

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

19 JUNE 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

PROVISION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval on the future provision of public conveniences across the County Borough as set out below in the body of the report.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 One of the outcomes of the 2016-2020 Corporate Plan (reviewed 2017-2018) is that Bridgend County Borough is a great place to live, work and visit; and that 'our communities are clean and safe.'
- 2.2 As part of the Council's approved Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018-19 to 2021-22 (MTFS) potential savings have been identified against the budget for the provision of Council owned and operated public toilets as a part of the Communities Directorate's response to balancing its financial allocation with the level of service provision while taking into consideration the priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan under:-
- Priority 2 – (helping people become more self-reliant); taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
 - Priority 3 – (smarter use of resources) Ensuring that all its resources(financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background.

- 3.1 As part of the Council's response to year-on-year reductions in Welsh Government Funding, measures to achieve savings against the provision of public toilets across the County Borough have been included in the Council's MTFS. In order to achieve these savings it will be necessary to review the provision and operation of toilet facilities currently operated by the Council.
- 3.2 In 2015 the Council consulted the public on the provision of public conveniences and as a result the number of toilets in our town centres was reduced from nine to six and male only urinals across the County Borough were de-commissioned.
- 3.3 In future it will also be necessary to review the provision of Public Conveniences following the enactment of The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 – Local Toilets Strategies. Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act requires local authorities in

Wales to prepare and publish local toilets strategies, under regulations shortly to be published by the Welsh Government.

- 3.4 In seeking to inform any future decision that Cabinet may take on the provision of public toilets across the County Borough, Cabinet approved at its meeting on 3rd October 2017 a formal public consultation. This consultation was focused on gaining the views of the public, Town and Community Councils, citizen's panel, disabled groups and organisations along with any other identified groups or individuals with an interest in the provision of public toilets.
- 3.5 The main outcomes of this consultation are set out below for Members' consideration. These findings will need to be balanced against the savings target identified in the MTFS of £100,000 for financial year 2018/19.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 Public toilet locations and their opening hours are set out for Cabinet in the table below. Currently the Council provides six public toilets, one in Maesteg, two in Bridgend, and three in Porthcawl. These are comparable to other town centres, for example Pontypridd has two public conveniences in the town and Neath has only one. The Council also operates a comfort scheme with businesses across the county borough.

Public Toilet Locations and Opening Hours

Location	Opening/closing
Maesteg Bus Station	All Year 09.00 – 18.00 Mon-Sat Sun - Closed
Bus station Bridgend	All Year 08.30 – 19.00 Mon – Sat 08.30 – 17.30 Sun
Cheapside Bridgend	09.00 – 18.30 Mon – Sat 08.00 – 17.00 Sun
John Street Porthcawl	Winter 09.00 – 18.00 Mon – Sat 10.00 – 18.00 Sun Summer 09.00 – 20.00 Mon – Fri 09.00 – 18.00 Sat - Sun
Griffin Park Porthcawl	Winter 09.30 – 17.30 Mon – Sat 10.30 – 17.30 Sun Summer 09.30 – 19.30 Mon – Fri 09.30 – 17.30 Sat - Sun
Rest Bay, Porthcawl	Winter 08.30 – 15.30 Summer 08.30 – 18.00

- 4.2 A public Consultation survey based on Bridgend County Borough Council's public conveniences was conducted over an eight week period between 7th February 2018 and the 4th April 2018. A survey was available to complete online on the consultation pages of the council's website. Paper copies were made available at local libraries and Bridgend and Maesteg bus stations. Residents could also request a paper copy (Welsh, English or accessible).
- 4.3 In total, there were twenty-one questions which required a reply from respondents; all other questions in the survey were optional. All survey responses offered the option of anonymity. The council's standard set of equalities monitoring questions were also included with the survey, as is recommended good practice for all public facing surveys carried out by the council.
- 4.4 The consultation team attended two meetings: Bridgend Shout and the Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People, and paper copies of the consultation were provided at both meetings. The content of the consultation remains available online in closed consultations.
- 4.5 Comments regarding the consultation were also invited via letter, email and phone call and via the council's Facebook and Twitter accounts.
- 4.6 Details of the consultation were sent to local media outlets via a press release. The consultation featured on Wales Online on 8th February 2018 and the local Gem on 15th February 2018. The consultation was also featured in the February 2018 issue of the Seaside News. All information was made available on the Bridgend County Borough Council website via the consultation webpages.
- 4.7 In total, there were 1,137 interactions, representing one per cent of the Bridgend County Borough population.
- 4.8 48% of responses were received from females and 20% from males. 31% of respondents did not provide a response to this question and 1% selected prefer not to say.
- 4.9 The majority of respondents (20%) were aged between 55 and 64, followed by 18% aged 45 to 54, closely followed by those aged 65 to 74 (17.8%). In total the group aged 55 or over made up 46% of respondents.
- 4.10 The type of disability respondents reported were mainly a long standing illness or health condition (28%), physical impairment (21%) or mental health condition (16%).
- 4.11 95% of those responding to the consultation supported the continued provision of public convenience facilities within the town centres and believed two facilities should be provided within each town centre which should be fully attended.
- 4.12 93% of respondents utilise public toilets within the town centres, the Porthcawl area (49%) and Bridgend town centre (43%) being the most popular location. John Street and Bridgend Bus Station were indicated as the most popular toilets, with the majority of respondents (60%) utilising them on a weekly basis.

