

ANNEXE 1

Review of Public Convenience provision in Waverley

Introduction

1. Waverley currently maintains and provides 12 public conveniences across the borough, and this service currently costs over £100,000 per annum (excluding support costs).
2. As a discretionary service, the Borough's public convenience provision has been under close scrutiny over recent years and a number of sites have either been closed or their management transferred to third parties.
3. This report sets out the history of the service, outlines the Council's current position on public convenience provision, and puts forward a number of options for the future.

History

4. At one time, Waverley owned and maintained 25 public conveniences around the Borough.
5. Over the past 25 years, however, a steady programme of rationalisation and devolution has taken place, in response to ever-tightening budgets and a general move towards the localisation of management of such facilities to town and parish councils wherever possible.
6. Below is a brief summary of the closures and transfers that have taken place over the past 25 years:
 - Three public conveniences have been closed in Farnham as being in poor structural condition and not well used (one of these was sold, and the other two- at Brightwells Gardens and Borelli Walk- are currently awaiting demolition), and another has been closed due to its remote location out of the town centre.
 - A further three Farnham facilities (Gostrey Meadow, Central Car Park and The Hart) were transferred to Farnham Town Council to manage in 2007/08 under a 125 year lease.
 - Going further back, two conveniences in the Farncombe area- one at Broadwater Park (Summers Road) and the other at Canon Bowring Rec were closed due to misuse/vandalism, some 25 years ago.
 - Some years later, a further two facilities, in National Trust car park, Hindhead and Churt Road, Churt, were demolished as being in a very poor structural state and subject to misuse.

- As a 2008/09 Star Chamber saving, the facilities at Village Hall, Milford were closed, and the building given to the Village Hall Committee.
- The Public Convenience at Fairground Car Park, Haslemere has now been closed for over a year due to its poor structural condition and drainage problems and, following a full structural survey which revealed that it would cost almost £40,000 to make it safe and usable, it is now awaiting demolition.

Current Situation

7. As previously mentioned, this Council currently provides and maintains 12 public conveniences across the borough. Of these, 9 are maintained under a cleaning contract with Carlisle Group, and three are maintained under the grounds maintenance contract with Glendale Grounds Maintenance (See paragraphs 18-23 for further details of these arrangements). The facilities, their locations, and the management arrangements for each are set out in the table below.

Site	Area	Maintained by
Crown Court	Godalming	Carlisle Group
Holloway Hill Recreation Ground	Godalming	Glendale
Meadow	Farncombe	Carlisle Group
North Street	Farncombe	Carlisle Group
Broadwater Park	Farncombe	Glendale
Windrush Close	Bramley	Carlisle Group
Cricket Green	Cranleigh	Carlisle Group
Village way	Cranleigh	Carlisle Group
High Street	Haslemere	Carlisle Group
Haslemere Recreation Ground	Haslemere	Glendale
The Green	Tilford	Carlisle Group
Frensham Pond Visitors Centre	Frensham	Carlisle Group

8. In addition to these 12 facilities, an annual grant (£3.7K in 09/10 with an annual uplift) is paid to Farnham Park Golf Club for the public to use their toilet facilities.

Summary of estimated costs for public convenience maintenance

9. The headline cost of providing public conveniences in Waverley in 2009/10 (excluding support costs) was just over £100,000.
10. The table overleaf sets out the projected costs, based on historic expenditure, for each of the public convenience sites currently maintained by this Council.

Estimated cost of public conveniences 2010/11							
SITE		Cleaning	Water	Electricity	Rates	Equipment	Total
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Crown Court	Godalming	11,000	1,100	800	2,000	400	15,300
Holloway Hill Recreation Ground	Godalming	2,500		-	-	-	2,500
Meadrow	Farncombe	6,000	400	200	600	400	7,600
North Street	Farncombe	6,000	600	200	1,200	400	8,400
Broadwater Park	Farncombe	4,600	300	200	-	-	5,100
Windrush Close	Bramley	6,000	400	200	2,000	400	9,000
Cricket Green	Cranleigh	6,000	400	200	-	400	7,000
Village way	Cranleigh	9,000	600	200	2,000	400	12,200
High Street	Haslemere	11,000	1,100	500	-	400	13,000
Haslemere Recreation Ground	Haslemere	2,500		-	-	-	2,500
The Green	Tilford	6,000	400	200	1,000	400	8,000
Frensham Pond Visitors Centre	Frensham	11,000	-	-	-	400	11,400
TOTAL		81,600	5,300	2,700	8,800	3,600	102,000

