

SUBJECT:	PUBLIC TOILETS / URINALS: PROPOSED CLOSURES
DIRECTORATE:	DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
LEAD OFFICER:	STEVE BIRD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES AND STREET SCENE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek agreement to permanently close the public urinals at Stamp End and Monks Road and the associated demolition and reinstatement works at these locations.
- 1.2 To seek agreement to consult on a proposal to close the public ladies and gents toilet facilities at St Peter at Arches.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The City Council owns and operates a number of public toilets across the city. The quality and accessibility of these facilities varies significantly. The Council operates three award winning accessible toilet facilities at Lucy Tower Street, Castle Square and Tentercroft Street but also has a number of older outdated and little used facilities which are not fully accessible and/or in some cases are misused and abused.
- 2.2 The gents urinals at Monks Road and Stamp End have been closed since late 2011 due to anti-social behaviour issues and in the case of the Monks Road facility, damage to an underground drain.
- 2.3 St Peter at Arches ladies and gents toilets remain open, although the ladies is not easily accessible (DDA compliant) to all by virtue of the access being by staircase. The gents facility at St Peters at Arches in particular suffers a significant degree of misuse and the number of users at the ladies facility is extremely low when compared with other city centre toilets. The City Council's longer term City Centre Toilets Strategy identified the need to consider closure of this facility and explore opportunities for provision of new public toilet facilities as new city centre developments come forward.
- 2.4 This report seeks agreement to formally and permanently close these facilities, and in the case of the two urinal buildings, to demolish them and reinstate the areas.

3. Background

- 3.1 **Monks Road Urinal** – this facility was closed in November 2011 due to damage to the underground drains. Incidents of inappropriate and anti social behaviour were also ongoing. Alternative toilet provision is available in the locality at the Arboretum, albeit not 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. Since the end of 2011 very few issues have been raised regarding its closure. It is a single sex urinal of brick

construction and is a poor facility with no running water for users or staff to clean the facility.

- 3.2 It is not considered cost effective to undertake the required drain works (estimated cost between £5-£10,000) - as damage could reoccur in the future due to the locality of a large tree directly next to the facility - for the poor provision that is provided.
- 3.3 **Stamp End Urinal** – this facility was closed in November 2011 due to ongoing incidents of inappropriate and anti social behaviour. Since that time very few issues have been raised regarding its closure. It is a single sex urinal of brick construction and is a poor facility, again difficult to clean and maintain.

Consultation – Monks Road and Stamp End

- 3.4 In 2012 notices were displayed at the Stamp End facility asking for comments on closure of the urinal. Officers also attended both the Monks Road Community Board and Monks Road Neighbourhood Initiative
- 3.5 Eight written responses were received:
- 7 from residents – 3 in favour of the permanent removal of the facilities and 4 objecting (so broadly balanced)
 - 1 from the School of Architecture at University of Lincoln suggesting some form of alternative use for the building (not retaining toilet provision).

St Peter at Arches Ladies and Gents Toilets

- 3.6 Customer numbers and usage of the Council's public toilets were assessed prior to the Toilets Service Lean Review in 2012. This showed that during one week in January there were 19,449 visits to the Council's city centre public toilets. Around 2,800 of those visits were to the St Peter at Arches gents facility and usage of the ladies toilets at St Peters at Arches was extremely low with only 218 users (an average of only 31 per day).
- 3.7 A further count was carried out during the summer (August) and whilst numbers had predictably increased during that busier period, still only 492 visitors were recorded at the ladies toilets in a week (an average of only 70 per day). In comparison the modern facilities at Westgate had 966 users and Castle Hill 2373 in the same period.
- 3.8 The low usage at St Peters at Arches is attributed to both the lack of accessibility of the ladies facility (requiring a climb of more than 30 steps) and the location of the facility accessed as it is along an uninviting long and narrow passageway which is also the access to the problematic gents toilets.
- 3.9 Furthermore, whilst the numbers using the gents facility is higher, both the City Council's Public Protection & Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Lincolnshire Police are aware of complaints of abuse and misuse of these toilets and it is believed that a number of visitors to St Peter at Arches gents toilets are not necessarily using the toilets for their intended purpose.
- 3.10 The Toilet Service Lean Review identified a need to consider whether the St Peter

at Arches toilets should remain open, given their relatively low usage (particularly in the case of the ladies), high cost per use, lack of accessibility, and their ongoing abuse and misuse which is partly encouraged by their old design and relative isolation.

