

SUBJECT: PUBLIC CONVENIENCES-SERVICE REVIEW

DIRECTORATE: COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

REPORT AUTHOR: STEVE BIRD ASSISTANT DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES AND STREET SCENE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Executive with details and background relating to the Public Conveniences services, so as to permit it to consider proposals to both deliver the financial savings required of this service and other options for change.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 As a result of the future financial challenges that the Council faces, the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-26 requires a significant reduction in the Council's net cost base to ensure it maintains a sustainable financial position.

- 2.2 A programme of individual reviews are being developed which includes a review of the net cost of the Public Conveniences Services, with a requirement to reduce the net cost by circa £82ka (plus annual inflation).

- 2.3 The report seeks agreement to:

- a rationalisation of facilities to provide a level of service that can still be delivered with the reduced level of staffing resources available.

- reduce staffing numbers (the staff costs making up the largest part of the service budgets), and hence deliver the required contribution to the Towards Financial Sustainability Programme.

- move to contactless payments on all charging facilities

- charging event organisers / seeking imposed cost recovery (with discretion subject to Director agreement in consultation with Portfolio Holder).

- continue consultation with appropriate groups with the ultimate aim of moving away from Radar key access, to a better, more modern, controlled access system.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Covid19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the Council's financial position and whilst the immediate effects in 2020/21 of increased costs and falling income were largely mitigated, it is the longer-term impact on a number of the Council's key income streams that have resulted in significant level of savings being required.

- 3.2 In March 2021 the Council approved the MTFS 2021-26 which was predicated on the achievement of annual revenue savings of £1.75m by 2023/24. Delivery of this savings target is critical in ensuring that the Council maintains a balanced budget position.
- 3.3 It is the delivery of a contribution towards these savings that is the objective of this report. Specifically, this report is provided based on the need to reduce expenditure by circa £82k pa (plus inflation).
- 3.4 The City Council's Public Conveniences services section comprises the following staff.
- 3.5 1 Supervisor
1 Mobile Attendant
6 Full time attendants
1 P/T Attendant
- 3.6 Prior to the closure required by covid, these staff have operated a seven day service across numerous facilities including two open air urinals.
- 3.7 The full details of staffing, facilities and income is included in the attached Impact Assessment Document, attached as Appendix A (which has had sensitive staff details redacted)
- 3.8 It is recognised that this service is an important front facing service for the council in that it underpins many visits to the city, so it is important that the review protects services as far as possible within the financial constraints required of the review.
- 3.9 It also has to be noted that in recent years the public conveniences services have encountered and endured increasing numbers of issues associated with damage to facilities, abuse, and anti-social behaviour. The damage and abuse of facilities has predominately been associated with Radar key accessed facilities.

4. The Proposal

- 4.1 The full details of the proposed changes are as set out in detail in Appendix A including everything indicated in summary below.
- 4.2 In summary this is what is proposed as the new level of provision.

Toilet Block	Current (pre covid) Provision	Staffing/Proposed	Opening Times Proposed
Bus Station	Ladies & Gents, Disabled, and 'Changing Places' . Charging	Staffed 7 days per week. Toilet Attendants staff to evening – Bus Station Staff close at Bus Station closing time	7 days per week, as per Bus Station opening hours.

Tentercroft	Ladies & Gents, Disabled Charging	Open 7 days Mobile	7 days per week 9am to 5pm
Castle	Ladies & Gents, Disabled Charging	Open 7 days Mobile	7 days per week 9am to 5pm
Westgate	Ladies & Gents, Disabled New- charging	One Radar key access toilet to be maintained, others closed to day to day use. Staffing subject to event requirements/income.	Disabled facility maintained accessible 24/7. All other facilities opened for events only.
Sincil Street	Ladies Free	Staffing subject to event requirements/income.	Opened for events only. (plans in place for site to be redeveloped with new toilets)
Hartsholme Country Park (HCP camp site has its own separate shower and toilet block maintained by camp site staff)	Ladies & Gents, Disabled Free	Open 7 days Mobile	7 days per week 9am to 4pm (potentially longer for events)
Boultham	Ladies & Gents, Disabled Free	Open 7 days Mobile	7 days per week 9am to 3pm (potentially longer for events). Closes at 3pm due to history of abuse after this time.
Lucy Tower	Ladies & Gents, Disabled Charging (closed for many months due to routine abuse/damage)	Staffing subject to event requirements/income.	Been available for events only.

