

This report will be made public on 26 October 2004.

Folkestone

Hythe & Romney Marsh
Shepway District Council



Report Number **S/04/19**

To: Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
Date: 3 November 2004
Status: Non-Executive Decision
Responsible Officer: Report of the Advisory Group

Subject: PUBLIC TOILETS

SUMMARY:

This report summarises the work of the advisory group on public toilets and sets out conclusions and recommendations.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

To ensure the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee completes its work on public toilets as agreed at its meeting on 2 August 2004.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report S/04/19.
2. To agree the following recommendations to the District Secretary for Environment:
 - a) To ask officers to draw up DDA specifications for each public convenience
 - b) To ask officers to develop a 4-5 year action plan for the future of the district's public conveniences, prioritising the ones to be retained
 - c) To ask officers to ensure that appropriate signage is affixed to those public conveniences that will not be retained
 - d) To ask officers to begin the tender process for works that need to be carried out to ensure that Shepway's public conveniences are DDA compliant

Performance Plan Objective(s) reference(s):- Clean, Green & Safe.

LA21 Links:- None arising directly from this report.

Crime and Disorder Impact:- None arising directly from this report.

Financial Implications:- None arising directly from this report.

Equalities and Diversities Implications:- None arising directly from this report.

Background Documents: The following unpublished documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this Report:-

Notes from the meetings of the public toilets sub-group on 27 September and 18 October
Results of consultation with town and parish councils

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting on 14 July 2004, the Cabinet decided to request the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to review the way forward and to make recommendations regarding the future of the public toilet services.
- 1.2 An advisory group was set up consisting of Councillors Callahan and Mrs Cufley. The Conservative Group did not appoint a member. The advisory group worked closely with Councillor Bunting, District Secretary for Environment, who attended several meetings.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 Terms of Reference for the review were agreed as follows:
 - To review, assist and report upon the position regarding the possible disposal of some of the Council's public toilets to interested third parties.
 - To contact each Parish/Town Council and to determine in consultation with them whether they are or are not prepared to take responsibility for public toilets within their town/parish.
 - To examine and review information on the work needed to make the Council's public toilets compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
 - To review information assembled on the possible alternative uses and valuations placed upon the Council's public toilets.
 - To review the information collected as part of the Best Value Review on public conveniences and the Quality Improvement Project on public space.
 - To consider the proposed introduction of new automatic public conveniences.

3. MEETING OF THE SUB-GROUP – 27 SEPTEMBER 2004

- 3.1 The sub-group met on 27 September 2004 with the Deputy Chief Executive (SFH) and the District Secretary for the Environment.
- 3.2 The Deputy Chief Executive informed members of the sub-group that seasonal public conveniences would close on 4 October 2004. With the transfer of services to Kent County Council, all those conveniences that remained open were being opened, closed and maintained by Kent County Council. He emphasised that there were no officers at Shepway, with the exception of himself, with any responsibility for public conveniences.
- 3.3 The Deputy Chief Executive then gave an update on the status of each public convenience, and suggested that a 5 year programme was needed to improve the quality of existing stock and to identify those conveniences that should be replaced.
- 3.4 Letters were sent out to all town and parish councils in the district where there were public conveniences, in order to arrange a meeting with them to discuss the issue.

4. CONSULTATION WITH TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

- 4.1 Members of the sub-group met with representatives of most town and parish councils during the first two weeks of October 2004. A summary of the results of this consultation is set out below:

- None of the town and parish councils wanted to see their public conveniences closed
- Town and parish councils did not want to take over the running of their own public conveniences, and were not prepared to provide funding to assist with keeping the conveniences open and well maintained
- In most instances, it was felt that automated public conveniences would not be suitable, although some councils requested further information about the costs involved in this option
- There was some acceptance that charging might be necessary in order to keep public conveniences open
- Several councils suggested the possibility of group working – e.g. setting up a ‘Marsh’ group of councils, for example, to help maintain the local conveniences
- In one or two cases, there was the possibility of a local business taking over the public conveniences, and these opportunities would be progressed

5. CONCLUSIONS ARISING FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5.1 The following conclusions were agreed as a result of consultation with town and parish councils:

- To keep all public conveniences in the district open
- To retain public conveniences in their current locations
- To request officers to take action to bring Shepway’s public conveniences up to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance as quickly as possible
- To recognise that no money would be forthcoming from town or parish councils to assist with the maintenance of public conveniences
- To try to ‘sell’ the idea of upgrading the public conveniences to local businesses and individuals
- In future bidding rounds, to set aside more capital funds for improvements to public conveniences

5.2 The advisory group decided not to review in detail the information collected as part of the Best Value review of public conveniences and the QIP on Public Space, or to consider in detail the introduction of new automated public conveniences. It was clear from the results of the consultation that town and parish councils believed that their public conveniences should remain open and that there was little support for automated public conveniences. The advisory group also recognised that making the public conveniences DDA compliant would mean funds were not available for improvements to the service.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 At a meeting on 18 October 2004, the sub-group agreed the following recommendations:

- a) To request that officers draw up DDA specifications for each public convenience
- b) To ask officers to develop a 4-5 year action plan for the future of the district’s public conveniences, prioritising the ones to be retained

- c) To ask officers to ensure that appropriate signage is affixed to those public conveniences that will not be retained
- d) To ask officer to begin the tender process for works that need to be carried out to ensure that Shepway's public conveniences are DDA compliant

6.2 The committee is asked to endorse the recommendations of the sub-group for presentation to the District Secretary for the Environment.

This report has been prepared by:

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