

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **16 October 2018**

Title: **Public Toilet Review**

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

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken:

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Recommendations:

It is RECOMMENDED:

- 1. that in respect of the rural public toilets (listed in Appendix A) the Hub Committee resolve that Parish and Town Councils are requested to either:**
 - i. Assume responsibility for the public toilets in their area including a transfer of the freehold or leasehold property; or**
 - ii. Make a contribution towards the cost of running public toilets equivalent to 75% of all direct costs (which includes staff and management costs).**
- 2. that the 75% contribution be increased over the following three years based upon actual spend as per the payment profile shown in Appendix A, to reach a point where full costs are covered by the Parish and Town Councils.**
- 3. that where a Parish or Town Council agrees neither to accept a transfer of the facility nor make the requested contribution (as set out in Recommendation 1 (i) and (ii))**

it will be recommended to Council that the facility will be closed before the end of the financial year 2018/19.

- 4. that where any facility will benefit from pay on entry equipment in order to reduce overall costs, the council will work with the relevant Town or Parish council on a business case and implementation programme to achieve best value.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report requests that Members consider the options for implementing the decision of the Hub Committee on the 17th July 2018 to approve and deliver efficiencies of the £50,000 (or more) in 2019/20 in operating the current public toilet service.

2. Background

- 2.1 Following the previous report to the Hub Committee on 17th July 2018, it was resolved:
1. To approve and deliver efficiencies of £50,000 (or more) in 2019/ 20 from the overall public convenience service as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy through consideration of the following:
 - The provision of pay on entry systems (where pay back can be achieved on a capital spend within a reasonable period, depending on the choice of equipment)
 - Closure of toilet facilities where adequate provision may be found within reasonable proximity or where footfall is not such as to justify continued provision.
 - The transfer of toilet facilities to parishes or other partners where agreement can be reached to maintain service continuity.
 2. It is recommended that officers proceed on the basis of consideration of a combination of all the above options in order to achieve this, subject to seeking the authority of this Council to any closure(s) to be considered.
- 2.2 In order to be able to formulate more detailed recommendations in respect of each facility, the Portfolio Holder Commercial Services and specialist officers have been consulting with Town and Parish Councils. Discussion has also been had with the Health and Wellbeing Lead Member.
- 2.3 Meetings have been held with all Town and Parish Councils, with the exception of Dartmoor Forest, where a meeting is due to be held on 12th October, and Tavistock, where a meeting has not yet been requested, although clarification has been sought.
- 2.4 Since the last meeting further work has been undertaken to ensure an equitable approach to the funding of public toilets is established so that the Borough Council is able to request an appropriate level

of contribution from each Town and Parish Council relative to the cost of providing the toilet facilities in that area.

- 2.5 Town and Parish Councils are to consider whether they wish to take a transfer of the facility or make arrangements to pay the required sum, whilst being aware that the Borough Council may resolve to close toilets which are not receiving a contribution (Recommendation 3). This will be due to considerations around cost, numbers of users and other toilets already available in an area.
- 2.6 This would also address the current position, where contributions towards the public toilet service vary considerably from over £3,000 per facility to zero.
- 2.7 With one exception, the responses from Town and Parish Councils have been understanding. Most are now considering how they may be able to either make a contribution towards the service or take on the assets entirely. However, at the time of writing we are yet to receive any formal proposals as rural parishes await information on contribution levels and timeframes.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 It is proposed that, in order to secure the long-term future of the public toilet service, a four-year contribution agreement be implemented, so that the agreement lasts for at least the length of the next elected Council (2019-2023). It is important that the strategy for public toilets is set out over a number of years to allow both borough council and parish and town council budget processes to be planned and for service changes to be communicated locally.
- 3.2 Parish and Town Councils will be given the option of adopting the four-year agreement or taking on the asset entirely. If neither option is chosen, the Borough Council would close the toilet(s) before the end of this financial year subject to Council agreement.
- 3.3 Modelling has been carried out for the rural public toilets (at Appendix A), to show what the Town/ Parish contributions would be.
- 3.4 The toilets in Okehampton and Tavistock will be the subject of further reports. Members will be aware that Assets staff are already in discussions with Okehampton Town Council in respect of the proposed closure of Market Street toilets, as well as the proposal to devolve Fairplace toilets to the Town Council. It has now been agreed that Market Street toilets will close and Fairplace toilets will transfer to the Town Council, on 1st April 2019. Further discussions will also be held with Tavistock Town Council.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Members are requested to consider the above options in light of the information provided to deliver the budgetary savings required whilst working to maintain an appropriate network of public toilets in the borough.

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 were included in the tender process already in train in South Hams, and Members will be aware that the awarding of this contract for any agreed pay on entry sites was approved at the Council meeting on 25th September 2018.

6. Implications

Implications		Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		No direct implications at this time. Legal consideration of assets being transferred will be considered on a case by case basis.
Financial		<p>There is a possible capital funding requirement of £50,000 - £60,000 relating to future pay on entry equipment which may be funded by the Strategic Change Earmarked Reserve if required.</p> <p>Financial modelling has been carried out to show the levels of contribution required to achieve the budget saving of a minimum of £50,000 as requested. A 74% contribution will achieve a saving of £41,411. A 50% contribution would therefore not meet the necessary level of saving.</p>
Risk		There may be some concern from customers in respect of Pay on Entry systems. 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. Data and information relating to Pay on Entry is available both locally and nationally. The Council has local information on these schemes as well as national data from the British Toilet Association and the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE).
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		

Equality and Diversity		Comprehensive impact assessments will be carried out in relation to any individual facilities where closure affects the overall toilet provision in an area.
Safeguarding		No implications.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		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. However, experience has shown that the Pay on Entry equipment could be a target for vandalism during the first few months of operation.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No implications.
Other implications		None.

Supporting Information

Appendix A – Costing information

Appendix B – Town and Parish information