Condition Survey and access audit

11. An independent access survey of the Accessible Facilities was carried out in 2009 by DisCASS (the Disabled Citizens Advice and Support Service) and their recommendations for improvements have, or are in the process of being carried out.
12. These were mainly minor concerns, such as the flush buttons, drop-down support bars, hand wash/dryers, sanitary disposal chutes or toilet roll dispensers being in the wrong places, and most have already been remedied at a cost of around £3.5K.
13. To build on the above, and give a fuller picture of the condition of the facilities we now own and maintain, a condition survey of public toilets is currently being carried out by the councils Property Section to determine what maintenance works might be needed over the coming years, with an estimate of cost. The findings of this piece of work are expected in March 2010.

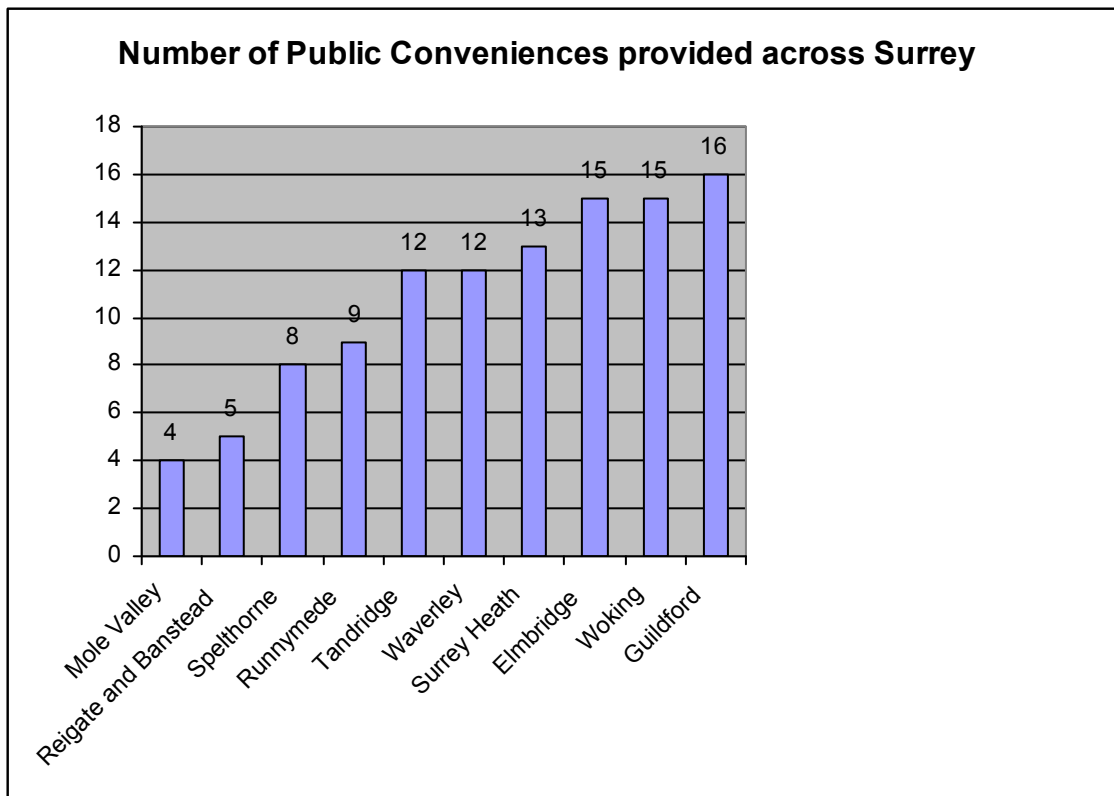
Current Usage

14. It is possible, by using anecdotal evidence of visitor numbers while daily and deep cleans are being carried out, by looking at the replacement rate of consumables (soap and toilet paper, etc), and purely by looking at the location of the facility, to draw some conclusions as to which conveniences are subjected to the greatest use, and which are not so well used, as well as to conclude which facilities may experience seasonal fluctuations in visitor numbers. Using these broad assessment criteria, the facilities have been placed into three broad categories, as follows:

- Very well used all year:
Haslemere High Street
Crown Court, Godalming
Village Way, Cranleigh
Meadrow, Farncombe
Broadwater Park, Farncombe
- Reasonably well used all year
North Street, Farncombe
Windrush House, Bramley
Holloway Hill Recreation Ground, Godalming
Haslemere Recreation Ground, Haslemere
- Seasonal
The Green, Tilford- well-used April - Sept, fair use over the winter
Cricket Green, Cranleigh- well-used April - Sept, little use over winter
Frensham Park- very high usage April - Sept, well used over the winter.

