

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Community Services Committee
DATE	17th June 2014
REPORT TITLE	Public Toilet Service Review
Report of	Head of Environment Services
WARDS AFFECTED	All

Summary of report:

This report considers the current public toilet service in West Devon and reviews the options available for delivering the service in the future. Information from the service budget, benchmarking against other authorities and property services analysis of costs have been used in recommending options to provide a sustainable, cost effective service in the future.

Financial implications:

The cost of maintaining the service at the status quo requires a service budget in 2014/2015 of £184,514. If options suggested in the report are employed then the current service budget can be retained or bettered for future years.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Committee considers the options presented in section 2 of this report and the supporting initial proposal shown at Appendix C. Options are not exclusive and so multiple options can be recommended as shown.

Officer contact:

Helen Dobby, Head of Environment Services helen.dobby@swdevon.gov.uk 1272
Stuart Jellings, Environment Services Manager stuart.jellings@swdevon.gov.uk 1545

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The public toilet service in West Devon has been subject to review over the past 14 years. As a discretionary service the number of toilets in West Devon has reduced over this period by over 50% to the current provision of 12 facilities. These facilities were recognised as key facilities within the Borough. The total cost of providing the service is approximately £185,000. Appendix A shows the public toilet provision across Devon (and Cornwall) to show the West Devon service in context.

- 1.1 Many of the toilets no longer managed by the authority are currently run by town and parish councils therefore managing to maintain a good overall level of provision for the public. This has been achieved through either asset transfer or lease arrangements over a period of time.
- 1.2 There is a £22,500 financial contribution to the Council for the annual running of the service from town and parish councils. The contributions paid in the last financial year are shown in the attached table at Appendix B.
- 1.3 The public toilets in Princetown were used as part of a trial in income generation and have generated a contribution to the local service of around £2,500 per annum during both 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.

2. OPTIONS

- 2.1 There are a number of alternatives which might be considered to reduce the strain on the council's budget and these include:
 - A Increased contributions from town and parish councils
 - B Reduction in utility costs; water usage, heating costs etc.
 - C Increase in income from 'pay to use' facilities
 - D Seasonal opening for a greater number of facilities
 - E Reduction in overall provision through either closure or asset transfer where appropriate.
- 2.2
 - A** The current contribution from 7 town and parish councils is 30% of annual running costs. This amount was set a number of years ago and should be reviewed to reflect inflationary increases in contract payments and utility costs. (Current contributions are shown at Appendix B.)
 - B** Our Assets team are currently looking at the costs which might be saved within individual toilet units. The majority of the toilets currently have hot water provided and some units have also got winter heating systems. By contrast many other local authorities provide only cold water for hand wash which will provide a saving.
 - C** The Princetown toilet pilot scheme for pay to use facilities was introduced in 2012. This scheme has been successful with £2,500 per annum being raised towards to the upkeep of the facilities. The cost of the cost collection equipment was approximately £4,000. The scheme lends itself to those toilets with the highest footfall. There would be potential in looking at further pay on entry systems in toilets in Tavistock, Okehampton and Yelverton based upon current facility footfall and operational accessibility to service cash boxes. Where door entry systems are direct entry cash collection boxes would be required per cubicle.
 - D** Many local authorities are looking at the possibility of closing some of their facilities seasonally in order to reduce service costs. It should be noted that in the most part this action is being taken by authorities with a much

larger toilet stock in the first instance and prior to local contributions being made.

E This option is presented for completeness but as can be seen from the benchmarking shown at Appendix A the Council has already much reduced its own public toilet stock with many facilities already transferred to town and parish councils. Where future transfers might be considered with local cleaning arrangements put in place it is important to note that the FCC contract for cleansing ends in April 2017.

2.3 It should be noted that West Devon has already pared back this service to a small number of key facilities and already relies on contributions and seasonal opening to provide its service. Appendix C outlines an initial proposal relating to the options above and which to public toilets they might apply.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Council does not have a duty to provide public toilets but has discretionary powers (under the Public Health Act 1936 and the local Government Act 1972) whether to manage, set charge fees and on the usage of public conveniences as it sees fit.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report, however future action may result in the betterment of the overall budget position for this service area.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 These are outlined in the risk template at the end of this report.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate priorities engaged:	Environment; Economy; Community
Considerations of equality and human rights:	None
Biodiversity considerations:	None
Sustainability considerations:	n/a
Crime and disorder implications:	None
Background papers:	Previous reports on this service, budget information
Appendices	A – Current stock and Benchmarking information B – Contributions from town and parish councils C – Matrix of options

STRATEGIC RISKS TEMPLATE

No	Risk Title	Risk/Opportunity Description	Inherent risk status				Mitigating & Management actions	Ownership
			Impact of negative outcome	Chance of negative outcome	Risk score and direction of travel			
1	Escalating costs of service as utility costs increase	To reduce usage and scale of resources.	↔	↑			Good communication to customers and partnership working.	Environment Services – Stuart Jellings
2	Lack of funds to provide discretionary services	Reduction in service	↑	↑			Continue to work with town and parish councils to provide as full a service as is possible within budgetary constraints.	Environment Services – Stuart Jellings

Direction of travel symbols ↓ ↑ ↔