

**Report of the Director of Environment, Transport and Planning**

**Public Toilet Provision: Update Report**

**Summary**

1. City of York Council provide eleven public toilets across the city for use by members of the public. Seven public toilet facilities are located in the city centre, one each in Acomb and Haxby shopping areas as well as facilities in Rowntree Park and West Bank Park.
2. The Public Health Act 1936 gives local authorities a power to provide public toilets, but it does not impose a duty to do so. Over the past decade or so, there has been a steady decline in the provision of public toilets across the UK as local authorities have tried to manage them within diminishing budgets and the perception of nuisance associated with them.
3. In 2013, the Council agreed a capital refurbishment of nine of its public toilet facilities. In May 2014 the Council entered into a 15-year contract to operate the facilities with an option to extend by another five years (by mutual consent).

**Background**

4. All of the Council's toilets are unisex, with all but one site (West Bank park) providing an accessible standard toilet(s). The accessible standard unit at Coppergate Centre is currently closed and will reopen later in the winter following internal remodelling. There are two Changing Places facilities at Union Terrace and Silver Street.
5. Accessible toilets must comply to Part M Building Regulations to ensure that all public buildings are accessible and have suitable

facilities. Standard accessible toilets are designed to facilitate access by a 'standard wheelchair' and are designed for independent use by an individual. Grabrails or fixed handrails are fitted to the side and rear of the WC. These facilities are unlikely to accommodate for example a powered wheelchair, or those fitted with additional head or leg supports.

6. Changing Places units are different to accessible toilets in that they provide additional space and equipment to support people who need changing benches, hoists, or sufficient space to accommodate more than 1 person. An accessible Changing Place Unit must have (i) enough space for a disabled person and two carers, (ii) a centrally placed toilet with room both sides for a wheelchair to manoeuvre, (iii) a privacy screen or curtain, (iv) a wide tear-off paper roll to cover the adult changing bench, (v) a large waste bin and (vi) non-slip flooring.
7. The Changing Places fund was introduced by the Government to accelerate the provision of facilities in existing buildings in England. The Council was successful in securing £244,238 from this fund to undertake improvements to expand the cities changing places facilities. Some money went to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties as well.
8. The Council's public toilet facilities are located as follows:-

<b>Location</b>	<b>Opening Times</b>	<b>Facilities</b>
Silver Street YO1 8RY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 8.00am to 6.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 7.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilet with a Radar key lock</li> <li>• Male/Female facilities</li> <li>• Changing Places unit with keypad entry</li> <li>• Baby change</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
Coppergate Shopping Centre YO1 9NT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 9.00am to 5.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible unit is currently being re-developed (to re-open Winter 2024)</li> <li>• Male/Female facilities</li> <li>• Baby change</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
Rougier Street YO1 6JB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 9.00am to 5.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Unisex facilities</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Opening Times</b>	<b>Facilities</b>

St Leonard's Place YO1 7EW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Unisex facilities</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
Nunnery Lane car park YO23 1AA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 9.00am to 5.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Unisex facilities</li> <li>• Baby change</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
St George's Field car and coach park YO10 4AB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 9.00am to 5.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Unisex facilities</li> <li>• Baby change</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
Union Terrace car and coach park YO31 7ES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Unisex facilities</li> <li>• Changing Places unit</li> <li>• Baby change</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
Rowntree Park public toilets YO23 1JQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8.00am to dusk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilet with a Radar key lock</li> <li>• Male/Female toilets</li> <li>• Free entry</li> </ul>
Front Street public toilets, Acomb YO24 3BZ *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 9.00am to 5.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Baby change *</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>
West Bank Park public toilets YO24 4NS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8.00am to dusk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male/Female toilets</li> <li>• Free entry</li> </ul>
Haxby Town Shopping Centre YO32 2LU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 October to 31 March: 9.00am to 5.00pm</li> <li>• 1 April to 30 September: 9.00am to 6.00pm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible toilets with either a Radar key lock or keypad entry</li> <li>• Baby change</li> <li>• 40p controlled entry</li> </ul>

\* Please note that Acomb toilets are currently being refurbished and the new accessible facilities will be open from late October 2024 onwards

## **Management of Public Toilets**

9. In 2014, the Council transferred the management of its non parks toilets to Healthmatic Limited through an investment and maintenance tender process. The contract required Healthmatic to upgrade facilities and allowed for fee-paying entry. Under the contract with Healthmatic, the premises are leased to the company, and they are responsible for all maintenance costs, receive all of the income from customers and receive a fixed annual management fee from the Council. The contract is for 15 years with an option to extend for a further 5 years.
10. Service provision can be affected by anti-social behaviour and drug use with damage and mess requiring extra cleansing. A number of the CYC provided public toilets have needle shutes for safe disposal of needles (locations are limited by the need for a service void in which to secure a safe storage unit).
11. During 2022 and 2023, there were a spate of breaks ins and attempted thefts from the payment machines and a couple of serious incidents related to drug use which resulted in some closures of the facilities, whilst repairs and deep cleanses took place. Happily, over the past 12 months there have not been any serious incidents at the public toilets. Community Safety and the Police work closely together to target any activity in public toilets.
12. Rowntree Park and West Bank Park are outside of the core contract; here the premises remain with the Council with Healthmatic providing opening / closing and cleaning services.
13. The Council's client function is provided by officers in Public Realm who liaise with Healthmatic on a regular basis and carry out ad hoc site checks. Specialist support and advice is available from the Council's Access Officer and colleagues in the Customer and Communities Team who have led on the Changing Places programme.