Public Convenience provision in other Surrey Authorities

15. In order to benchmark the current level of public convenience provision in Waverley, all Surrey boroughs and districts were asked to confirm the number of toilets they currently provide. As of February 2010 responses had been received from nine councils, and their respective levels of provision are set out in the chart overleaf.



16. Although of course these areas are all unique in terms of geography, population, demographics, urban/ rural split, etc, and therefore all have specific requirements and priorities in terms of public convenience provision, the headline figures nonetheless suggest that provision in Waverley is more than adequate by comparison to geographically similar neighbours such as Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead, and that there may therefore be some scope for rationalisation.

The current cleaning contracts

17. As previously discussed, the responsibility for cleaning the Council's Public Conveniences is currently shared between Carlisle Group and Glendale Grounds Maintenance.
18. The Council's contract with Carlisle group commenced on 1st April 1996 following competitive tendering, and was for an initial period of 5 years with an optional two-year extension period. At that time, it was for the cleaning of 19 public conveniences across the borough, with a further 3 sites added subsequently.
19. The programme of closure, devolution and rationalisation that has since been underway, has meant that 10 of the original 22 sites have now been either closed or transferred to Farnham Town Council, with a further 3 transferred to the Grounds Maintenance Contract in 2005. During this time of constant change, it has simply not been feasible to retender the contract, as the uncertainty over the future of the

remaining sites meant it was impossible to provide a clear indication of the requirements of any potential tenderers. Therefore, since the expiry of the contract with Carlisle Group in 2003, they have, by mutual agreement, simply continued to service the remaining sites at the rates applicable to the relevant conveniences that were tendered in 1996, subject only to specified inflation uplifts.

20. In August 2009 however, Carlisle Group approached this Council to advise that halving the number of sites has undermined the basis of their pricing, and that as a result of this, as well as a number of legislative changes (such as the Working Rights Directive, National Minimum Wage, etc), they were losing over £1,000 per month by providing the service to Waverley. They went on to confirm that they proposed to serve Notice of Termination with immediate effect unless they could renegotiate their prices.
21. This issue was reported to Corporate Management Team in August 2009, and it was agreed that the necessary funding would be made available for the remainder of the 2009/10 financial year pending the outcome of this review.
22. The maintenance of the conveniences at Broadwater Park, Holloway Hill Recreation Ground and Haslemere Recreation Ground was incorporated into the respecified Grounds Maintenance Contract in 2005 and, since that time these facilities have been maintained by the dedicated Park Keepers for those sites as part of their daily duties. This Contract expires in November 2012, with the option to extend for a further 7 years.

Participatory Budgeting

23. During the Council's October 2009 Participatory Budgeting Consultation Exercise, participants were specifically asked for their opinions on the current level of public convenience provision, whether they considered there to be too many or too few facilities, and whether for example they would reduce current levels if faced with a budget deficit.
24. This exercise revealed a general consensus that the closure of the five least frequented toilets was among the reductions that would cause the least displeasure, but only after a number of more high profile services such as Locality Office closures, reductions in the number of editions of the Council Magazine produced per year, and reductions in museum funding for example.
25. Furthermore, public conveniences were not among the top ten service areas that respondents felt should be maintained at current levels and there was very little appetite for increasing provision at the expense of other service areas.

The current challenge and options for rising to it

26. As has been set out already, public conveniences have been closely scrutinised over recent years, and over 50% of the sites we once managed have now either been closed, demolished or transferred to third parties.
27. The challenge continues however, and as part of the 2009 Star Chamber process, a further £20,000 per annum must be found from the public conveniences budget from 2010/11 onwards. A number of options are being explored to enable this target to be met, and to ensure an appropriate level of service is provided, as locally as possible, into the future. These options are set out in the following section.

