

# AGENDA ITEM 4

## SPECIAL MEETING OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

27 OCTOBER 2010

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF STREET SCENE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

#### REVIEW OF MELTON MOWBRAY TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE SERVICES

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members on the current levels of service and availability of public conveniences in Melton Mowbray Town Centre and to report findings from the recent stakeholder and public consultation in 2010.
- 1.2 To provide additional information on public conveniences including a national perspective on public conveniences, other methods of service delivery, a comparison of the local provisions in Melton Mowbray town centre with other comparable towns and Local Authorities in respect of public conveniences and also to provide information on the age and state of repair of each of the public conveniences owned by Melton Borough Council.
- 1.3 To assist members in agreeing on the appropriate level of service provision for its public convenience service in Melton Mowbray Town Centre and identify the optimum service level for the town, taking into account how the service fits within the Council's priorities, the results of the recent consultation and background research and also the budgetary constraints to decide how best scarce resources can be allocated.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Members select one of the preferred options outlined in Section 3.14 of this report taking into account the estimated revenue and capital implications for each option.**
- 2.2 **Officers continue to monitor usage figures and review the public convenience operating hours to minimise operating costs.**
- 2.3 **Officers investigate introducing the individual single toilet scheme for Melton Mowbray Town Centre and report their findings back to Members in 2011/12.**
- 2.4 **Officers continue to seek opportunities to improve the provision of public conveniences in the town centre by investigating opportunities to work with the private and voluntary sector for new ways of delivering the service including working with a social enterprise.**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 **Background to the changes in the Melton Mowbray Town Centre service provision of public conveniences since 2008**

Members of the Community and Social Affairs Committee meeting on the 19 September 2007 resolved to close Wilton Road Public conveniences subject to further consultation with the trade unions. The review had been instigated as an identified area for potential disinvestment. The report presented a number of options to Members and the decision to close Wilton Road toilets was based on information including the numbers of usage, (this was the least used of the toilets), the age and poor state of repair of Wilton Road toilets and also the overall expense of running the toilets.

On 4 February 2010 Full Council identified the opportunity to make savings on the public convenience budget by switching the fully attended service to roving attendants. This was estimated to provide an annual saving of £28,000. However this initiative has never been implemented and therefore there is a budgetary shortfall. Savings have been achieved in the sum of £12.1k per annum by the introduction of new income streams i.e. advertising on bus shelters and hoardings and the introduction of charges for coaches in car parks. This was to provide funding in this financial year for the temporary opening of Wilton Road public conveniences.

At a Special Meeting of this Committee on the 9 June 2010 and subsequently considered at a Special Meeting of the Policy, Finance & Administration Committee on the 11 June 2010, it was agreed to re-open the Wilton Road public conveniences with minimal refurbishment from the 1 July until 6 October 2010 (Saturday and Tuesday only) with roving attendants. This decision was made following receipt of a number of complaints from the public and other stakeholders on the closure of the Wilton Road toilets.

The Wilton Road toilets were re-opened on Saturday 3 July 2010. The baby changing room was not opened as it requires an attendant operating and the night toilet was not opened as it required substantial refurbishment work. The toilets were opened on Saturday and Tuesdays since that date without charge up until the roof failed following a period of heavy rainfall. The opening/closing and 'roving attendant' regime was as follows:

- Open at 09:00
- Visits at approximately 11:00 and 13:00
- Closure at 15:00

A roving visit lasted 30 minutes with cleaning and replacement of consumables as the main duties. The first weeks in July saw the attendant closing Park Lane toilets whilst the roving took place; this regime was changed at the beginning of August in order to understand any implications of keeping Park Lane open whilst 'roving'. However, the Wilton Road toilets have been subject to vandalism whilst the toilet has been unattended. This caused a 'knock-on effect' due to further work for the attendants and property team in order to bring the facility back to a reasonable state. In the interim it does not give a good impression to visitors.

Appendix 1 shows in detail the type and extent of maintenance work that was required during the trial opening period and the Capital costs to refurbish Wilton Road and bring it back into permanent use. The major problem, apart from deliberate abuse, was the leaking roof.

Whilst the roving attendants were on site they counted the number of users and from this information we have estimated the total usage as approximately 70 people per day of which 60% pay – which the attendants believe was the norm before the toilets were closed.