## **Recent Improvements**

14. In 2017/18, the Council invested £70k across Silver Street and Coppergate for toilet improvements.
  - The Silver Street site was created in 2012 as a replacement for the Parliament Street facilities. Here new low maintenance

toilets with a larger flush capacity were installed to replace the existing units which were at the end of their life and have had previous issues caused by their limited flush capacity. The proposal also funded new urinals and redecoration.

- The Coppergate Toilets were remodelled with the existing layout reduced by approximately 40 %, the toilets were repainted, new toilets were fitted, new flooring, and improved lighting were also delivered.
15. In Spring 2024, the facilities at Silver Street were improved by an upgrade of the shared Accessible / Changing Places Unit into a modern Changing Places Unit and creation of a new separate accessible unit in what was formally the Market Trader unit (which is still available to the Traders).
  16. Work is currently ongoing at Front Street, Acomb to renew the existing accessible toilet and add a second accessible unit in part of the building which had been mothballed for several years. Work commenced in early September 2024 with the project due to be completed by the end of October and is funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The two units will have left-hand and right-hand accessible provision.
  17. Improvements have also been made in relation to signage in regard to toilets. The Council has recently worked with the York BiD (Business Improvement District) to improve the way finding signs in the city, which include signage to the public toilets. Further improvement to directional signs to Silver Street (due to its location) are due to take place in the coming weeks.
  18. In addition to this, the Council has installed directional signage for customers to all of the Changing Places Toilets in the city centre (Silver Street, Union Terrace, York Rail Station, and the Explore Library) guiding them from the closest principal Council car park. Each site's signage has specific directions and distances to each of the facilities available.
  19. The Council has set up a stakeholder group on public toilets with a number of partners including market traders, Healthmatic, the Access Forum, Make it York, York BiD, YCT, Browns and M&S (other businesses are welcome). The group have discussed the general cleanliness and challenges of operating toilets, together with capacity for key events. The group continues to meet on a

regular basis to share best practice and seek to manage provision effectively.

20. The Council provides information on its website about its public toilets and indeed other facilities (not provided directly by the Council) which can also be used by members of the public. These can be found at [www.york.gov.uk/publictoilets](http://www.york.gov.uk/publictoilets)

### Take A Seat Campaign

21. Businesses can actively promote their toilet facilities for those who need it, with no obligation to purchase, under the “Take a Seat” campaign. This can be particularly helpful for older people, disabled people and people with long term conditions. Information as to businesses who participate in the scheme at [www.homeinstead.co.uk/york/blog/take-a-seat-initiative](http://www.homeinstead.co.uk/york/blog/take-a-seat-initiative)
22. Businesses taking part in the “Take A Seat” scheme display a sticker in their window to indicate that a seat and/or facilities are available for use in their premises with no obligation to make a purchase. The map outlines if there is a seat and/or toilet facilities available. Since the scheme was introduced, there has been a growing number of businesses being involved. If businesses are interested in joining the scheme they can contact Home Instead on 01904 690884 or email: [info@york.homeinstead.co.uk](mailto:info@york.homeinstead.co.uk)

### York BiD

23. The Council works closely with York BiD and the BiD have recently undertaken a survey with other BiD’s to understand what public toilet provision was like in their cities. The main aspects of the survey and responses received from other BiD’s are included below:

City/Town	No of Council run public toilets	Comments/Notes
Bath	1 (located in gardens)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Temporary toilets are sourced or Christmas market</li></ul>
Bradford	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Toilets are provided in the shopping centres and at train station.</li><li>• Re-examining plans for City of Culture</li></ul>
Sheffield	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Museum and market open their facilities for all.</li></ul>
City/Town	No of Council run public toilets	Comments/Notes

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ran a programme called LAVS involving paying levy payers to open but scheme ceased after Covid.</li> </ul>
Manchester	0 in BiD area. Main toilets located at Town Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Station toilets are now free to use.</li> <li>• Council pays select shops and shopping centres additional funding</li> <li>• Provision of toilets is more of an issue when Christmas markets are on</li> </ul>
Harrogate	4 within the BiD area (more across the wider district)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality and upkeep is poor</li> <li>• General perception is that there are no public toilets</li> </ul>
Liverpool	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public toilets are available in Liverpool One, St John's Centre and at transport hubs</li> <li>• Accessible toilets in bars, restaurants and shops</li> <li>• Receive little negative feedback about toilets</li> </ul>
Aberdeen	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of dedicated evening provision is biggest issue</li> <li>• Used to operate pissoirs which BiD felt were successful but these ceased with Council budget cuts</li> <li>• New toilet facilities at Union Terrace Gardens are accessible and done to a high standard</li> </ul>

## Future Opportunities

24. The Council could consider bidding for round 3 of Changing Places fund but no information has been forthcoming to date from the Government concerning this scheme.

## Recommendation

25. To note the content of the Report.

## Contact details:

For further information please contact the authors of this Information Report.

## Author

<b>Name:</b>	James Gilchrist
<b>Job Title:</b>	Director of Transport, Environment and Planning
<b>Service Area:</b>	Place

<b>Telephone:</b>	
<b>Report approved:</b>	Yes
<b>Date:</b>	13/09/2024

## Co-author

<b>Name:</b>	Ben Grabham
<b>Job Title:</b>	Head of Environmental Services
<b>Service Area:</b>	Place
<b>Telephone:</b>	07749 710152
<b>Report approved:</b>	Yes
<b>Date:</b>	13/09/2024

## Background papers

## Annexes