

URGENT ITEM

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

19 MAY 2010

URGENT REPORT OF THE HEAD OF STREET SCENE & ENVIRONMENT

FORMER WILTON ROAD PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress following the resolution of the meeting of Council on the 24 April 2010, namely:

***RESOLVED** that no action be taken on the decision made by the Community and Social Affairs Committee on 17 March 2010 to sell the toilets on Wilton Road and a report be brought forward on their refurbishment with the financial implications as soon as possible.*

- 1.2 To make a decision on the way forward for the facilities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That members determine whether to reopen Wilton Road public conveniences and how to fund the resulting decision in terms of the associated capital and revenue implications for recommendation to the Policy, Finance & Administration Committee.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The following key issues are concerned with the costs of refurbishing; the annual running costs (both staff and maintenance) and programme of work when the source of the funding has been agreed.

- 3.2 At the meeting of this Committee on the 17 March 2010 it was resolved that:

(1) Members agreed to dispose of the freehold interest in the former Wilton Road Public Conveniences to the owners of Egerton Lodge;

(2) Formal arrangements are entered into with Wetherspoons and the George Hotel for public use of their toilet facilities during opening hours and that officers explore similar arrangements with other nearby businesses;

(3) Investigations continue for a comprehensive solution to coach parking and drop off facilities within the town.

- 3.3 Following a motion to Council on the 24 April 2010 the resolution in (1.0) above was agreed, i.e. *that no action be taken on the decision made by the Community and Social Affairs Committee on 17 March 2010 to sell the toilets on Wilton Road and a report be brought forward on their refurbishment with the financial implications as soon as possible.*

- 3.4 To quantify the costs involved, three contractors were requested to give quotations for refurbishing the Wilton Road facility and bring it up to a working standard. Outlined in Appendix A is the content of the refurbishment works that would be required.
- 3.5 Two contractors returned quotations, varying from £18,000 to £20,625. The third contractor declined to give a quotation as they believed there were too many uncertainties for them to quote accurately without gaining full access to the roof. The contractor who submitted the quotation of £20,625 carried out the more thorough investigation within the building and that has been used to produce the table below. However, there is still the possibility of unforeseen works that may be required to the flat roof, which will only be visible when the roof is taken off. It is therefore prudent to allow a contingency allowance of say 15%. Thus the refurbished works would cost:

	£
Refurbishment costs	20,625
Contingency (15%)	3,090
Total	23,715
Say	£24,000

- 3.6 The annual running costs (excluding staffing, support services and capital charges) have been estimated as **£7000** per annum net of any income based on current estimates for St Mary's and Park Lane facilities.
- 3.7 In addition to the above there will also be an increasing pressure on the corporate budget for repairs and maintenance, which is used for the entire general fund's fixed assets with the addition of another property to maintain and assuming there is no increase in this budget for the maintenance of Wilton Road toilets..
- 3.8 Wilton Road conveniences would be open:

Monday – Saturday 9am to 5pm
 Sunday 10am to 4pm

The staffing costs associated with this would be in the region of **£33,000** per annum.

- 3.9 The information given to this Committee at it's last meeting stated that an analysis of the use of the public conveniences showed that numbers continue to decline from a total of over 104,000 paying users in 2007/08 to 60,715 paying users in 2008/09 and a projected 58,000 paying users in 2009/10.
- 3.10 Subject to a decision on the funding source for both refurbishment and the running costs being found within a short timeframe every effort would be made to open within the date suggested i.e. 1 July 2010. However, the works to the flat roof are unlikely to be completed in this timeframe. The works to the flat roof would therefore have to be carried out at a later date with a consequential closure of the facility.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The provision of adequate public conveniences is linked to the priority objectives of town centre development and enhancement.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Public conveniences are a general expense and are therefore paid for by all council residents within the borough as opposed to a special expense.
- 5.2 The financial implications excluding additional income of refurbishing the Wilton Road facility have been described in Section (3) and can be summarised as:

	£
Refurbishment cost (one-off)	24,000
Maintenance and running costs, net of income (annual)	7,000
Staffing Costs (annual)	33,000
Total (annual)	40,000

- 5.3 An analysis of the cost per paying user of the facility is set out below:

