

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE: 14 JANUARY 2008

Report of Strategic Director – Brendan Cleere

Review of Public Conveniences

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Melvyn Mullins)

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To review the provision of public conveniences in Taunton Deane.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting of 13 December 2007, the Overview and Scrutiny Board was informed of the Executive's intention to make revenue savings of up to £45,400 from the public convenience budget.
- 2.2 In order to achieve this level of saving, a number of public conveniences across Taunton Deane would need to be either closed, or alternative (more efficient) management arrangements established. At the time of the Overview and Scrutiny Board's meeting, a specific list of facilities for closure or alternative management had not been developed. However, issues such as vandalism, anti-social behaviour, usage by the public and proximity to other facilities were highlighted as key considerations.
- 2.3 A full review on the issue was promised for consideration by the Executive at its January meeting. This report contains the results of that review.

3. Public Conveniences – Key Facts

- 3.1 There is no statutory duty for the Council to provide public conveniences. However, public conveniences do provide a service to the community, visitors and people travelling through the Borough.
- 3.2 The Council currently maintains 24 public conveniences across the Borough, located as follows:

Taunton

Canal Road
Canon Street
Castle Green
Castle Walk
French Weir
Goodlands Gardens
High St C/P
Paul St. C/P
Priorswood Shops
Priory Bridge Rd. C/P
Sand Wedge, Wilton Lands
Station Road
Taunton Bus Station
Victoria Park
Vivary Park

Wellington

North St. C/P
Longforth Rd
Rockwell Green
Wellington Park

Wiveliscombe: North St.

Milverton: Creedwell Orchard

Milverton: Recreation Ground

Bishops Lydeard: Mount St

Bishops Lydeard: WSR

- 3.3 The public conveniences in Taunton Deane are owned by the Council and maintained by Taunton Deane Direct Labour Organisation (DLO).
- 3.4 The current (2007/08) revenue budget for public conveniences is £335,000. This is broken down as follows:

•	Cleaning	£96,800
•	Repairs and Maintenance	£44,490
•	Security	£21,900 (locking at night)
•	Utilities (energy and water)	£58,370
•	Rates	£27,860
•	Internal recharges	£49,660
•	Capital charges	£29,400
•	Insurance	£4,140

- Other (clinical waste disposal, etc) £2,150

- 3.5 Public conveniences are subject to a range of nuisances and social problems, including anti-social behaviour, vandalism, misuse, overnight occupation, alcohol and drug use and illegal sexual activity. The prevalence of such issues varies from one facility to another, and further details are provided in Appendix A.
- 3.6 The public conveniences were subject to a programme of refurbishment during the 1990s. The focus of the programme was to increase levels of vandal resistance, safety and hygiene at the facilities. There are no planned refurbishments at present.
- 3.7 Public conveniences in Taunton Deane are cleaned twice a day and the majority are locked at night unless specified otherwise in the table at Appendix A.
- 3.8 Analysis recently undertaken by South Somerset District Council shows that Taunton Deane has a relatively high provision of public conveniences when compared to other districts, as shown in the table below:

Table 1 – Comparison of public convenience provision

District	No. of Public Conveniences
Taunton Deane	24
South Somerset	19
Mendip	5
Salisbury	17
Sedgemoor	20 (of which 6 are in Highbridge/Burnham)

4. Public Conveniences - Reviewing the Current Provision

- 4.1 Although this review was prompted by the drive to achieve revenue savings and improve the Council's medium term financial position, other criteria are also suggested to assist the Executive in deciding on the future provision of this service, including:
- Prevalence of nuisances, such as vandalism and alcohol/drug use.
 - Level of usage
 - Proximity to other facilities
- 4.2 The table at Appendix A provides an analysis on all of the above criteria, aiming to assist the Executive in making an informed decision about the level of future provision across the Borough. All financial data in the Appendix relates to the previous financial year (2006/07), while all other comments reflect the current position.

- 4.3 Issues and opportunities arising from the potential closure of facilities (e.g. sale of land, demolition, alternative uses) have not been explored in this review.
- 4.4 The Executive is advised that a revenue saving of £18,400 can be taken from 2008/09, without closing or transferring any facilities. Potential savings identified in Appendix A would be over and above this sum.
- 4.5 A number of options are available to the Executive in respect of each public convenience facility, including:
- Maintain provision as at present
 - Closure
 - Seasonal opening
 - Seek contribution from outside body
 - Transfer cleansing responsibility to outside body

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Executive is recommended:
- a.) to accept revenue savings of £18,400 as indicated in paragraph 4.4 of this report.
 - b.) to consider each facility listed in Appendix A and decide on the most appropriate future course of action from the options provided in paragraph 4.5.

