

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :		
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary /	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide	YES	
	Operational	Need to be recommendations to Council	NO	
		Is it a Key Decision	NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Adrian Lawrence E-mail: cldr.adrian.lawrence@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Ian Devereux		
		Other Members consulted: E&C Panel, KLACC		
Lead Officer: Nathan Johnson E-mail: nathan.johnson@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 782075 (ext 2075)		Other Officers consulted: Chris Bamfield, Lorraine Gore, John Hussey		
Financial Implications YES	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications NO

Date of meeting: 28 November 2017

PUBLIC TOILETS

Summary

1. The report considers proposals to amend the current funding of public toilets and potential for closures. The context is to enable Cabinet to consider the implications prior to the budget being approved.
2. The Environment and Community Panel and King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee (KLACC) have considered the proposals and made suggested recommendations. Consultation has also taken place with relevant Parish Councils.
3. The Council currently provides 22 public conveniences in the Borough at an annual cost of £374,000.
4. The report proposes that of the existing 22 public conveniences;
 - 13 remain open as per current arrangements including the full reopening of the Ferry Street toilets as listed in section 2.2 of the report.
 - 4 are charged to Special Expenses including 2 in The Walks, Memorial Playing Field, Downham Market and Heacham village on the basis of 80% locally and 20% from general rates.
 - 1 at Wales Court handed over to Downham Town Council after refurbishment costing £40,000.
 - 2 at Gaywood and Howdale, Downham Market are closed pending demolition or alternative use of the sites.
 - 2 at Old Hunstanton and Holme-next-the-Sea subject to further investigation.

Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to;

- a) Maintain the provision of toilets as listed in Section 2.2 of the report.
- b) Charge 80% of the cost of the following toilets as a Special Expenses charge;
 - Walks Management Building
 - Walks Broadwalk
 - Memorial Playing Fields, Downham Market
 - Heacham village
- c) Allocate £40,000 in capital funding to carry out a refurbishment of the Wales Court toilets, Downham Market and transfer to the ownership of Downham Market Town Council.
- d) Delegate authority to the Executive Director Commercial Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community to arrange for demolition or alternative use of the toilets at Gaywood and Howdale, Downham Market.
- e) Delegate authority to the Executive Director Commercial Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community to investigate options for Old Hunstanton and Holme-next-the-Sea.

Reason for Decision

To maintain an adequate supply of public conveniences and contribute towards the Council's budget targets.

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council has an ongoing programme of service reviews aimed at bridging the budget gap as Central Government funding of Local Authority Services continues to reduce. Borough wide the cost of public toilets is £374,000, covering the cost of 22 different toilets. Costs include business rates and utilities payments, disposable materials and staff cleaning.
- 1.2 Over the last few years as lease arrangements have expired, or other opportunities have become available, the Council has closed or handed over to third parties the management and operation of a number of toilets;
 - Denver Sluice
 - Hilgay
 - Snettisham
 - Brancaster
 - Austin Street, King's Lynn
- 1.3 Public conveniences have been subject to a review involving a Working Party established by the Environment and Community Panel, discussions through the King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee and correspondence with relevant Parish Councils.
- 1.4 Options considered have included:
 - Maintaining current arrangements

- Closing selected toilets either on a part time or permanent basis
- Charging people for use of the toilet
- Transfer of facilities to Parish Councils
- Charging costs through Special Expenses
- Transfer to a third party to operate as a toilet
- Sale or alternative use of the site

1.5 It is fair to say that proposals have generated a great deal of debate with conflicting views and opinions.

1.6 The Council has no legal responsibility to provide public toilets.

2 Proposals

A number of options including maintaining the current provision, closure, sale or transfer to a third party and charging locally through Special Expenses have been considered.

In discussions with the Portfolio Holder the following proposals are suggested for Cabinet consideration.

2.1 No Change

2.1.1 A number of toilet blocks are proposed to have no change to their current arrangements. These are associated with transport, car parks, town centre and tourist activities for which the Council receives an income to fund the cost of the public toilets. These are:

2.1.2 King's Lynn

- Bus Station/Vancouver Car park
- Baker Lane Car Park
- St James' Multi Storey Car Park
- Ferry Street/Tuesday Market Place Car park (was initially closed Monday – Friday for a trial period)

2.1.3 Hunstanton

- Seagate Car Park (Seasonal)
- Cliff Top Car Park
- Central Car Park/Bus Station
- Central Promenade/Southend Car Park
- Esplanade Gardens/The Green
- Bowling Green (Seasonal Opening)

2.1.4 Heacham

- North Beach Car Park
- South Beach Car Park

2.1.5 Burnham Market Car Park

2.2 King's Lynn Toilets considered for Review

2.2.1 The Gaywood toilets were closed on 27 March 2017 for a trial period and currently remain closed. The closure was due to a number of factors:

- Poor quality facility subject to regular vandalism
- Low level of use
- Toilets are available in the neighbouring supermarket and public library during opening hours.