### **3.2 Other Issues associated with Wilton Road toilets**

The Wilton Road public convenience service is linked with the operation of the Wilton Road car park and the associated use of coach parking and drop off points (please refer to letter from Chamber of Trade at Appendix 2). The local consultation on public conveniences showed 39% of respondents consider Wilton Road Toilets the most popular for the Town. The main reason customers give for keeping Wilton Road toilets open is that coach passengers disembark at Wilton Road and do not have toilets immediately adjacent to the drop off point. One potential solution to this was to re-locate the main bus and coach drop off points elsewhere in the town near to St Mary's public toilets, this option has been investigated with Leicestershire County Council Highways and subsequently ruled out for St Mary's Way and any other locations in the town.

### 3.3 Existing levels of provision for public conveniences in Melton Mowbray Town Centre

For the last five years (since 2006) Melton Borough Council has continually achieved five star awards in “Loo of the Year Awards” run by the British Toilets Association. This is the highest level that can be achieved and there were only 60 five star awards for full-time attended public toilets in the United Kingdom. The public conveniences are judged on five criteria with a maximum score of 5.

Entries and results for Loo of the Year Awards from 2006 to 2010 were as follows:

	Year	Result	Year	Result	Year	Result	Year	Result	Year	Result
Park Lane	2006	5*	2007	5*	2008	5*	2009	5*	2010	5*
St Mary's Way	2006	5*	2007	5*	2008	5*	2009	5*	2010	5*
Wilton Road	2006	5*	2007	5*	2008	Not entered	2009	Not entered		

Radar keys are available for Customers with disabilities from the Customer Service Centre at a cost of £3.00. There are no adult disabled changing facilities at any of the sites. The locations of the Council-owned public conveniences are shown on a plan at Appendix 3.

*Table showing current opening times and facilities (Please note that Wilton Road toilets are currently under repair)*

Location	Opening Times	Children under 16yrs	Adult Charge	Staff Number	Disabled Facilities	Baby Changing	Night Toilet
<b>Wilton Road</b>	Summer Opening Tues and Sat Only	Free	No Charge	Unattended, but with roving attendant	Yes	No	No
<b>St Mary's</b>	Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri 9am – 5pm	Free	20p	1 daily attendant, no cover during half hour lunch break	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Tues & Sat 8am – 5pm	Free	20p	1 daily attendant, no cover during half hour lunch break	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Park Lane</b>	Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri: 9am – 5pm	Free	20p	1 daily attendant, no cover during half hour lunch break	Yes	Yes	No
	Tues & Sat 8pm – 5pm	Free	20p	1 daily attendant, no cover during half hour lunch break	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Park Lane</b>	Sunday Opening 10am-4pm	Free	20p	1 daily attendant	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Wilton Park Town Estate</b>	During park opening times		No charge	Unattended	No	No	No
				Overall MBC Staff Number Is 4 (3 Full Time Equivalent)			

The public conveniences are also open outside normal opening times for community events such as Melton Country Fair, Melton Mowbray Show and the Victorian Christmas Fayre.

### 3.4 National Guidance on Level of Provision of Toilets

Recommendations for toilets spatial strategy are included in British Standard BS8465 Part 4. The British Toilets Association were Panel members for the creation of this standard and support and advocate its recommendations. Section 8 - Public toilet spatial strategy - is intended to ensure that there are adequate toilet facilities throughout the whole area, rather than just at a few major locations. It includes reference to city centres and tourist areas, “toilets should be within a short walking distance, and should ideally be at 300m centres in the busiest areas, and at 500m centres generally in town centres”. The above guidance suggests that Melton Mowbray Town Centre, when operating all three of its toilets, is

providing standards equivalent to city centres rather than the less demanding town centres standard. The plan attached at Appendix 3 shows the walking distance from a town centre point and demonstrates that all 3 toilets are well within the 300 metre recommendation and could indicate that there is an opportunity to reduce the number of toilets the Council manages from 3 to 2 or even from 3 to 1.

### **3.5 Local consultation results and why the provision of public conveniences is important for Melton Mowbray Town Centre**

Melton Borough Council is committed to providing a high quality public convenience service to local residents, tourists and local businesses. The provision of public toilets is not a statutory duty, but the service is one that the public has come to expect, and there is evidence from the British Toilets Association and a report by the Communities and Local Government, "The Provision of Public Toilets" October 2008, of growing concern at the increasing scarcity of public toilet provision. This national concern has been reflected locally in the results from our recent customer and stakeholder consultation. The provision of a quality public convenience service contributes to the Council's priority of town centre improvement and also caters for the elderly and very young and helps to look after those who are most vulnerable in our society.