- 4.13 Respondents believed John Street (77%) was the most needed convenience within the Porthcawl area.
- 4.14 Bridgend Bus Station was the most popular (89%) convenience within Bridgend town centre.
- 4.15 54% of respondents were prepared to pay to use public toilets. The majority (52%) would be prepared to pay 20p to use the public convenience.
- 4.16 A large proportion of respondents (62%) were not aware of the comfort scheme but thought it was a good idea and the council should promote the scheme more widely to the public and businesses.
- 4.17 54% of respondents said 'yes' if the comfort scheme expanded to include more premises, they would be comfortable using a business such as cafes/bars as an alternative to council operated public toilets. However the majority (74%) of respondents also indicated they would not support the closure of public conveniences and replacement with the comfort scheme as an alternative facility within town centres.
- 4.18 From 33% of the total responses received, 19% of this figure believed 'the impact on disabled/ older generation with health issues was a concern'; 16% highlighted the impact on tourism primarily in Porthcawl area and 13% raised accessibility issues.
- 4.19 Full details of the public consultation and its findings are attached for consideration by Cabinet at **Appendix A**.
- 4.20 Members will be aware that the transfer of public toilets to Town and Community Councils forms part of the Councils current objective under its Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme. This work remains a priority and discussions with Town and Community Councils on the transfer of public toilets are ongoing.
- 4.21 Set out below are details of current planned public convenience provision and operating arrangements for Council operated public toilets in Maesteg, Bridgend and Porthcawl with recommendations for Cabinets consideration. Discussions and correspondence with regards to the provision toilets is ongoing with the Town Councils and of note Bridgend Town Council is considering the provision of a number of alternative additional facilities within the town.

Public Toilet Planned Operational Arrangements

- **Maesteg Bus Station**

As part of the redevelopment plans for Maesteg Town Hall in the medium term, the existing public toilets adjacent to the bus station will close and be replaced by new public toilets within the redeveloped Town Hall. These facilities would be operated and cost borne by Awen, available for public use during Town Hall opening times.

In the short term prior to the new facilities being provided by Awen it is recommended that in preference, if Maesteg Town Council are willing to take on the responsibility for maintaining the facility, this is undertaken. However should

Maesteg Town Council not wish to do so, that as a short term measure, the toilets at this location would be closed and local businesses should be approached and offered the opportunity to participate in the Council's Comfort scheme.

While 54% of respondents would be comfortable using a business such as cafes/bars as an alternative to council operated public toilets 74% of respondents also indicated they would not support the replacement of public toilets with the comfort scheme as an alternative facility within town centres. Notwithstanding this, Cabinet will need to balance the Council's current financial position with the views of the public and its ability to continue to fund and provide public toilets in its town centres, when balanced against other competing demands for public services.

- **Bus station Bridgend**

These toilets are well used and in a reasonable state of repair out of all of the public convenience facilities, given the high footfall in users of the station. These toilets potentially could best support conversion to pay to use, with the public paying a nominal charge.

Based on the outcome of the public consultation exercise 54% of respondents were prepared to pay to use public toilets with a majority (52%) being prepared to pay 20p. Following careful discussion and consideration of the consultation with Scrutiny and Cabinet members it is considered important that Card payments method be available should pay systems be introduced. However it is recommended that in order to facilitate the benefit of the card payment system, the charge of 50p per use would be reasonable and needed to offset the additional costs of the card systems. Many different charge rates are in place in the UK Public Conveniences with charges of £1 per use being commonplace. The costs of installing pay to use equipment at this facility will need to be investigated further along with appropriate measures to ensure that disabled access to the toilets is not compromised in any way. Dependant on the identification of a suitable system this would be the recommended resolution for this location.