South Park	Ladies & Gents, Disabled. Events only. Free	Staffing subject to event requirements/income.	Opened for events only as has been the situation for many years
Newport Arch	Gents urinal Free	Closed	Closed
Union Road	Gents urinal Free	Closed	Closed

- 4.3 The proposal is predicated on establishing a new level of service that it is viable to maintain with the cut in resources necessary to achieve the savings.
- 4.4 This has meant a reconsideration of the service from the base upwards and has led to reductions in the facilities available to correlate with the loss in staffing numbers. The detailed plan sets out clearly which facilities are to be retained, which are to have restrictions on use, and which are to be closed permanently.
- 4.5 In brief all services are maintained as they have been pre-covid **except**: Sincil Street (ladies) will be replaced with a new improved (modern unisex) facility within the refurbished market, Westgate will be reduced to Radar key access only, Lucy Tower will be events only, and the two urinals will close.
- 4.6 This review has, by necessity, taken a fundamentally different approach to service delivery to that previously enjoyed. Under the established model sites have been attended, with only some others on the periphery of the service cared for by mobile staff. The new model moves, by necessity, to one where mobile staff will provide the core provision. Only the bus station, which is so heavily used and also has other cleansing demands for the site, retains a staff presence for a significant part of each day.
- 4.7 Use of mobile cleansing staff does reduce costs, but it also means staff will not always be on hand to assist members of the public, maintain constant cleansing, and deter abuse/misuse. Whilst mobile staff will no doubt do their very best to uphold standards, and it is hoped cleaning standards won't diminish, it is inevitable that the new model will not be able to deliver exactly the same level of service for users, at times.
- 4.8 Other initiatives identified in the report, which it is hoped will follow a reorganisation of the service, are to adopt contactless payments and to replace Radar key access with an electronic trackable electronic access system. Additionally, greater income will be achieved by charging event organisers for facilities.
- 4.9 Contactless payments can be delivered by a small investment in the infrastructure, improving access for users.
- 4.10 The Radar key scheme suffers from the open availability of keys to those who should not have them. It is hoped that a modern electronic alternative can be developed to better protect facilities, and thereby afford better access for users needing these services. This will be discussed with disability access groups, prior to developing any implementation proposals.

- 4.11 Charging event organisers would be a simple way for the cost of providing an event to fall on the organiser of the event, not on the Council.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Let's drive economic growth

The Council's toilets provision is important to the business and recreational offer in the city centre. It is important that this proposal is reflective of both demands and the changing retail/recreational environment.

5.2 Let's reduce inequality

An EIA is attached as appendix B. See Equality, Diversity and Human rights section below.

5.3 High Performing Services

Nationally it is increasingly expected that public toilets are now a charged service. As such it is vital that the service becomes even more business minded and improves elements of service to ensure that paying customers get a good quality of service that represents value for money.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance

The MTFS target is for a saving of £82k pa plus annual inflation. The proposal detailed below slightly exceeds the target figure.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
TOFS Savings Target required	(82,000)	(83,640)	(85,310)	(87,020)	(88,760)
TOFS savings target identified	(82,220)	(86,880)	(88,540)	(90,230)	(94,480)
Savings Target Overachieved	(220)	(3,240)	(3,230)	(3,210)	(5,720)

Any overachievement of the target will be retained within the service initially in order to fund any potential loss of income from the service changes.

The initial outlay for the purchase of the card machines will be funded from the overachievement of the ToFS target in year 1 and is included in the above table.

As part of the proposal there will potentially be redundancy costs and pension strain costs, these will be funded from the Invest to Save Reserve. At the maximum potential cost the savings delivered will achieve a payback on the upfront costs of less than 2 years.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules N/A

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Attached as Appendix B and C is a full EIA and the outcomes from the associated consultation exercise. The conclusions of these can be very briefly summarised as concern at:

- any reduction in the availability of toilet facilities, which could lead to more frequent toileting in the street.
- the distance between facilities due to disability/illness/age related complaints.
- The impact this will have on deterring shoppers/visitors to the city.

Appendix D shows the proximity of the facilities.

6.4 Human Resources

As the service review requires the loss of posts to achieve the required savings it has been necessary to follow a full Management of Change (MOC) process, in accordance with Council policies.

Unions have been consulted accordingly, both alongside the MoC consultations with staff and through formal JCCs.

6.5 Land, Property and Accommodation

The proposal closes two urinals, Sincil Street ladies' toilet facilities in the market until they can be replaced by new unisex facilities, reduces access to facilities at Westgate to disabled only, and closes others for use in support of events. Facilities Management will take account of the changes and adjust/remove provision accordingly in due course.

6.6 Significant Community Impact

As a part of considering changes an EIA has been developed and consulted upon. See Equality, Diversity and Human rights section above. In addition, a comprehensive public consultation exercise was undertaken.

6.7 Corporate Health and Safety implications

All Council facilities are managed via the usual site inspection and risk assessment processes. The facilities are subject of the corporate Tree of Responsibility for any H&S issues that may arise.

7. Risk Implications

(i) Options Explored

The section's finances have been considered in detail, but as the bulk of the budgets are staff and site costs then the savings can only be achieved by reductions in staff and facilities in tandem, as set out in the report.

(ii) Key risks associated with the preferred approach

Removal of attendants exposes sites to greater abuse/misuse/damage and vandalism. The service quality may be impacted leading to a poor reputation and lowering income. However, at this stage it is envisaged any additional costs associated with abuse of the facilities will be less than the financial savings this proposal releases, accepting that any increase in damage will impact on the actual level of savings released. This will be kept under review.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That Executive agree the report and savings as proposed.

Is this a key decision?

Yes

Do the exempt information categories apply?

Yes- some details moved to part B

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?

No

How many appendices does the report contain?

5 (plus 1 in part B)

List of Background Papers:

MTFS 2021-26 Executive January 2021

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