3.6 The Council has widely consulted customers, local stakeholder groups and other organisations on the provision of public conveniences to gain customer insight into this service, what is important to our customers and stakeholders? What are their ideas on how we can improve our service in an environment where resources are scarce? The consultation has taken place at local group meetings, through questionnaires, e-mail consultation to targeted groups and also through a 'Visitor's Comments Book' at each of the public conveniences. We have also consulted front line staff and managers to gain a better understanding of what the issues are in managing our toilets and what is important to our customers. In addition to local consultation officers have looked at National guidance on levels of provision for cities and towns to help Members put our levels of service provision into a national context, research has also been undertaken into service level provision by local authorities in similarly sized English towns. Please refer to the English Towns comparison table attached at Appendix 4.

3.7 The feedback from 186 completed questionnaires demonstrates that customer expectations and priorities are varied; customers were asked to rank the toilets in terms of importance and the results are (most important first):

- Wilton Road – 39%
- St Marys Way – 38%
- Park Lane – 18%

This customer prioritisation of toilets differs from the amount of usage figures that were analysed for fee paying customers in 2008 where usage was as follows (most usage first):

- St Marys Way – 40%
- Park Lane – 36.2%
- Wilton Road – 23.8%

The questionnaires showed that the majority of customers would expect Melton Mowbray Town Centre to have 3 public conveniences available to the public. The Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade have written in response to the consultation and confirmed that local businesses consider that the public conveniences provide a form of infrastructure necessary for the enjoyment of the town by visitors and residents. Their letter is attached at Appendix 2, the Chamber of Trade preference is for all 3 toilets to be brought into permanent and daily use however they recognise that in the current economic climate this may not be viable and state that St Mary's Way and Wilton Road conveniences are the two most important as both are situated adjacent to coach/bus and car parks. A summary analysis of

the questionnaires and comments received is attached at Appendix 5.

### **3.8 Ideas from the public and stakeholder consultation on public convenience provision**

There were several suggestions coming out of the public consultation exercise and detailed comments are summarised in Appendix 5. The main opportunities to be explored further in this report are Community Toilet Schemes; a Social Enterprise to manage the facilities; opening toilets on busier days only; increase charges to help cover costs; and improving the signage and promotional material for the Town Centre public conveniences.

### **3.9 Community Toilet Scheme**

The Community Toilet Scheme enables local businesses like pubs, restaurants and shops, to work together with the Council to make more clean, safe and accessible toilets available to the public. Members of the public can use toilet facilities during the premises opening hours and without the need to make a purchase. Businesses have the right to refuse entry in exceptional circumstances. Street signage indicates the name and direction of the participating businesses.

The Council has investigated this initiative with local businesses and from our initial investigations we have received positive feedback only from the recently fire damaged Kettleby Cross public house, the pub is owned by Wetherspoons a company that supports this scheme nationally. Last year several reports were published through central government about toilet provision with recommendations for Council's to consider this initiative as part of their toilet strategy. As part of our strategy Town Centre Managers will continue to investigate this option with local businesses.

### **3.10 Social Enterprise to manage and operate Park Lane toilets**

One idea coming from the consultation was for the Council to investigate the opportunity to run one or more of the Council-owned toilets as a social enterprise trading for social and environmental purposes and driven by social objectives. This type of initiative has the potential to reduce running costs for the Council and also develop the 'Big Society' theme for Melton Mowbray.

We have investigated which local organisations may be interested in participating in a social enterprise and both Voluntary Action Melton (VAM) and MENCAP have expressed an initial interest.

Our recent consultation exercise has shown that Park Lane toilets are the least valued of the Council's toilets, they are also only busy on particular days – Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and therefore one option Members may wish to consider is transferring management/ownership to a social enterprise run by a charity organisation for example, MENCAP or Voluntary Action Melton to manage Park Lane toilets. A social enterprise may be entitled to grant funding and would have socially driven objectives. It may lead to greater community involvement and this is an option that can and would need to be explored further.

### **3.11 Opening toilets on busier days only**

The most popular days for people visiting the Town Centre are Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays and one of the suggestions coming from public consultation was to reduce the number of days that a service is provided. Please find attached at Appendix 6 a graph illustrating the daily usage of the toilets and the income received from Town Centre car parks according to the day of the week. These graphs illustrate the busiest days of the week for Melton Mowbray Town Centre. One of the options for Members to consider is reduced opening times to coincide with the Market at Park Lane.

Evidence from data collected by the attendants suggest that Sunday use of Park Lane is minimal and the toilets should no longer be opened on Sundays except for when special events are organised.

