

Subject: Public Toilet Review Working Group Recommendations  
Report to: Council – 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Report by: Director of Customer Services

This report details the work undertaken by the Public Toilet Review Working Group and recommends changes to the operation for the coming 2015/16 year.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Council currently operates a total of 22 toilet blocks across the Borough. A map of locations is attached for information. Opening times vary according to summer and winter schedules. Currently customers are not charged for using any facilities. It should be noted that the Council does not have any statutory obligation to provide public toilets.

The toilet service is currently delivered through the Joint Venture Company GYB Services. Toilets operate on a summer and winter schedule particularly in relation to seafront and rural facilities.

The current costs of operation total £477,000 and as part of the Transformation work the authority wished to re-evaluate and redesign where possible and practical.

To move to future operations as part of either an in house (GYB Services) or third party delivery, significant savings and operational improvements must form part of the overall package.

The Council's aspiration is to continue to deliver the services that our stakeholders prioritise and value. The recent consultation process asked for views in relation to Public Toilets and whether customers would be willing to see the number of facilities reduce. Responses in relation to this question indicated no clear overall view with the split of 'fors' and 'againsts' being very dependant upon age groupings.

## **2. INVESTIGATIONS**

The toilet provision is clearly split between the rural parishes and the town with 10 toilets located within the northern parishes and a further 12 located either within Great Yarmouth or Gorleston.

A thorough review has been undertaken in relation to running costs, operational hours, anomalies and overall condition. Findings were mixed with a number of facilities being highlighted by the group for possible investment and others being of such low footfall that continued operation was both impractical and cost prohibitive.

The following identifies in detail the findings:

### **Parishes -**

Of the 22 existing toilet blocks a total of 10 are located within the Northern Parishes of the Borough as follows:

- Caister x 3
- California Cliffs
- Scratby
- Hemsby
- Winterton
- Martham
- Thurne
- Acle

Of the 10 locations currently 8 are seasonal with Caister High Street and Martham being the only all year operation although as part of this process it has been identified that Winterton is currently opened, cleaned and operated by the Winterton Beach Café for the benefit of Coastwatch and café customers.

Discussions have previously been undertaken with Parishes highlighting the need to carry out service reviews to best identify and deliver the services which are high priority to our stakeholders.

It is clear from reviewing information that there are differences in relation to provision of public toilet facilities across the Borough not only in relation to locations but usage and opening hours. Some of the northern parish sites are not only seasonal but relatively low usage. During this review period Parishes have been offered the opportunity to take over the ownership and operation of the toilets giving them the flexibility to adjust service requirements or leave the buildings free for an alternate use should the Parish decide they no longer require operational public toilet facilities.

The current responses indicate that the parishes are unwilling to take over this role without appropriate funding allocation, but in some cases would welcome the opportunity to consider further how by the Council and Parishes working together a solution could be identified.

Expressions of interest have also been received from businesses within the northern Parish areas who would like to take over the ownership and operation of the toilets rather than see the facilities closed, this requires further consideration.

## **Great Yarmouth and Gorleston –**

The remaining 12 toilet blocks are located in Great Yarmouth (7 total) and Gorleston (5). It is recognized that some of these facilities require updating, are difficult to keep clean to modern standards and in some cases are scenes of anti social behaviour, petty vandalism, indecent and unpleasant activity. The low footfall and use of the facilities is an indicator as to how the public views some of these. These are all factors to take into account when considering the delivery of safe, clean and accessible services for all customers.

The location of facilities has also been considered, reviewing the need for more than one toilet block within a small geographical area.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to rationalize and improve toilet provision within the Borough there would be benefit in agreeing a number of tasks, and the Working Group recommends the following options:

- i. Reduce operational costs of the Northern Parish Public Toilets for the 2015/16 year allowing the opportunity to further review the position and work with Parishes and Businesses to identify and agree alternative options. This would mean that the facilities at California, Caister (two toilet blocks - Parish to agree priority) and Acle are not opened for the 2015/16 season and considered for longterm closure / transfer.

The Working Group recommend that facilities at the following locations remain in place until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015 at which point alternative options must be agreed to enable future operation:

- Caister x 1
- Hemsby Beach
- Scratby Cliffs
- Winterton Beach
- Martham
- Thurne (alternative cleaning, opening/closing to be identified to enable this toilet block to operate for the 2015/16 summer period).

Reduce operational costs at two locations in Great Yarmouth (North Drive and Caister Road) and two locations in Gorleston (Alpha Road and Brush Quay) all of these locations suffer from a mixture of anti social behaviour, low usage or the close proximity of other facilities. The Council will continue to review facilities as and when required. It is proposed that these facilities are not operated for the 2015/16 year and options for reuse, disposal or demolition are reviewed.

The transfer of any toilet block will be considered by the Working Party on a case by case basis identifying any appropriate conditions.

- ii. To ensure that facilities which remain in operation are of a suitable standard and during the 2015/16 year identify opportunities throughout the estate to refurbish/enhance facilities.
- iii. Currently all public toilets within the Borough are free of charge, the group would recommend that an evaluation in relation to charging for facilities be undertaken to better understand the operational issues and investment opportunities of introducing charging.
- iv. The existing budget of £477K would be reduced to £337K for the 2015/16 financial year by approval of the above recommendations. A further £40K per annum would be achieved through full realisation of the above recommendations.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

An overall budgetary saving of £140,000 if all recommendations are introduced.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:** Ongoing investigations are being undertaken in relation to land ownership/transfer.

Does this report raise any legal, financial, sustainability, equality, crime and disorder or human rights issues and, if so, have they been considered?	Issues	
	Legal	Yes
	Financial	Yes
	Risk	Yes
	Sustainability	Yes
	Equality	Yes
	Crime and Disorder	Yes
	Human Rights	Yes
	Every Child Matters	Yes



