

AGENDA ITEM NO.

**TO: ECONOMIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14TH
DECEMBER 2004**

SUBJECT: PUBLIC CONVENIENCE REVIEW

FROM: LEISURE AND AMENITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

As part of the on going Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme agreed by Members a review of the decisions on the Public Convenience service taken earlier this year has been undertaken. This follows the full review carried out by this committee in 2003/04.

2. BACKGROUND

The Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook in September 2003 a review into the Public Convenience contract which had come into force in April 2003. As a result a number of changes to the way that the contract was managed and the number of Public Conveniences operated were recommended by this committee. These changes came into force on 5th April 2004.

3. POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

As part of the recommendations made in April 2004 the Executive agreed the provision of £50,000 a year of capital expenditure to be made available each year for three years to upgrade the toilets still in operation.

4. OUTCOME REQUIRED

To confirm the recommendations set out in 5.7 of this report and propose these to the Executive for adoption at their meeting in February.

Ian Coker
Amenities Manager

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Economic Overview & Scrutiny Report November 2003.

Executive Report April 2004.

Areas in District Affected: All

Executive Portfolio Area and Holder: Economic – Richard Tamlin

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5. Background

5.1 Customer complaints TY / LY.

5.1.1. The number of complaints received by Car Park Services from customers regarding the cleansing of Public Conveniences during the first nine months of the year are set out below.

5.1.2. The complaints have been broken down between those received relating to poor maintenance / vandalism and those where cleaning has been the cause of the complaint. Comparison figures are taken over the same 9 month period as last year and excludes the complaints received for the toilets closed this year (of which there were two).

5.1.3. Customer Complaints.

Complaint / Location	Kenilworth	Leamington	Warwick	Total
Cleansing first 9 months 03/04.	7	18	21	46
Cleansing first 9 months 04/05.	1	10	12	23
% change	-86%	-45%	-47%	-50%
Maintenance / damage first 9 months 03/04.	2	3	4	9
Maintenance / damage first 9 months 04/05.	1	10	4	15
% change	-50%	+333%	Level	+66%

5.1.4. The level of complaint regarding cleansing issues has fallen by 50% from 46 complaints during the first nine months of 2003/04 to 23 complaints in the first nine months of 2004/05. However complaints regarding maintenance / vandalism have increased by over 66% from 9 to 15.

5.1.5. From that feedback and monitoring of the contract officers conclude that the change in cleansing rota agreed as part of the Scrutiny process has lead to

an improvement in the general standard of the cleansing in the public conveniences.

5.1.6. However the increase in the number of maintenance / damage complaints underlines the need for improvements to the overall standard and condition of the public conveniences.

5.1.7. It is considered that the improvements highlighted in 5.2 will result in a further reduction in the level of complaints being received and an improvement in the satisfaction with the service recorded through the Citizen Panel.

5.2 Improvement programme.

5.2.1. £150,000 has been allocated to the capital programme over the next three years to upgrade the Public Conveniences operated.

5.2.2. The refurbishment work is currently out to tender to be completed in two phases. Phase one will include Abbey Fields, Jephson Gardens and St Nicholas Park. Phase two will include Regent Grove, Warwick Market Place and Victoria Park. The plan to upgrade the Public Convenience Abbey End is on "hold" dependant on plans for the development of the area.

5.2.3. A third phase which will cover the remaining Public Conveniences is planned for 2006/07. A programme for the upgrade of that phase will be drawn up by October 2005.

5.2.4. The cost of phase one and two is expected to be in the region of £100,000. The result of the tender process will be known in time of the committee meeting

5.2.5. The main areas of improvement to the toilets planned for phase one and two are detailed below.

- a) Improved and up-graded of the disabled provision.
- b) Provision of baby changing facilities within both male and female toilet blocks.
- c) Provision of water and electricity management systems to reduce the current utility usage.
- d) New fixtures and fittings, new floor and walls coverings and new lighting systems aimed at aiding the contractors cleaning process.

5.3 Myton Fields Public convenience.

5.3.1. The toilet block at Myton Fields has been closed since April 2004 as part of the agreed closure programme. There have been a number of adverse

comments from customers using Myton Fields about the lack of toilet facilities in an area which provides long term parking and picnic facilities.

5.3.2. Officers have investigated the cost of providing a restricted service to cover openings for weekends from April – October and daily during July and August. This provision would be in line with the customer usage of Myton Fields. The area is made available to the public at times determined by Leisure and Amenities based on the general weather, river and under foot conditions of the area. To provide this level of service would cost £2,200.

5.3.3. Car Park Services has introduced a new Pay and Display system at Myton Fields. This has seen a significant increase in income being generated from the area. The estimate for the full financial year 2005/06 is £36,000.

5.3.4. It is recommended that £2,200 per year be vied from the income from the Myton Fields car park income to support the re-introduction of this service from April 2005 operating during the period highlighted in 5.3.2.