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APPENDIX A

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES IN TAUNTON DEANE

Notes*:

- 1.) 'Usage' is based on cleaning service estimates and comparison with other public conveniences
- 2.) 'Nuisance' covers issues such as vandalism, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse and illegal sexual activity. Details where applicable are provided in the 'further comments' column.
- 3.) Annual saving if closed comprises utilities charges, rates and cost of maintenance/repairs locking

Facility (Taunton unless specified)	Usage* (H/M/L)	Spend on vandalism repairs	Nuisance Level* (H/M/L)	Annual saving if closed*	Further comments
Canal Road	L	£1047.00	L	£5750	Usage has been higher on Saturdays (Market Day) but the Market is shortly to be relocated and the site redeveloped as part of Project Taunton. Probably our poorest facility in terms of condition. Closest alternatives are at Priory Bridge Road and Station Road.
Canon Street	H	£1482.00	L	£7200	Relatively few problems probably due to high usage from people using car park. Closest alternatives are at Victoria Park or Paul Street.
Castle Green	H	£2718.64	M	£15100	A section of the men's toilets are left open at night for taxi drivers' use. Illegal activities including drugs and sexual activities have been reported and there are frequent instances of people sleeping in the facility. The ladies are relatively free of problems. Nearest alternative Bus Station or Paul Street
French Weir Park	L	£1275.00	M	£4500	Problems with drug misuse and graffiti particularly to the outside of the building. Nearest alternative is at Station Road
Goodlands Gardens	H	£1758.54	H	£6600	Highest levels of drug misuse occur at this facility, with large numbers of sharps removed daily. Nearest alternatives are at Castle Green or Canon Street.
High Street	M	£1385	M	£8100	Some evidence of misuse from drug users. Nearest alternative is at Paul Street

Facility (Taunton unless specified)	Usage* (H/M/L)	Spend on vandalism repairs	Nuisance Level* (H/M/L)	Annual saving if closed*	Further comments
Paul Street Car Park	H	£2127.00	M	£10,900	The most used facility. Problems exist with homeless taking possession of cubicles soon after they are opened and then staying throughout the day. Nearest alternatives are at High Street or Castle Green.
Priorswood Shops	L	New facility	L	Not available (but minimal)	No other public toilets nearby.
Priory Bridge Road Car Park	L	£700.00	H	£6100.00	Vandalism (graffiti) and reports of illegal sexual activity persist at this facility. It is used mainly by motorists and delivery/lorry drivers, due to ease of access from the road. This site will be developed as part of Project Taunton during 2008. Closest alternatives are at Canal Road and Station Road.
Sand Wedge Café, Vivary park	L	New facility	L	£3000* *estimate no real cost available	This is a new facility, built in 2005. It is used primarily by customers of the Sand Wedge Café, although signage for general park users is being improved to clarify that these are for public use. The closest alternative facility is within Vivary Park, adjacent to the children's play area.
Station Road	H	£1260.00	H	£9500	Frequent use by drug users and homeless taking possession of the cubicles. Nearest alternative is Canal Road
Bus Station	H	£256.63	L	£4100	Main users are bus passengers and customers using the station. Nearest alternative – Castle Green
Victoria Park	L	£646.16	H	£9450 Figure includes sports pavilion. Saving attributable to toilets alone would be approx £2000.	Vandalism is frequent at this facility. The facilities are used by park users and people attending sports fixtures. Nearest alternatives in the Town Centre.

Facility (Taunton unless specified)	Usage* (H/M/L)	Spend on vandalism repairs	Nuisance Level* (H/M/L)	Annual saving if closed*	Further comments
Vivary Park	M/H (seasonal)	£1422.78	M	£7,900	This facility was completely refurbished in 2001 as part of the wider park renovation. There is higher seasonal use in the summer, as well as when special events are taking place in the summer. Closest alternatives are at the Sand Wedge Café, within the park.
Wellington – North St Car Park	H	£418.50	M	£3100	Some evidence of drug misuse. Nearest alternative is Longforth Road
Wellington – Longforth Road	H	£1259.63	M	£8500	As above. Nearest alternative is North Street Car Park
Wellington – Rockwell Green	L	£616.82	M	£3600	As above. Nearest alternatives in Town Centre.
Wellington Park	M	Not available	M	Not available	Nearest alternative is North Street
Wiveliscombe – North Street	M	£3896.41	H	£6700	Spate of vandalism in 2006/07. Locking at night an option, but local arrangement required. Wiveliscombe's only public convenience facility.
Milverton – Creedwell Orchard	L	£663.09	M	£1000	Suffers from occasional vandalism. Nearest alternative is the Recreation Ground. Locking at night an option pending local arrangement.
Milverton – Recreation Ground	L	Nil/negligible	M	£100	Nearest alternative – Creedwell Orchard
Bishops Lydeard - Mount Street	L	£2211.25	L	£6700	Nearest alternative – West Somerset Railway Stn
Bishops Lydeard – West Somerset Railway Stn.	M/H (seasonal)	£1729.29	L	£2900	This facility was built in 1997. High seasonal use by customers of the West Somerset Railway and the facility is closed at night and when the Railway is not in use. Nearest alternative – Mount Street