

**REPORT TO THE SCRUTINY PANEL for PLACES
MEETING OF 16th JUNE 2011**

Status: Discussion
Title: Public Toilet Provision Update
Originator: Matthew Bradford, Head of Community Services
Where from: Community Services
Where to next: Executive

Objective: To update the scrutiny panel on the situation regarding Council-owned toilet blocks in the district, how they are financed, managed, usage, where available and condition. To inform the scrutiny panel of options for managing the toilet blocks in the future.

1. Outcome sought from Panel

- 1.1 To note the contents of the report, and comment on the current arrangements for management of the toilet blocks owned by Harborough District Council

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council currently owns and operates toilets and toilet blocks in the following locations:

Commons Car Park Market Harborough
Welland Park Market Harborough
Little Bowden Recreation Ground Market Harborough
Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street Market Harborough (Office hours only)

The following toilet blocks are owned by the Council, but were closed in April 2010 after approval by Executive:

Market Place Market Harborough
Great Bowden Recreation Ground
Orchard Road Car Park Broughton Astley

The toilet block at George Street Car Park Lutterworth was closed, but has subsequently been renovated and is now open and managed by Lutterworth Town Council.

A toilet block is also located at Symingtons recreation ground. This was closed to the general public in the late 1990s and is only opened on Carnival Day. These toilets are used by the occupiers of the bowls pavilion since 2003/04.

All locations are shown on attached plans at **Appendix 1**

- 2.2 Changes to the financing arrangement for toilets have now resulted in the costs being apportioned to Special Expenses budget codes. This means that the communities that the toilets serve, now pay for their maintenance.
- 2.3 The toilets blocks that remain open are cleaned by FOCSA through the integrated contract. Closing the toilets itemised above enabled savings of £50k to be realised by the authority through reduction in cleaning costs, reduction in maintenance and repair costs and reduction in utility payments. The cost saving can be identified in the spreadsheet provided by Financial Services at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.4 The historical costs for maintenance including utility costs are also contained in the spreadsheet supplied by Financial Services at **Appendix 2**
- 2.5 The toilets are maintained by the Facilities Team at Harborough District Council. In 2005 and 2008 condition surveys of toilets were undertaken by the Engineers Team and the findings are recorded at **Appendix 3**. There has been some deterioration of the toilets in the years between the surveys, with the most acute deterioration at Welland Park toilets.
- 2.6 Footfall figures have been recorded for the Commons Car Park toilets in December 2010. These are shown below.

FOOTFALL SAMPLES COMMONS CAR PARK						
Samples taken week commencing 13 December 2010						
footfall count taken each time over 2 x 1 hour counts am & pm						
footfall analysis therefore between 0900 Hrs & 1630hrs weekdays						
	am	pm				total
Monday	56	52	median per hr	54	x 8hrs per day	432
Tuesday	52	58	median per hr	55	x 8hrs per day	440
Wednesday	56	62	median per hr	59	x8hrs per day	472
Thursday	68	74	median per hr	71	x8hrs per day	568
Friday	72	82	median per hr	77	x8hrs per day	616
Saturday	86	51	median per hr	68	x8hrs per day	544
Sunday	59	51	median per hr	55	x8hrs per day	440
						3512

- 2.7 Harborough District Council is seeking ways to encourage local communities to manage public conveniences. The Co-op at Broughton Astley is considering undertaking the management of the Orchard Road toilets, and as previously mentioned Lutterworth Town Council has already entered into an agreement to manage the toilet block at George Street Car Park. Lutterworth Town Council is now charging for use of the toilet. The current tariff per visit is 20p.
- 2.8 There is no statutory obligation for a local authority to provide public toilets. However, consideration should always be given to the detrimental affect that

non provision may have on visitors and residents of the town, and whether non provision of public toilets will make the town centres less desirable to visitors.

2.9 Section 87 of the **Public Health Act 1936** states that:

1) "a local authority or a parish or community council may, subject to subsection (2) of this section, provide sanitary conveniences in proper and convenient situations."

3 Points for discussion

3.1 Does the panel consider the existing toilet provision in communities to be sufficient? The current growth figures for housing in the District are documented in the LDF, and these should be taken into when determining whether exiting provision will be sufficient in the future. How would the panel like any future shortfalls to be addressed and what mechanism does the panel suggest the Authority should adopt in addressing these future shortfalls.

3.2 Does the panel consider that the arrangements that are now in place for financing the provision of public toilets through Special Expenses is correct?

3.3 The panel will have noted the condition surveys for the toilets blocks. How would the panel wish to see the provision of good quality toilets delivered? Should officers explore the possibility of businesses making toilets available to the public? Should dilapidated toilets be renovated or replaced and how does the panel consider this work should be financed?

3.4 Does the panel consider that charging for toilets should be implemented, and what level should the charge be set? Should the Commons Car park toilets be permanently staffed in the future, and how does the panel consider this extra cost should be absorbed since the review of toilet provision?

3.5 On 6 March 2008 the Department for Communities and Local Government published guidance aimed at encouraging local authorities to provide better access and better quality toilets. A press release outlined some of the measures that may be used:

SatLav – a charged service whereby text information about the nearest public toilet is sent to the subscriber's mobile phone

Community Toilet Schemes – where local shops and businesses open up public access to their toilets.

Use of the **planning** system to encourage developers to fund new toilets.

Use of **strategic and spatial plans** to ensure a better mix of provision, adopting a range of approaches to meet needs at different times of the day, and to improve poor quality facilities that attract criminal activity and bring down the reputation of neighbourhoods.

Does the panel consider any of these suggestions to be suitable for Harborough District, and how does the panel consider they should be implemented? The full publication of 13th May 2010 from the Houses of Parliament can be found at **Appendix 4**

4 Equality Impact Assessment Implications/Outcomes (attach completed EIA)

4.1 There are no major issues identified on the EIA, see **Appendix 5**.

5 Impact on Communities

5.1 The closure of some public conveniences will have had an impact on communities, especially where alternative facilities are not available. It is hoped that by working with communities, Parishes and businesses that toilet facilities can be provided and managed in locations where they are needed

6 Legal Issues

6.1 There are no major legal issues identified.

7 Resource Issues

7.1 The closure of some toilet blocks enabled savings to be made on cleaning and maintenance costs.

7.2 By charging for use of public toilets a revenue stream can be generated to offset some of the maintenance costs. This is now working in Lutterworth as the Town Council have set a charge of 20p per visit.

8 Community Safety Implications

8.1 Non identified.

9 Carbon Management Implications

9.1 Non identified.

10 Risk Management Implications

10.1 There is a reputational risk to the authority if satisfactory solutions for provision of public toilets cannot be identified.

11 Consultation

11.1 A petition was received from members of the public concerning closure of the public toilets at the Market Hall Market Harborough.

11.2 Closure of the public toilets in 2010 was undertaken on approval by Executive.

12 Background Papers

12.1 None.

Previous report(s): *Not Applicable*

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: No

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Location Plans for Public Toilets

Appendix 2 Financial information 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11

Appendix 3 Condition Survey results 2005 and 2008

Appendix 4 Parliamentary standard note on public conveniences May 2010

Appendix 5 Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 6 Council Minute 275