

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny**
Date: **6 September 2018**
Title: **Drugs and Alcohol Task and Finish Group Interim Report**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **Totnes**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

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

Date next steps can be taken: At SH Executive on 13th September 2018

Author: James Kershaw Role: **Senior Specialist**

Contact: **Tel: 01803 861287**
email: james.kershaw@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Panel

- 1. consider the Briefing note on designing out intravenous drug use in South Hams District Council public conveniences; and**
- 2. RECOMMENDS to the Executive to spend £2,500 from the Repairs and Maintenance Earmarked Reserve, to pay for the works necessary to design out the use of intravenous drugs in Coronation Road male toilets.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 In December 2017 following ongoing complaints about intravenous drug use, and a reduced amount of resources over the Christmas period to assess damage and instigate urgent repairs, the decision was taken to close the three toilet blocks in Totnes.

- 1.2 The problems reported were in relation to intravenous drug use and the disposal of needles and other drug paraphernalia.
- 1.3 The Council sought out the advice of the Police Architectural Liaison Officer, who specialises in designing out crime from buildings. They visited the toilets and made several recommendations in how the design of the building could be altered to dissuade drug users from using the toilets and make it easier to safely dispose of the needles and other paraphernalia.
- 1.4 These recommendations have been transposed into the attached report. Since the toilets were reopened there has been a significant improvement in the state of the toilets, however there has been regular problems with the gents toilets in Coronation Road.

Therefore as there has been an improvement in anti-social behaviour with in the majority of toilets it is proposed to only apply the suggested improvements to Coronation Road gents' toilet, at this time. Should problems re-occur in other toilets in the future a recommendation will be brought forward to extend these improvements to the Council for approval.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2017 the Council received a spate of complaints in relation to the state and condition of the toilets in regards to blood splattered walls and irresponsibly disposed of needles as well as other drug paraphernalia.
- 2.2 The risk to the posed to the public was managed by increased inspections of the toilets, which would then be closed until a thorough cleanse could be arranged. However in December 2017 it was recognised that a shortage of officers over the Christmas break would mean that this could not happen, and it was on this basis the decision was made to close the public conveniences.
- 2.3 Due to the public outcry over this decision, and recognising that the situation was not sustainable a request was made to the Police Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO) for their advice on how the facilities could be improved to dissuade drug users from abusing the facilities.
- 2.4 The ALO advised that there were several improvements that could be made to the toilets to dissuade drug users these suggestions included:-
 - Removal of flat surfaces
 - Reduction in height of the toilet cubicle doors
 - Changing the toilet roll holders and soap dispensers to minimise the risk of needles being hidden in them.
 - Installation of sharps bins

- Install hooks on the back of cubicle doors to prevent the need for shelves.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 Following the receipt of the recommendations made by the ALO the attached policy was produced, the aim of the policy is to consider how the Council could improve their facilities following complaints about anti-social behaviour associated with intravenous drug use.
- 3.2 Following the re-opening of the toilets in January 2018 there was a significant improvement in complaints about the Steamer Quay, or Market toilets. There has been sporadic problems in the gents' toilets at Coronation Road, therefore it is proposed to only carry out the suggested ALO improvements to the facilities at Coronation Road at this time.
- 3.3 The estimated cost of carrying out the full list of works proposed is £3,500, however a combined grant of £1,000 has been offered by the South Devon Community Safety Partnership and Devon Public Health, due to the harm reduction benefits of these proposals. It is recommended to spend £2,500 from the Repairs and Maintenance Earmarked Reserve to pay for the necessary works..
- 3.4 There will also be an increased budgetary pressure for the ongoing maintenance of the facilities and the increased waste collection costs for the required clinical waste collection of the sharps bins. This is estimated to be an additional £1300 per annum.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Council has a duty to its staff and members of the public using its facilities to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken to keep them safe. It could be argued that the proposals by the Architectural Liaison Officer (ALO) reflect good practice in designing out intravenous drug use and in turn reduces the risk of irresponsible needle disposal.
- 4.2 The ALO's report does state that the proposed pay on entry may be a sufficient deterrent to drug users, however local Police officers have stated that they are aware that as a few of the users are also begging for change in Totnes that they may have easy access to the correct change needed and therefore 'pay on entry' on its own may not be sufficient.
- 4.3 A large proportion of the costing is due to the number of proposed needle bins, it is proposed to install one in each cubicle. The aim of this is to promote the usage of the bins for the safe disposal of needles and to ensure that the bins were located in a way that was more discreet. There would be a lower cost if there was a single bin in the communal area of the toilet.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That the Panel recommend to Executive for further consideration; the briefing note on designing out intravenous drug use in South Hams public conveniences.
- 5.2 That the Panel recommend to Executive that the proposed works to Coronation Road gents toilets be incorporated into any works to implement pay on entry to these facilities.
- 5.3 That the Panel recommends to the Executive to spend £2,500 from the Repairs and Maintenance Earmarked Reserve, to pay for the works necessary to design out the use of intravenous drugs in Coronation Road male toilets.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>Failure to adequately protect the public and our workforce from injury may lead to the Council being non-compliant with their duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Occupiers Liability Act.</p> <p>There are also considerable reputation issues for the Council and effective management of substance abuse and its consequences for all should be considered appropriately.</p>
Financial		<p>There is a cost of £3,500 needed for the works, however a grant of £1,000 has been offered by the Community Safety Partnership and Devon County Council Public Health.</p> <p>Therefore the Committee will need to recommend to the Executive that the shortfall of £2,500 is taken from the Repairs and Maintenance Earmarked Reserve.</p> <p>There will also be an increased revenue cost for the emptying of the needle bins, and restocking the bins. This is estimated to be an additional £1,300/ annum.</p>
Risk		Failure to curtail the intravenous drug use and

		irresponsible needle disposal may mean that the long term future of the facility has to be re-considered.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		None foreseen.
Safeguarding		None foreseen
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		If the proposed works are implemented there should be a reduction in the anti-social behaviour associated with irresponsible needle disposal.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The safety of the toilet cleaners and facility users will be improved if the proposed works have the predicted improvement in irresponsible needle disposal.
Other implications		None foreseen

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A: Briefing note on designing out intravenous drug use in South Hams District Council public conveniences

Background Papers:

None