
Meeting of the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services and Advisory Panel

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

City of York Council Public Toilets Review - Update

Summary

1. This report informs the Executive Member as to the progress to date on the complete review of public toilet provision for York.

Background

2. The provision of clean, safe, accessible public toilets affects all local people and visitors to York. For older people, those with medical conditions such as diabetes and parents with young children, public toilets are an important factor in quality of life and in making the city centre user-friendly. Quality of public toilets plays a major role in defining the image of a city.
3. There is no statutory obligation for local authorities to provide public toilets but many people perceive that this is the responsibility of local authorities.
4. York is a major tourist destination and has a thriving economy therefore it is important that the standard of toilet provision is of the highest standard possible maximising the use of existing financial resources.

Scope

5. The scope of the review covers the following issues and options:
 - A condition survey for each of the current sites, including cost implications to bring the current range of facilities up to modern standards.
 - A customer survey to establish the current level of use and cost effectiveness of existing sites.
 - Investigate the potential for a community toilet scheme in partnership with local retail outlets and public houses as in other large city's in the UK. In order to significantly increase the level and quality of provision by inviting local businesses to allow members of the public to use their facilities.

- Consider options for the introduction of hydraulic urinals that are stored underground during the day and raised in support of the evening economy.
 - Examine alternatives adopted by authorities such as Leeds City Council who operate quality mobile units that are available in the city centre at week-ends or other locations and events where high volumes of customers are expected.
 - To consider the charging regime across the range of attended and unattended toilet facilities, and ensure that future arrangements make the city fully compliant with equalities legislation, and considered how to cover the cost of ensuring that compliance.
 - To consider access issues to ensure that whatever solution was recommended improved facilities for a range of disabled residents and customers and their carers.
6. In carrying out the review the team will have consideration for the following regulations and policies relating to the public toilet provision and standards:
- **Public Health Act 1936** - The provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is at the discretion of local authorities, who have powers to provide public conveniences, but not a duty to do so. It is expected that Section 87 (3c) of this act will be amended during 2008.
 - **The Public Lavatories (Turnstiles) Act 1963** – prohibits the use of turnstiles in any part of public lavatory controlled or managed by a local authority.
 - **Building Regulations and Building Standards** – The British Standard (BS 6465 – 1:2006) is a code of practice for the design of sanitary installations.
 - **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995** – Part 3 of the DDA includes provisions covering access to services and facilities.
 - **The Equalities Act 2006** – gives local authorities general and specific duties.

Project Plan

7. The project plan is set out in Annex 1 to this report.
8. The core members of the project team are Assistant Director, Environmental Services, Head of Neighbourhood Pride Service and Neighbourhood Services Performance Manager with invitees as required.

9. The conditions survey is to be carried out by Property Services to assess the overall conditions of the structures.
10. A private sector organisation has been identified who is prepared to carry out their own independent review at no cost to the council.
11. Meetings are to be scheduled with access groups who it is hoped will be commissioned to carry out their own survey of the accessibility and condition of each of the sites.
12. Consideration has been given to a number of organisations who could carry out their own survey and assist the council with the 'Community Toilet Scheme'. In the first instance it has been agreed that ENCAMS should be approached.
13. It is important that we learn from the experiences of other local authorities. The plan is to meet with Leeds City Council who are using flexible mobile units. The London Borough of Bexley where JCDecaux are providing and maintaining three Pillar design Universal Superloos free of charge in exchange for commercial advertising. Reading and Durham who have installed 'Urilift' pop-up toilets and Richmond upon Thames who are the lead authority on 'Community Toilet Schemes'.
14. Part of the review is to calculate the utilisation of each of the sites. However, other than Union Terrace, there is no controlled access to give user numbers. Consideration was given to user numbers at Union Terrace against the amount of water being used, to try to establish if there was a correlation between users and water consumption. The outcome of this work indicated that there was too great an error factor to give any meaningful control data. It was therefore agreed that we should carry out a survey over the summer months at each site. Secure electronic counter systems are being considered and may be utilised at some sites. The majority, however, will require a manual count.
15. A series of meetings are to be established with key organisations in the City to begin discussions regarding the Community Toilet Scheme. It is hoped that some organisations will be interested in accompanying council representatives to Richmond upon Thames to gain a fuller understanding of how it works and the benefits to the organisations involved.

Consultation

16. A significant amount of consultation with a range of interested parties is built into the project plan.

Corporate Priorities

17. This report is important for the following corporate priority:
 - Improve the actual and perceived condition of the city's streets, housing estates and public spaces.

Implications

Financial

18. The costs of the surveys will be within the existing budgets. The outcome of the review will give an overall indication as to the levels of investments needed to deliver the agreed service.

Human Resources (HR).

19. There are no HR issues associated with this report.

Equalities

20. This paper has taken access issues into account. There will be regular update meetings with the councils Equality Team and access groups will be encouraged to participate in the surveys.

Legal.

21. There are no legal implications at this stage.

Crime and Disorder.

22. The review is taking community safety issues into account, and in particular look at ways to improve facilities during the evenings and thereby potentially reduce environmental crime.

Information Technology (IT).

23. There are no direct IT implications at this stage, but electronic counters are being tested.

Property

24. The outcome of the surveys, particularly the conditions survey will give some indication as to the current build conditions.

Risk Management

25. In compliance with the council's risk management policy the main risks that have been identified in this report are those which could lead to the inability to deliver a service review of sufficient quality (operational) which could lead to damage to the Council's image and reputation and failure to meet stakeholders' expectations (governance).
26. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risks at this point need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

27. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member to note the project plan.

Reason: To inform the Executive Member of work completed to date.

Contact Details

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

Property – Neil Hindhaugh – Head of Property Service

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

City of York Public Toilet Review – Meeting of the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Advisory Panel – 19th March 2008.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Project Plan.