### **3.12 Improving the signage and promotional material for the Town Centre public conveniences**

A key feature of the consultation is that visitors to Melton Mowbray were not aware of the location of public conveniences. We have therefore reviewed and improved the website to provide better quality information on the toilets including symbols and details of toilets provided by other organisations.

At present there is finger signage to both Park Lane and St Mary's Way toilets. Toilets are also signposted on the visitor information points in all of the car parks, on shopping guides and visitor guides. Signs will also be displayed on the public conveniences external walls to inform members of the public on opening times, facilities etc. an example of the signage is attached at Appendix 7.

### **3.13 Re- Development of Melton Town Centre Toilets provision**

A further suggestion from one of our stakeholders is to investigate the possibility of introducing individual single toilets with individual doors. For example four toilets could be introduced at Wilton Road toilets, these toilets are a concept being developed by companies such as "Healthmatic" agents for Stow on the Wold Council, they have selective automation, and combine this with careful rostering of staff duties and charging where appropriate it may be possible to deliver savings in the long term by using this model. This option is not a short term solution however it can be investigated further if members require.

### **3.14 Summary of the 2010 Review and options available**

Officers have identified a number of options for Members to consider taking into account the consultation the list is not exhaustive. However, it is recognised that each of these options, if selected will have a knock on consequence that will impact on either the level of public conveniences service or other services provided by the Council. Reducing the level of service provisions of public conveniences will nearly always prove unpopular with certain stakeholders, however it is reasonable to say that in comparison with other towns of similar size to Melton Mowbray the current level and quality of public conveniences provision is high.

If Melton Mowbray town centre had two fully attended, "five star award" public conveniences in the town centre, the quality and level of provision would still be at a higher level of provision than the majority of other similarly sized towns. Please refer to Appendix 4 attached to this report. The provision of two toilets within 500 metres of the town centre would also meet the British Standards guidelines on level of provision for public conveniences. Alternatively, if members came to a solution of roving attendants on 2 or 3 toilets the provision compared with similarly sized towns would still be reasonable.

The consultation feedback and high levels of response from our customers in Melton Mowbray town centre clearly show that the provision of quality public conveniences is considered by the public as an important issue for the town and an important service that customers expect the Local Authority to deliver.

Each of the options below need to be considered in light of the Central Governments comprehensive spending review on 20 October 2010. Within each main option there are sub options to consider around whether toilets are attended or roving, and if attended whether the charge remains at 20p or increases to 30p. It is suggested that Members first of all select a preferred main option, and then consider the implications of attended or roving. Finally, if appropriate then consider any changes to the charging policy.

Each of the options has been allocated indicative cost estimates based on current financial accounts and data and are subject to further refinement once a decision on the preferred option has been made. A summary of the cost implications for each option is set out in Appendix 8.

Option 1 Carry out the necessary works to open all three public conveniences based on existing standard opening hours.

**Supporting evidence**

- 39% of questionnaire respondents identified Wilton Road as most important toilets for the Town Centre
- This option would give customers the best choice and service level provision
- The Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade identified 'Wilton Road toilets and St Mary's Way toilets as the two most important toilets as both are situated adjacent to Coach/Bus and Car Parks'
- Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade stated their preference for all 3 town toilets to remain open 'in an ideal world'

**Issues associated with this option**

- This is the most expensive option put forward for consideration. Additional ongoing revenue costs of between £4.9k and £52.9k over and above the funded base budget for public conveniences would need to be found.
- In the current economic climate and in light of the 2010 comprehensive spending review, all councils are facing significant pressure to find budget savings. Discretionary areas of spending, such as public conveniences, will be subject to review up and down the country at the present time. This option will place significant additional pressure on the Council.
- The Council will have to fund the one off refurbishment of Wilton Road toilets at an approximate cost of £20,000 capital expenditure
- Melton Mowbray town centre would have a generous provision of toilets compared with other towns.

