

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 2 NOVEMBER 2010

Title:

REVIEW OF PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Bryn Morgan]
[Wards Affected: All]**

Summary and purpose:

To present an update on the review of public convenience provision in Waverley and to make further proposals for the local alternative provision of the service.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

This report relates to the Council's 'Improving Lives' priority, as the provision of accessible public conveniences in the Borough's towns and villages improves the quality of life for all, particularly the more vulnerable in our society.

Equality and Diversity Implications:

The availability of accessible public conveniences in the Borough is a particular need of those with certain medical conditions.

Climate Change Implications:

There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

Resource/Value for Money Implications:

It currently costs the Council over £100,000 per annum to maintain its public conveniences. As a discretionary service however, the Council is not obliged to provide any such facilities and therefore as part of the 2009 Star Chamber process a saving of £20,000 was identified as being achievable from this service in 2010/11.

A saving of £3,500 has so far been achieved this year through the seasonal closure of Tilford Green toilets, and the proposals contained within this report would bring about further savings of approximately £16,600 per annum. Assuming implementation in December 2010, this would equate to a further saving of £4,150 in the current financial year.

Legal Implications:

Public Conveniences are a discretionary service. The Council is therefore not legally required to provide them.

Background

Introduction

1. At its meeting of April 2010, the Executive considered a report presenting a review of public conveniences in the borough. This report sought the views of the Executive on a range of options for future provision of the service, and also set out options for achieving £20,000 savings from the Public Conveniences budget in 2010/11, as identified through the Star Chamber process, as follows:-
 - a. Close North Street public conveniences, Farncombe
 - b. Close Windrush House public conveniences, Bramley
 - c. Put in place seasonal opening at Tilford public conveniences
2. At that meeting the Executive resolved to:-
 1. Put in place seasonal opening (April-September) at Tilford Public conveniences.
 2. Carry out further research into the condition and usage of all three public conveniences in the Farncombe area and the Windrush House public conveniences in Bramley, and ask officers to return with further recommendations including what alternative facilities might be made available on a formal basis.
2. This report sets out the progress made to date on this work, and seeks the agreement of the Executive to implement changes to the service.

Summary of progress to date

3. A number of activities, identified in the aforementioned report, have now been progressed, as follows:-
 - i. People counters were installed at the three public conveniences in North Street, Meadow and Broadwater Park, Farncombe in May 2010 with the aim of assessing the level of usage of these facilities. This exercise established that the average visits per day for North Street is 50, in comparison with 64 at Meadow and 77 at Broadwater.
 - ii. The option of entering into a joint contract with Guildford Borough Council has been explored. They are proposing to market test their in-house operation over the coming 12-18 months and are keen to explore

this option with us. They considered the option of entering into a joint procurement of these services at their October Executive meeting.

- iii. Negotiations with Cranleigh Parish Council have taken place regarding the transfer of the two facilities in the village. The Council agreed, at its Parish Council Meeting in September, to pursue this option further and has subsequently sought further information from WBC Officers to enable an informed decision to be made on this. Similar conversations with Godalming Town Council have not been so fruitful; they have indicated that they do not have any interest in taking over any of the Godalming or Farncombe facilities at this time.
 - iv. The Wheatsheaf public house in Bramley and The Leathern Bottle public house in Farncombe have been approached regarding the possibility of them making facilities available for use by non-customers. Both have indicated that they would be keen to enter into an arrangement whereby they make their toilets available to the public in return for a small annual grant to cover the cost of consumables.
 - v. The seasonal closure of public conveniences at Tilford was agreed in April this year. This facility was closed at the beginning of October and will not re-open until the end of March 2011, which will generate savings in the region of £3,500 per annum.
4. This work has revealed that there is some further scope for achieving savings from the Public Conveniences budget going forward but that, if there is no desire to simply close facilities down (but instead achieve savings whilst still maintaining a good level of service in the borough), these savings will take some time to achieve.

Proposals for immediate implementation

5. So far, it has only been possible to achieve the seasonal closure of Tilford Green public conveniences this year, which will achieve an annual saving of approximately £3,500 per annum. There is therefore currently a £16,500 shortfall against the £20,000 Star Chamber target.
6. The replacement of Meadow and Windrush Close toilets with formal agreements to allow public access to toilets at nearby public houses presents the most immediate and obvious solution to this issue, and it is therefore proposed that Officers be instructed to draw up formal agreements with The Wheatsheaf public house in Bramley and The Leathern Bottle public house in Farncombe regarding the provision of publicly available toilets into the future, and to arrange for the closure of the nearby public conveniences once these agreements are in place.
7. If this approach proves successful, there is scope to explore opportunities for reaching similar agreements elsewhere in the Borough in future, thus maintaining the current level of service whilst at the same time significantly reducing the cost of providing that service.

8. The possibility of devolution in Cranleigh and shared working with Guildford BC present longer-term opportunities for savings, and officers will continue to pursue these into the future.

Conclusion

9. In the short-term, there is an identified need to find a £20,000 saving against the public convenience budget in 2010/11. As things currently stand, this target will not be achieved in full, but the proposals in this report will achieve the required savings in future years whilst not compromising the local provision of the service.
10. The seasonal closure of the Tilford conveniences was implemented from 1st October 2010. If the other proposals are acceptable to the Executive, immediate steps can be taken to programme the implementation of the alternative facilities.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive:-

1. note this update, and the current position regarding the targeted 2010/11 Star Chamber Savings; and
2. agree to the replacement, with immediate effect, of the Meadrow and Windrush Close toilets conditional on formal agreements to allow public access to toilets at nearby public houses.

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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