

Report to: **West Devon Hub Committee**

Date: **17<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

Title: **Public Toilet review**

Portfolio Area: **Environment Services (Cllr Robert Sampson)**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: To be considered by Full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2018  
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

Author: **Cathy Aubertin** Role: **Operational Manager (Environment Services)**

Contact: [Cathy.Aubertin@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:Cathy.Aubertin@swdevon.gov.uk)

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**Recommendations:**

- 1. That the Hub Committee considers the options for saving £50,000 on the public toilet budget, including:**
  - A. Close, or devolve to Parish Councils, six facilities in rural locations. See appendix B (£63053 savings achieved):**
    - **Brentor**
    - **Bedford Bridge, Horrabridge**
    - **Chagford**
    - **Hatherleigh**
    - **Lydford**
    - **Yelverton**
  - B. Close one facility in Okehampton and one in Tavistock, where other options are available. See appendix C (£75324 savings achieved):**
    - **Market Street, Okehampton**
    - **Bedford car park, Tavistock**

**C. Closure of low footfall facilities in rural locations coupled with Pay on Entry in high footfall areas. See appendix D (£63053 savings achieved and potential £22,000 income)**

**D. Close all public toilets as it is a discretionary service provided by the Council (this would achieve greater than the £50,000 saving required)**

**2. It is recommended that the Hub approve the progression of a joint procurement exercise to test the costs of pay on entry equipment, which can then be purchased promptly if required.**

## **1. Executive summary**

1.1 This report requests that Members consider the options for saving £50,000 on the public toilet budget.

## **2. Background**

2.1 This year, the Council faced a budget shortfall of £749,000 for 2019/ 20 (as per the Council Budget report of 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018) and, in order to help to address this challenge, Councillors set up their own Financial Stability Member group, to review areas where it was felt savings could be made. Clearly, the need to consider the continued provision of discretionary services is an area that both the Member group and officers must consider.

2.2 The Financial Stability Member group has modelled an indicative saving of £50,000 on the public toilet budget for 2019/ 20 to reflect the direction of travel they feel is needed for this discretionary service, and officers were requested to propose ways in which such a saving could be made.

2.3 Public toilets are currently provided in the following locations:

1. Bedford Bridge, Horrabridge
2. Brentor
3. Chagford
4. Hatherleigh
5. Lydford
6. Fairplace, Okehampton
7. Market Street, Okehampton
8. Princetown (Pay on Entry facility)
9. Bus Station, Tavistock
10. Bedford car park, Tavistock
11. Guildhall Square, Tavistock
12. Yelverton

- 2.4 The Overhead Budget for Public Toilets, excluding officer salary costs, totals almost £181,000 for this financial year, of which over half of that amount is committed to contract cleaning costs, with the remainder paying for other running costs, such as business rates, repairs and maintenance, energy and water. A breakdown of the budget is shown below:

Property repairs & maintenance	£32,678
Water	£29,330
Business rates	£16,638
Electricity	£11,156
Purchase/ repairs of equipment	£1,260
Other sundry expenses	£250
Rent/ contributions	£2,000
Contract cleaning costs	£99,303
Capital charge	£13,122
Income from Pay on Entry at Princetown	- £2,500
Other costs recovered from Town & Parish Councils	- £22,500

- 2.5 This is the last opportunity for Members to review the service as the current cleaning contract with FCC expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, and the provision of a possibly amended list of public toilets must be provided to Bidders who are tendering for the Council's Waste and Cleansing contract as a matter of urgency.

