This approach has led to adequate provision within Lancaster.

- **Morecambe-** determine best locations for toilets and invest in improving provision in those toilets. Close down surplus toilets (eg Bare prom, Dome, West End). There is adequate provision within Morecambe but there are still some issues that need to be resolved. Specifically-

Removal of surplus toilets- capital is required to demolish and reinstate.

The Festival market toilet is well located and used. It is very expensive to run. Conversion into a purpose built unit as per the Clock Tower and Library car park would require up front capital investment but would reduce ongoing running costs from £31K per annum to £11K per annum.

The Stone Jetty toilets are contained within the café (apart from the disabled unit). They are maintained by the Council. This arrangement causes ongoing problems. It would be better if negotiations took place with the café owner with a view to transferring management of these toilets to the café.

- **Rural areas-** In the other areas of the District we have a number of issues that need to be addressed-

All the facilities are in need of upgrade and considerable investment. Besides structural and cosmetic problems the buildings are compared to our new facilities inefficient in terms of use of water, energy and design.

At least one facility (Red Bank Shore) is currently closed because it is structurally unsafe and will require expenditure of £5-10K before it can reopen.

Some of the toilets are poorly located (Hest Bank).

Some of the toilets are an eyesore (Bolton Le Sands, Heysham Village) and detract from the surroundings.

Bull Beck and Glasson Dock toilets both located adjacent to established cycling and walking paths are very well used but in need of upgrading .

The toilets at Carnforth are well used but relative to some of the recently refurbished toilets expensive to maintain.

- **Williamson Park / Happy Mount Park-** both of these parks are well used and have an ongoing visitor programme. Happy Mount Park toilets have been recently refurbished and converted to pay as you go facilities. Williamson Park has three sets of toilets one of which is only open during the summer months. Toilet provision is currently being reviewed along with many other issues.

2.5 In order to address the issues outlined above a clear direction for the future of the District's toilets needs to be developed and agreed. What is clear is that status quo is not sustainable as the Council retaining the current toilet stock is not affordable. Therefore a clear plan is required that would-

- Build on the good practice already in place in Lancaster and Morecambe.
- Consider invest to save options to improve toilets in key locations.
- Reduce the Council's toilet stock in non key locations. Reduction could either be through closure / demolition or if requested transfer to the relevant Parish / Town Council with an appropriate annual grant and initial support in arranging the transfer.
- Consider the appropriateness of a community toilet scheme.

- Address any outstanding issues- eg surplus toilets.

2.6 Based on the issues raised above a plan has been included in Appendix B which sets out a timescale and indicative costs / savings of addressing these.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 Parish and Town Councils have recently been consulted as to their views on the future of toilet provision these views have been fed into the report.

3.2 The views of individual members of the public have been considered and fed into the report.

3.3 The outcome of the report will be used to help inform the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Parish Council funding Task Group.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1

Option	Pros	Cons
1- Status quo	In the short term maintains existing levels of toilet provision.	<p>The condition of some of our toilets is already poor. Without investment they will further deteriorate to the point where they have to be closed for safety reasons (eg Red Bank Shore).</p> <p>Those toilets that have had capital investment show considerable savings in terms of ongoing maintenance, cost of electricity / water, reduced vandalism etc, compared with some of our older toilets.</p> <p>Maintaining status quo would, in the short term, satisfy some stakeholders. However, it doesn't create a position from which to take a planned look at toilet provision.</p>
2- Mothball a number of toilets in 2010/11	<p>It is estimated that revenue savings of approximately £100K could be made by mothballing toilets outside of the main visitor areas of Lancaster and Morecambe.</p> <p>£20K of this saving could allocated to a community</p>	<p>Would be seen as a kneejerk reaction to the current financial situation as opposed to a strategic decision.</p> <p>Even with £20K allocated to the community toilet scheme there is no guarantee that</p>

Option	Pros	Cons
	toilet scheme. If toilets were already mothballed it would make implementation of the scheme much easier.	businesses would sign up. There is even less guarantee that businesses in the areas most affected by the mothballing would sign up. Mothballed toilets would further deteriorate and create further maintenance issues for future years.
3- Adopt the plan in Appendix B for the District's toilet provision.	A planned approach to toilet provision would allow the Council to plan future investment and service provision. The plan proposes toilets in key locations that should be improved (Carnforth, Glasson, Bull Beck). However, it also identifies toilets in non key locations that should be closed or at the request of the Parish Council be considered for transfer (with an appropriate grant).	Could result in less toilet provision within the District. Requires capital investment to realise full savings.

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 The officer preferred option is option 3.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 The report sets out a plan to sustainably manage toilet provision within the District.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Toilet provision is not referred to directly within the Corporate Plan. However the proposals within the report do support the key actions-

- Improving the energy efficiency of our public buildings
- Implement Cycling Demonstration Town programme

Under the existing Capital Investment Strategy, investment in toilet provision would be allowable only where it is self-financing or investing to save, generally over a 5 year period, although longer periods may be allowable if appropriate. A report elsewhere on the agenda seeks Cabinet's initial views on reviewing these criteria.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

In preparing the report consideration has been given to relevant issues such as diversity, human rights, sustainability and rural proofing.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The 2009/10 approved revenue budget includes £374,500 for the provision of public toilets within the District. Currently 3 full time direct staff are employed on this function of cleansing

The latest Capital Programme, as approved by Cabinet on 28th July 2009, includes the sum of £100,000 within 2010/11 for toilet improvements. However, it should be noted that the capital programme is reliant on a projected level of capital receipts which may or may not be received.

Option 1 (status-quo) would see no change to the budget requirement and therefore generate no savings but may lead to closure of some toilets for safety reasons.

Option 2 would see the mothballing of toilets outside of the urban core which would generate savings of approximately £100,000 of which a proportion would be re-invested in the community toilet scheme.

Option 3 (as detailed in Appendix B) provides a phased plan of closure and conversion of existing toilets. The plan is largely reliant on capital investment to realise potential savings and should this not be available then the actions of the plan that do not require capital will be implemented and the plan will be amended accordingly. A financial appraisal over 7 years has been formulated and is summarised as follows.

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Savings							
- Independent of Capital	-60	-45	-45	-45	-45	-45	-45
- Dependent on Capital	-5	-21	-26	-37	-38	-44	-44
Capital Required	100	90	90	60	90	100	0

If all revenue savings were to be re-invested then the project would be self-financing within seven years and after that period only revenue savings would occur. That said, the capital investment criteria would need to be considered and met, not least to ensure that value for money was being achieved. This would be done as part of the budget exercise. As an example, the plan includes for the refurbishment of particular toilets such as Festival Market, Carnforth, Bull Beck and Glasson Dock, but the provisional costings would indicate that for some of these, the payback periods would be very lengthy – well outside of existing capital investment criteria. Members can change such criteria to include investment in toilets if they feel it would be appropriate to do so, but affordability is still a major issue and also the Council still has a duty to achieve value for money.

Options 2 and 3 would see a reduction in staffing to 1 full time direct member of staff. 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.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The proposals would achieve revenue savings to help with the 2010/11 budget, and would allow the capital investment plans to be considered alongside other growth bids, and in context of the Council's priorities and its financial prospects.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Any transfer of property will be completed by the Council's legal services

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Click here and type list of background papers

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