City Centre Toilets Strategy

- 3.11 In 2009 the Council adopted a strategy for the future provision and management of city centre toilets. The Strategy identified the poor quality of the facilities at St Peters at Arches and the Monks Road and Stamp End urinals.
- 3.12 In relation to the St Peter at Arches toilets the strategy identified the need to consider development of new, fully accessible facilities in the area and identified the need to consider the future of the facilities at St Peters at Arches given their age, poor location, poor accessibility and poor quality. Specifically the report identified the gents toilets as being one of those suffering the most anti-social behaviour and identified that neither facility was fully accessible (DDA compliant) – particularly in the case of the ladies – highlighting that considerable costs would need to be incurred to make them accessible by provision of a lift or escalator or complete remodelling (if indeed that were physically possible).

Consideration by the Council's Asset Review Group (ARG)

- 3.13 In the autumn of 2013 ARG considered the proposed closure of the Monks Road and Stamp End urinals, in light of the facts detailed above. ARG felt that the closure was appropriate, but that any demolition / making good costs should be met within existing service area budgets as and when this could be afforded.
- 3.14 In January 2014 ARG considered the proposed closure of St Peter at Arches ladies and gents toilets and had no objections to the closure of this facility in light of the facts detailed above in the report.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The proposal is to decommission and demolish the urinals at Monks Road and Stamp End.
- In the case of Stamp End, indicative costs have been provided for the demolition of the facility and reinstating the area to grass to blend with its surroundings. A budget of approximately £6,500 is required to undertake these works.
 - In the case of Monks Road, indicative costs have been provided for the demolition of the facility, realigning the fence around the adjoining Monks Abbey Park and restating the area to grass to blend with its surroundings. A budget of approximately £9,000 is required to undertake these works.
- 4.2 It is also proposed to consult on a proposed closure of both the ladies and gents toilet facilities at St Peter at Arches.
- 4.3 In doing so, to note the Council's intent to identify opportunities to provide improved, fully accessible public toilet facilities in the lower city centre area as development opportunities arise through the City Centre Masterplan, including but

not limited to, the proposed Lindongate development and any future improvement works at the Central Markets, in accordance with the adopted Toilets Strategy.

5. Strategic Priorities

Fit for Purpose Council

- 5.1 Presently the two urinals are of such poor quality they have needed to be closed for safety reasons. St Peter at Arches toilets are of poor quality and are not fully accessible. The Council's strategy for toilet provision identified the need to consider closure of these facilities and supports the development of new improved facilities in the city centre as opportunity permits.

6. Organisational Impacts

(i) Finance

- 6.1 **Stamp End** – there will be minimal insurance and maintenance cost savings. Business Rates are not payable on this location. Costs of demolition and reinstatement are estimated at £6.5k plus fees.
- 6.2 **Monks Road** – there will be minimal insurance and maintenance cost savings. Business Rates are not payable on this location. Costs of demolition and reinstatement are estimated at £9k plus fees.
- 6.3 It is suggested that the above costs be met by the public toilet revenue budget as and when they can be afforded. It is likely therefore that as there is no budget provision for such, demolition and reinstatement will be undertaken incrementally as budget provision allows.
- 6.4 **St Peter at Arches** – closure would result in savings from operation in terms of utilities in the order of £3,200 pa. Minimal costs would be incurred in physically closing off the toilets and ensuring that access continues to be barred until the building is given over to another use. The savings would be available for release from the service budgets as a contribution to the Council's overall savings targets set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy subject to the potential future adoption of a new facility as considered by the City Centre Toilets Strategy.
- 6.5 Subject to the outcome of public consultation on the proposed closure should a decision be taken to proceed with the proposed closure of the St Peter at Arches toilets then this would also provide an opportunity for a saving in the staffing budget. Should closure be confirmed this would be factored into the ongoing Public Conveniences Service Review which is looking at reconfiguring the staffing rota and reducing overtime costs in the staffing budget. Any actual saving would be factored into the financial implications of that report.