Year	2008/09 Actual £	2009/10 Estimated Year End Position £	2010/11 Original Estimate £	2010/11 (assuming Wilton Road is open) £
Direct Costs	123,756	94,810*	88,090*	128,090*
Income	-12,236	-12,050	-12,050	-17,650
Net Direct Costs	111,520	82,760	76,040	110,440
Net Direct Costs per User	1.84	1.43	1.36	1.31
Overheads	40,470	41,470	30,800	37,740
Full Service Costs	151,990	124,230	106,840	148,180
Full cost per User	2.50	2.14	1.91	1.76
Number of Chargeable Users	60,715	58,000	56,000 ⁽¹⁾	84,000 ⁽²⁾

Note 1: Assume 2,000 less users over previous year as the trend.
 Note 2: Calculated using 28,000 users per facility

* figures exclude share of corporate repairs & maintenance budget and any capital works

- 5.4 The 2010/11 budget contains an efficiency target of £28,420 following a resolution of The Council when the budget was set is as follows:

“the proposed disinvestment relating to the unattended Public Conveniences (D1) be removed and replaced with an efficiency target of £28,240 in 2010/11 and £31,000 in future years. The achievement of this to be investigated by the Efficiency Task Group.

Such savings be approved by the Policy, Finance and Administration Committee by 30 June 2010;”

This saving has not yet been fully identified.

- 5.5 The Medium Term Financial strategy sets out a potential financial deficit of up to £1.079m in 2011/12. As a result of the national economic position cuts in funding are almost certain and it just remains to identify how these cuts in funding will be targeted. The finance settlement is unlikely to be available until Late November/early December 2010 and with a budget and council tax being set in February 2011 it is essential that the council plans for such a deficit now if it is not to be in a position of having to make last minute decisions on cost reductions without the necessary planning and investigation of the implications.
- 5.6 Alternatives options which could be considered to fund the running costs associated with Wilton Road from within the public convenience service itself could be:
- a) Close another public convenience – If it is considered that the positioning of Wilton Road conveniences due to their location next to the bus park is the major objection then an alternative would be to consider if closing another facility may be preferable as this would still leave two facilities in the town centre. Closure of St Mary’s Way would enable the site to be utilised for car parking. Park Lane offers less options for the use of the property/land however the facilities proximity to the Play Close has been somewhat negated by the access provided to the Town Estate facilities at the tennis courts by the construction of the connecting bridge from the Play Close. It could be assumed for estimate purposes that the revenue implications of this would be neutral with the capital costs of the refurbishment of Wilton Road still needing to be funded.
 - b) Implement roving attendants at all three conveniences, as suggested at the EETG meeting of the 14 May 2010, using 1.33 FTE as a guide provides a salary estimate of £31,000 which would provide a saving of £31,000 on existing costs. This would fully fund the revenue costs of Wilton Road and provide a contribution to the current savings target within the 2010/11 budget.
 - c) Open Wilton Road only on Tuesdays and Saturdays however the financial implications of this would need to be determined.
- 5.7 Due to this report being an urgent item all estimates would need to be more fully assessed to provide for more accurate costings of the option(s) selected.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

- 6.1 The provision of public conveniences is a discretionary service and as such Melton Borough Council can determine the appropriate service levels.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 The current public conveniences (St Mary’s Way and Park Lane) and also Wilton Road have suffered from incidents of anti-social behaviour in the past, keeping the toilets manned helps to minimise safety risks.

8.0 EQUALITIES

- 8.1 Any re-opening of the Wilton Road conveniences would increase the level of access to disabled toilet provision and also allay the concerns the Access Group had when the conveniences closed in early 2008.

8.2 If the re-opening of the Wilton road toilets resulted in the roving attendants option being implemented this might be seen as reducing the level of access to disabled toilet provision as it is the experience of the toilet operatives that many severely disabled customers require assistance in order to use the facilities.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The risks are shown in the table below:

Probability



Very High A				
High B			1	
Significant C		2, 4		
Low D		3		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic

Impact →

Risk No.	Description
1	Annual running costs add to the Council's overall budget issues in this year and 2011/12 onwards
2	Declining numbers of users increases unit costs
3	Facility does not increase visitors to town centre
4	Use of roving attendants may increase the amount and extent of vandalism

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 Public conveniences are a heavy user of utilities for heating, light and water use thereby adding to the carbon footprint.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Council's Management Team on the production of this report.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 The location of the Wilton Road 'public convenience' is situated within the Egerton Ward.

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Date: 18 May 2010

Appendices: A – Specification for refurbishment and repairs

Background Papers: Previous Committee reports

Reference: X: Committees/CSA/2010-11/19-05-10/Wilton Road Public Conveniences