2.2.2 During the closure of the toilets, the Council has received 2 formal complaints.

2.2.3 The Environment and Community Panel (E&C) recommended Gaywood toilets be kept open and the savings that could have been achieved be taken by closing one of the Walks toilets. The Panel also suggested that the cost of the toilets should be partially charged to Special Expenses and partly met by the Borough.

2.2.4 If the Broadwalk toilets were closed then additional capacity would need to be arranged for events. A one day hire of comparable facilities will be circa £230, which would quickly wipe out any potential savings.

2.2.5 The KLACC at its meeting on 19 October recommended that the Walks toilets remain open, that the existing Gaywood toilet remains closed but that officers report back on the feasibility of capital funding to provide a new toilet block. It is estimated that a small toilet block with a unisex disabled toilet, 2 unisex individual toilets and a male urinal could be provided for circa £70,000.

2.2.6 In contrast to the Gaywood toilets, both sets of toilets in the Walks are well used particularly for events. Potentially part-time closure could be considered but both facilities would need to be retained. The only option for closure would be the Broadwalk toilets as those at the management building also serve the café at the very busy play and activity areas. The Broadwalk toilets comprise 2 unisex toilets in fairly close proximity to the bandstand one of which is for people with disabilities. The annual cost of the facility is £4,500 in fixed building /consumables and £4,500 in staff costs. This is comparable to the current costs for Gaywood toilets.

2.2.7 The report supports continuing to provide the two toilet blocks in the Walks to cope with current demand, both for visitors to the park and for events. Closure of the Broadwalk toilets would require additional provision as stated in Section 3.4.

- 2.2.8 Both the E&C Panel and KLACC noted that the Walks is a significant park that is not only used by King's Lynn residents and particularly for events, however, quantifying the usage levels by residents and non residents is difficult. It is therefore suggested that an 80/20 split be adopted with 80% charged to Special Expenses for King's Lynn and 20% to the general Borough Council Tax. This policy would also be applied to any toilets charged to Special Expenses in any Parish.
- 2.2.9 It is recommended that the Gaywood toilets remain closed, but that the feasibility and costings for a new toilet block are reported to a future meeting of the KLACC.

2.3 Downham Market considered for Review

2.3.1 The toilet blocks provided in Downham Market are:

- The Howdale
- Memorial Playing Fields
- Wales Court

2.3.2 Downham Market Town Council have indicated that they would be prepared to take over direct management of the Wales Court toilets provided these were refurbished to resolve the ongoing issues around parts and repairs for the specialist unit. The estimated works costs would be £40,000. After handover the Town Council would then manage and maintain the facility through its Parish Precept.

2.3.3 The toilets on the Memorial Playing Field are to be charged against Special Expenses.

2.3.4 The toilets on the Howdale to be closed and demolished.

2.4 Heacham Village

2.4.1 Toilets at Heacham village to remain open and charged 80% locally and 20% to general rates.

2.5 Old Hunstanton and Holme-next-the-Sea

2.5.1 Both these toilets are unusual in that they are adjacent to car parks that are not operated by the Borough Council. They are also part of the overall tourism offer for West Norfolk. Further investigation is taking place with regard to options for these two toilets and no recommendation is proposed as yet.

3. **Policy Implications**

The considerations being undertaken are operational matters.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The proposals produce a saving of £40,000 per annum.
- 4.2 The proposals will release an element of time currently taken up by street cleaning staff in cleaning public toilets. This will be allocated locally for additional litter picking and general street cleaning duties, this is equivalent to £26,000 in staff time.
- 4.3 There will be no overall saving on the Borough spend from charging 80% of the costs of the two sets of toilets in the Walks to King's Lynn special expenses. The costs will however be recovered from the tax payers in King's Lynn as the users of these facilities rather than through the general council tax charge to all residents of the Borough. This follows the practice with toilets operated by parishes where the costs are charged to their residents.

5. Statutory Considerations

The Council has no legal responsibility to provide public toilets.

6. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

7. Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None

8. Background Papers

Published reports and Minutes from E&C 10/10/17 and KLACC 12/9/17
comments from parish councils



**Pre-Screening Equality Impact
Assessment**

Name of policy/service/function	PUBLIC TOILETS				
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function?	New / Existing (delete as appropriate)				
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	Current funding of public toilets and potential savings if some public toilets are demolished or transferred.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			X	
	Disability			X	
	Gender			X	
	Gender Re-assignment			X	
	Marriage/civil partnership			X	
	Pregnancy & maternity			X	
	Race			X	
	Religion or belief			X	
	Sexual orientation			X	
	Other (eg low income)			X	
Question	Answer	Comments			
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	Yes / No				
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	Yes / No				
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes / No				
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	Yes / No	Actions:			
	N/A	Actions agreed by EWG member:			
Assessment completed by: Name ALLISON BINGHAM					
Job title BUILDING TECHNICIAN	Date 31 October 2017				

Please Note: If there are any positive or negative impacts identified in question 1, or there any 'yes' responses to questions 2 – 4 a full impact assessment will be required.