(ii) Legal Implications incl Procurement Rules

- 6.6 The required works will be procured in accordance with the Council's procurement policy. The relevant planning consents will be sought if required.

(iii) Land, Property and Accommodation

- 6.7 All 3 facilities are owned by the City of Lincoln Council. The Monks Road urinal is next door to the remains of Monks Abbey, but does not require additional specific approvals. There are no specific issues at Stamp End.
- 6.8 The closure of the St Peter at Arches facility would be subject to consultation and consideration of the feedback. If ultimately a decision was taken to close the facility, then this would lead to a disposal of the asset.
- 6.9 A recent condition survey of the St Peter at Arches toilet facility has identified the need to carry out maintenance repairs of £17,816 within five years and £68,740 in the longer term.
- 6.10 Should a decision be taken to close the toilet facility then a disposal options report will be submitted by Property Services which will also look at the potential of combining this property with adjacent landholdings to increase the level of capital receipt.

(iv) Human Resources

- 6.11 There are no staff implications relating to the closure of the two urinals.
- 6.12 The proposed closure of St Peter at Arches if agreed will be taken into consideration in the ongoing Public Conveniences Service Review, and is expected to result in additional savings. Any resulting staffing implications will be subject to formal consultation with staff and unions and would be managed through the Council's Management of Change process as a part of the Public Conveniences Service Review.

7. Risk Implications

(i) Options Explored

7.1 Monks Road

1. Re-Commission Facility – major works are required to rectify the broken drains (estimate (£5k - £10k) and even if repaired would still only provide a single sex, open air, facility.
2. Do Nothing – there will be ongoing minimal costs to inspect, maintain and insure the facility, however over time the fabric of the building will deteriorate.

7.2 Stamp End

1. Re-Commission Facility – minimal works are required to reopen the facility but would still only provide a single sex, facility and the inappropriate and anti social behaviour is likely to return.
2. Do Nothing – there will be ongoing minimal costs to inspect, maintain and insure the facility, however over time the fabric of the building will deteriorate.

7.3 St Peter at Arches

1. Improve Facility to Make Fully Accessible – this is not considered to be achievable at reasonable cost and even if it were the site and physical location of the toilets would still be unsatisfactory and it is suggested low usage and misuse would continue.
2. Do Nothing – the toilets will continue to have severe access restrictions, be the subject of abuse and misuse, and in the case of the ladies in particular, have a high cost per use.

(ii) Key Risks Associated with the Preferred Approach

- 7.4
1. Toilet facilities are being removed from the Council's portfolio meaning a loss in provision and potential PR implications, however:
 - These toilet blocks have limited accessibility and limited facilities.
 - In the case of the two urinals they have been out of use for some time.
 - It is hoped that in the longer term St Peter at Arches will be replaced with a fully accessible, well equipped male and female facility in the city centre.
 2. An initial equality analysis on the proposed closure of the St Peters at Arches facilities has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix A to this report. This will be further informed by the outcome of consultations on the proposed closure

8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the Executive agree that:

1. Stamp End and Monks Road urinals be decommissioned and be declared surplus to service requirements.
2. Stamp End and Monks Road facilities be demolished and the ground reinstated to blend with the surrounding area at such a time when the necessary funding can be met from existing service budgets.
3. A public consultation exercise be undertaken on the proposal to close St Peter at Arches toilets.
4. A final decision on the closure of St Peter at Arches be delegated to the Director of Housing & Community Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder taking into account the outcome of public consultations.
5. Should the closure of St Peter at Arches progress in line with the proposal, the Director of Resources' Property Services Team be asked to provide an options paper for the future use or disposal of the building.

Key Decision

No

Do the Exempt

No

**Information Categories
Apply**

**Call in and Urgency: Is the
decision one to which
Rule 15 of the Scrutiny
Procedure Rules apply?**

No

**Does the report contain
Appendices?**

Yes - one

**List of Background
Papers:**

None.

Lead Officer:

Caroline Bird
Telephone 873405