### 3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 In order to achieve the required £50,000 saving it will be necessary to either devolve or close toilets and use pay on entry for any toilets with high footfall. See appendix A for total costings of the public conveniences from 2017/18
- 3.2 Some of the rural toilets, which are not frequented as often as the town centre facilities and which could be devolved to local communities for operation are:
- Bedford Bridge, Horrabridge
  - Brentor
  - Chagford
  - Hatherleigh
  - Lydford
  - Yelverton
- See appendix B for costings
- 3.3 Alternatively, the Council could look to close two of the town centre public toilets:
- Market Street, Okehampton
  - Bedford car park, Tavistock
- See appendix C for costings

- 3.4 Members will be aware that Assets Community of Practice are already in discussions with Okehampton Town Council in respect of the proposal to devolve Fairplace toilets to the Town Council.
- 3.5 Should Bedford car park toilets in Tavistock be closed, Members will be aware that alternative facilities are available at the nearby bus station.
- 3.6 Where closures are suggested and tenants share the existing building, the Council would commence dialogue as soon as possible to find a suitable outcome regarding the vacant space.
- 3.7 A further option would be to implement Pay on Entry in our facilities which have the most footfall. Pay on Entry is already in place in Princetown so it is recommended that this should be considered in:
- Chagford
  - Yelverton
  - Bedford car park, Tavistock (assuming option 3.2 is not resolved)
  - Guildhall Square, Tavistock
  - Bus Station, Tavistock
  - Fairplace, Okehampton

See appendix D for costings

- 3.8 It is estimated that income from the above facilities would be in the region of £20,000-£25000, although income would not be generated until the machinery is in place and this requires a tendered procurement. Should the installation take place in 2018/19, given the timeframe for procurement and installation it is unlikely that any more than £5,000-£7000 income would be generated in this financial year. The Bus Station facilities are included only to ensure that not all customers migrate there to avoid paying the entry fee. It may be worth considering closing this facility, resulting in a saving of approximately £17,000.
- 3.9 In addition, there would be a requirement for capital funding to be provided, anticipated to be in the region of £50,000 – £75,000, based upon the cost of recent installations in South Hams.
- 3.10 The capital sum required to provide the pay on entry equipment could be funded by the Strategic Change Earmarked Reserve, which currently has an uncommitted balance of £286,000.
- 3.11 If the facilities listed in paragraph 3.6 above were to become Pay on Entry facilities, it is anticipated that the capital expenditure would be repaid within three years, taking into consideration possible vandalism costs.

#### **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

- 4.1 Members are requested to consider the above options and give officers a steer on how they wish to proceed.

#### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 5.1 Officers will proceed in accordance with the recommendation resolved by Members. In case it is resolved to proceed with Pay on Entry, the facilities are included in the tender process already in train in South Hams, which will give the project a head start, enabling installation of Pay on Entry equipment to commence in the autumn, so that income generation can also commence at an early stage. Tender documentation makes it clear that not all facilities included may proceed to procurement.

#### **6. Implications**

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		
Financial		Possible capital funding requirement of £50 - £75,000, which may be funded by the Strategic Change Earmarked Reserve.  Saving to budget as requested of £50k.
Risk		There may be some concern from customers, which would present a reputational risk. However, it should be noted that more and more authorities are implementing Pay on Entry systems so more people are aware of them and use them than ever before.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		A comprehensive impact assessment has been completed in respect of this matter which shows that, should Pay on Entry be implemented, there would be positive discrimination in respect of disabled customers, who would be able to enter a disabled facility using a Radar key, therefore not paying the entry fee. Eliminating this discrimination would increase costs to install equipment, and is not considered necessary at this stage.

Safeguarding		No implications.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		<p>There is potential for vandalism of public toilets to be reduced should Pay on Entry be implemented, due to the requirement to pay a fee to gain entry.</p> <p>However, experience has shown that the Pay on Entry equipment could be a target for vandalism during the first few months of operation.</p>
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No implications.
Other implications		None.

### **Supporting Information**

Appendix A – Public Toilet Cost Allocation for 2017/18;  
 Appendix B – Rural Location Public Toilet Costings 2017/18;  
 Appendix C – Market Street and Bedford Toilet Costings 2017/18;  
 and  
 Appendix D – Rural Location Public Toilet Costings 2017/18.