(i) Seasonal closure of Tilford and Cranleigh Cricket Green

These two toilets experience significant seasonal peaks and troughs in demand, and therefore present the option of seasonal closure. Closing both from the beginning of October to the end of March each year would generate savings in the region of £6,500. Both Tilford Parish Council and Cranleigh Parish Council have been consulted on this, and both have concerns. Cranleigh Parish Council have in fact subsequently expressed the desire to take on the management of their site (see (iii) below), however, no such offer has come from Tilford Parish Council.

(ii) Permanent closure of least-used facilities

The obvious candidates here would be North Street (Farncombe), Windrush House (Bramley), Holloway Hill Recreation Ground (Godalming) and Haslemere Recreation Ground (Haslemere), and depending upon which (and how many) were closed, savings of between £2,500 and £22,000 could be realised.

(iii) Devolution of Cranleigh facilities to the Parish Council

There is a will within the Parish Council to explore opportunities for devolution of responsibilities in Cranleigh, and a meeting was held in January 2010 at which the specific question of public conveniences was discussed. This arrangement could, over time, yield savings for this Council of over £19,000.

(iv) Explore other opportunities for devolution

The obvious starting-place for these discussions would be with Godalming Town Council, with whom various opportunities for devolution are already being explored and progressed. An initial

approach has been made to the Town Clerk, who has undertaken to raise the issue with Members. There is a potential long-term saving to be had from devolving responsibility for Crown Court, Meadow and North Street toilets of over £30,000 per annum.

An initial approach has also been made to Haslemere Town Council regarding the option of devolving the management of High Street toilets in Haslemere. This could yield annual savings of approximately £13,000 per annum.

(v) Explore opportunities for shared/ integrated cleaning contract

It is likely to be difficult to obtain a competitive price for the cleaning of any sites that remain open and in the custody of this Council, given their likely number and geographical spread. The option of entering into a joint contract is therefore being explored with Guildford Borough Council at present, and further information on this is likely to be available by April 2010.

Other options here include the possibility of incorporating the maintenance of public conveniences into a retendered/ respecified waste management contract and then incorporating toilet-cleaning duties into the street-cleaning function.

(vi) Permanent closure of all remaining facilities

As the provision of public conveniences is a discretionary service, there is no legal requirement for the Council to provide them. An option therefore exists where, having explored all other possibilities, any facilities that remain the responsibility of the Council are closed, yielding a headline saving of just over £100,000 per annum. This move could be accompanied by the launch of a 'community toilet scheme' as successfully implemented elsewhere, where public houses and restaurants are paid an annual grant to make their toilet facilities publicly available.

(vii) Explore opportunities to charge for public convenience use

Systems have now been developed to enable adaptations to be made to existing public convenience buildings to facilitate automatic charging for use, and the market also offers 'off the shelf' coin-operated units that are also self-cleaning, etc. If there is a will to maintain the existing, or indeed any level of public convenience provision, it may be worth exploring further the options for charging for use, with the aim of reducing the net cost to the Council.

Conclusion

28. There are a number of options available to the Council in terms of future provision of public conveniences, and these are set out in the options appraisal above.
29. In reality, it is likely that no single option will present a complete solution to the problem of continuing to provide a level of service where needed, whilst also responding to mounting financial pressures to reduce expenditure on discretionary services such as this.
30. Instead, it is likely that the solution lies in a combination of further devolution of responsibilities where possible, closures where appropriate, and progressing with alternative ways of providing and maintaining the service (such as charging) where necessary.
31. In the short-term however, there is a need to find a £20,000 saving against the public convenience budget in 2010/11 and in order to achieve this it is therefore proposed, with effect from 1 April 2010, to:
 - Close North Street Toilets, Farncombe
 - Close Windrush House Toilets, Bramley
 - Put in place seasonal opening (Apr-Sept) at Tilford Toilets
32. Combined, these measures should achieve savings of approximately £21,000 per annum. However, as explained in Paragraph 20, the precise amount of savings achieved may be subject to the overall sustainability of the contract, and a matter for negotiation. Furthermore, a decision would need to be reached as to what would happen to the empty building at North Street, Farncombe in order to avoid it falling into disrepair and becoming a liability into the future.