5.4 Night cubicles.

5.4.1. There are two “night cubicles” operating in Warwick and Leamington. These are open during normal “out of hours” between 8.pm and 6am each day.

5.4.2. The usage of these night cubicles is low and they have attracted significant levels of abuse and vandalism. As a result it has been concluded that it would be more effective for the space currently used for the night cubicles to be incorporated in the refurbished toilet blocks at Regent Grove and Warwick Market Place.

5.4.3. Whilst it is difficult to quantify a specific financial saving achieved by this action, officers consider that there will be a reduction in the cost of maintenance at these public conveniences as a result of the closure of the night cubicles.

5.4.4. Officers believe there will be an improvement to the general level of service offered to all the customers who use the toilets in the future from the ability to redesign the toilet blocks and longer term savings in maintenance costs from this better design.

5.4.5. Special arrangements are being drawn up to provide a managed level of access to these toilets for taxi drivers operating from these ranks at night. This would be by the provision of a key access to the disabled toilet paid for by the taxi drivers.

5.5 Broom Hall Lane – Lapworth.

5.5.1. Discussions have been ongoing with Lapworth Parish Council to introduce a lease agreement which would result in the Parish Council taking over the operating costs of the public convenience rather than the closure of the Public Convenience. On the basis of these on-going negotiations it was agreed to continue to operate the toilet until these discussions were completed.

5.5.2. Following a meeting on 21st October the Parish Council has informed officers that following full consideration they feel unable to enter into a full lease agreement. The Parish Council has requested they be given time to attempt to raise funding to pay for the cleansing contract cost element of operating the public convenience. The Parish Council undertook to inform the Council in early 2005 if funding had been secured.

5.5.3. If funding were found, the Parish Council informed Officers that they would plan to operate the Public Convenience daily between Easter and October and for one week over the Christmas period.

5.5.4. On the basis that this Public Convenience would therefore be closed during the winter months even if operated by the Parish Council it was agreed that the Public Convenience would be closed to the public from 1st November 2004.

5.5.5. The total cost of operating the public convenience at Broom Hall Lane is estimated at £5,000 of which the cleansing contract element was £3,500.

5.5.6. If the Parish Council was to find the funding to cover the cleansing costs the cost of rates, electricity, water and general maintenance estimated to be £1,200.

5.5.7. If no funding is forthcoming from the Parish Council and the Public Convenience are closed the on-going cost to Warwick District Council from the half-rates charged for the building would be in the region of £350.

5.5.8. It is recommended that the Parish Council be given to February 2005 to confirm if they can find the funding to cover the cleansing side of the operating costs. If that was to be confirmed then the Public Convenience should remain open during the period of time highlighted in 5.5.3.

5.6 Long term future of Public Convenience closed.

5.6.1. On the basis of the recommendations agreed by the Executive in April 2004 the following toilets were closed.

5.6.2. As a result of the recommendations in this report it is planned that rather than for these to just remain closed the following use will be made of these during the next year.

5.6.3. Current the plans for those Public Conveniences closed in April 2004 and not previously detailed in the report are set out below.

Public Convenience location	Current Plans April 2005	Comments
St Peter's	To remain open for special events. e.g. Peace Festival, Mela.	Continue to operate as agreed. Funding to support cleaning for these events is provided from other budget.
Newbold Comyn	Convert to changing rooms in 2005.	Full saving to Public Convenience contract. Increased income from use of pitches to Sports budget.

5.6.4. The current plan is to refurbish the toilets in Victoria Park located on the Riverside Walk side of the Bowls Pavilion. This would result in the full closure of the toilets at the Cricket Pavilion.

5.6.5. Leisure and Amenities are keen to incorporate the space currently used as a public convenience within the bowls pavilion into the current pavilion and refurbish the toilets at the Cricket Pavilion to provide the service to users of the park.

5.6.6. This would be a no additional cost to the Public Convenience service, will allow improved use of the Bowls Pavilion and still provide a service for users of the park.

5.7 Recommendations.

5.7.1. That the new cleaning programme operated by Superclean be confirmed.

5.7.2. The refurbishment programme of the Public Conveniences set out in items 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 be agreed.

5.7.3. That the Public Convenience at Myron Fields be opened for the period set out in items 5.3.2. and the cost of operation be vied as detailed in 5.3.4.

5.7.4. That the spaces used as night cubicles be used to enhance the toilets at Regent Grove and Warwick Market Place and provision for taxi drivers be via the disabled toilet.

5.7.5. That the Public Convenience at Broom Hall Lane be closed on a permanent basis unless funding form Lapworth Parish Council to cover the full cost of cleaning is confirmed by February 2005.

5.7.6. That the long term future use those toilets closed in April 2004 and set out in 5.6 be agreed.

5.7.7. Members of the Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to determine if the toilets at the Bowls or Cricket pavilion should be refurbished to provide the service at Victoria Park and add that to the recommendations made above.