Following identification of a suitable system a further decision and subsequent approvals will be required with regards to which budget would be utilised (capital or revenue) to fund the equipment on a invest to save basis.

- **Cheapside Bridgend**

Discussions are currently ongoing with the land owner of the adjoining precinct for the re-development of this area. The public toilets at this location could be transferred as part of these discussions and either incorporated into any future development or removed completely. In the event that this outcome does not materialise the toilets at this location would be recommended for closure (These toilets are in poor condition, often used for antisocial activities and with ASDA in the vicinity with available pristine customer toilets, considered non-essential). In their place local businesses should be approached and offered the opportunity to participate in the Council's Comfort Scheme.

- **John Street Porthcawl**

The public toilet in John Street is a Grade 2 listed building. The preferred solution for the ongoing provision of these facilities would be for Porthcawl Town Council to receive these toilets under the Council's Community Asset Transfer Programme. Should Porthcawl Town Council not agree to operate and run the toilets, the toilets would be closed to meet the objectives of the Council's MTFS. As an alternative and as for Cheapside public toilets, local businesses should be approached and offered the opportunity to participate in the Council's Comfort scheme

- **Griffin Park Porthcawl**

Discussions are currently ongoing with Porthcawl Town Council to transfer these toilets under the Council's Community Asset Transfer Programme. These discussions are progressing well, though some technical questions have been raised by Porthcawl Town Council regarding the structure of the building. While transfer of the facility is not guaranteed, it is hoped that in the near future Porthcawl Town Council will assume responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of this toilet. Should these discussions fail, the toilets would be closed to meet the objectives of the MTFS. As an alternative and, as for Cheapside public toilets, local businesses should be approached and offered the opportunity to participate in the Council's Comfort scheme

- **Rest Bay, Porthcawl**

Rest Bay public toilets are currently being redeveloped. The future maintenance and operation of these toilets will be incorporated into the lease for the operation and running of the attached cafe and associated services. The recommendation would be that the new toilets would also be designed as pay as you use facilities.

4.22 A draft of the above recommendations has been shared and discussed and subsequently updated further to a meeting with Scrutiny members, officers and the Cabinet member for Communities. The following observations were made by Scrutiny members:

- Due to the public need for public conveniences, Members were pleased to hear of the proposed future alternative plans for public conveniences.
- Members strongly supported introducing charging for the use of public conveniences and made the following comments in relation to it:
 - Payments should be accepted by cash and card
 - Thought needs to be given to what entry system to introduce and Members request to be included in the consultation of the method before the Council progress with implementation
 - A Corporate contingency should be allocated to this spend as there is a possibility that the revenue from the charges will not match the expenditure
- Members supported the discussed proposal of the public conveniences in Rest Bay be included in design of new sports centre and further encourage the new leaseholder to assume responsibility for the cost of the toilets and ongoing associated charges.
- Members were pleased to hear of the proposed plan for the public conveniences in Maesteg to be incorporated into the town hall development.

- Members encourage the involvement of Town and Community Council's as most have the capability and financial capacity to take ownership of public conveniences in the Borough either by themselves or via an external company.
- Members highlighted the need to publicise the premises involved in the Comfort Scheme.
- Although it was stated that the public conveniences at Cheapside were no longer fit for purpose and should be demolished.
- Members state that the toilets found in the reception area of the Civic Offices should be signposted for use by the public.

Officers were in agreement with the observations of Scrutiny members which were aligned with the recommendations presented. On the usage of both cash and card payment systems it was highlighted that the costs of card systems (both installation and transaction costs) would have to be investigated further as the costs may largely negate the usage charge, and if so that option may need to be discounted from further consideration albeit it is expected that at the 50p charge rate the card option will be viable).

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1.1 This report has no effect on Policy Framework and Procedural Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached in **Appendix C**.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment

7.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment based on the 5 ways of working and any requisite mitigating measures have been set out in **Appendix B**.

8. Financial Implications.

8.1 The findings of this report need to balance against the savings target identified in the MTFs of £100,000 for financial year 2018/19. Sufficient time should be allowed for the discussions attached to the transfer of the toilets as detailed in the report to take place. This may mean that not all of the savings identified within the 2018/19 financial year will be achieved in year. In this event the communities directorate will endeavour to mitigate by identifying savings to compensate from elsewhere.

9. Recommendations.

9.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the proposed course of action detailed in the report, specifically the actions presented in section 4.21 of the report.

9.2 Cabinet is recommended to approve the signposting of the toilets in the reception of the Civic Offices for use by the public (to be funded via the streetscene revenue budget), as recommended by Scrutiny members in section 4.22 of the report.

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