Option 1a – Fully attended with existing charges of 20p

**Supporting evidence for retaining this charge**

- This is the existing charge
- Very few complaints at this level of charging
- Predictable demand

**Issues associated with retaining this charge**

- May not maximise the income receivable
- 7% of consultees felt that increasing charges would be acceptable in the current economic climate

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 1a**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £52.9k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 1b – Fully attended with charges increased to 30p

**Supporting evidence for increasing the charge**

- 7% of consultees felt that increasing charges would be acceptable in the current economic climate
- Based on current usage levels income of £6k per annum could be generated
- Assuming a 10% reduction in usage income of £4.8k per annum could be generated

### **Issues associated with increasing the charge**

- Given the current economic conditions and the implications of the 2010 comprehensive spending review we need to consider all options to minimise the impact on the revenue budget
- 3% of consultees considered there should be no charges
- It is difficult to predict what impact this would have on the number of paying users however it is unlikely to be popular with the majority of customers in the current climate
- There would be an initial set up charge for changing the payment mechanism on the turnstiles and this is estimated to be a one off cost in the region of £1,000

### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 1b**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £48.7k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences

### Option 1c – Roving attendants with no charges

#### **Supporting evidence for roving attendants**

- There was limited vandalism encountered during the summer period this year when Wilton Rd toilets were unattended during the trial period
- The cost of running all 3 toilets could be minimised by introducing roving attendants for all 3 toilets.
- Roving attendants is the most common form of service delivery used by the other Councils in the 'similar sized town's survey'
- Use of toilets would be free of charge to all
- The level of provision of toilets in Melton Mowbray would exceed the Guidelines contained in the British Standard BS8465 Part 4 that states "toilets should be at 500m centres generally in town centres" (The British Toilets Association were Panel members for the creation of this standard and support and advocate its recommendations)
- The level of provision would be above average for other English towns of a similar sized population

#### **Issues to consider**

- CCTV cameras may need to be considered to deter anti-social behaviour
- No income would be received
- There would be a reduction in staff numbers if this option was selected – currently 4 staff (x3 FTE equivalent) rostering options and implications would need to be worked through
- 13% of consultees consider that having the toilets fully attended helps to maintain standards of cleanliness and deters anti social behaviour
- Park Lane toilets may be more vulnerable to vandalism and anti-social behaviour given its relatively secluded location and proximity to the Park

### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 1c**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £4.9k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

### Option 2 – Carry out the necessary works to open Wilton Road and St Marys Way public conveniences based on existing standard opening hours. Open Park Lane on Tuesdays and Saturdays only (Roving Attendance Only in all sub-options below)

#### **Supporting evidence**

- 39% of questionnaire respondents identified Wilton Road as most important toilets for the Town Centre 38% identified St Marys Way as most important.
- The Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade identified 'Wilton Road toilets and St Mary's Way toilets as the two most important toilets as both are situated adjacent to Coach/Bus and Car Parks'.



- Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade stated their preference for all 3 town toilets to remain open 'in an ideal world' – however they recognised this may not be realistic in the current economic climate.
- Park Lane toilets are busiest on market days
- Sunday usage for Park Lane is usually very low and there are alternative toilet options at St Marys night toilet, Wilton Park toilet and town centre cafes

#### **Issues associated with this option**

- This is cheaper than option 1 but is still an expensive option. Additional ongoing revenue costs of between £8.1k (saving) and £20.2k over and above the funded base budget for public conveniences would need to be found.
- In the current economic climate and in light of the 2010 comprehensive spending review, all councils are facing significant pressure to find budget savings. Discretionary areas of spending, such as public conveniences, will be subject to review up and down the country at the present time. This option will place significant additional pressure on the Council.
- Economic conditions require significant savings in public expenditure. The public conveniences are currently showing a £15.9k shortfall on expected savings. This shortfall would not be met by this proposal.
- 19% of respondents consider that Park Lane toilets were most important to the Town Centre
- The Council will have to fund the refurbishment of Wilton Road toilets at an approximate cost of £20,000 and the capital receipt received from the disposal of Park Lane could be used to fund these works
- Melton Mowbray town centre would have a generous provision of toilets compared with other towns

The Town Estate as part of this 2010 review have been asked whether they would re-consider contributing towards the running costs of the Park Lane toilets or taking ownership of the toilets however they have indicated that this is not an option they would consider.

**For supporting evidence and issues for each permutation below please refer to Options 1a, 1b and 1c above.**

Option 2a – Fully attended (Not Park Lane) with existing charges of 20p

#### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 2a**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £20.2k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 2b – Fully attended (Not Park Lane) with charges increased to 30p

#### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 2b**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £16k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 2c – Roving attendants with no charges

#### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 2c**

- The ongoing revenue saving of this option will be £8.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 3 – Carry out the necessary works to open Wilton Road and St Marys Way public conveniences based on existing standard opening hours, but not Park Lane. Declare Park Lane surplus to requirements

### **Supporting evidence**

- 39% of questionnaire respondents identified Wilton Road as most important toilets for the Town Centre.
- Located closest to the coach drop off point at Wilton Rd this is the most convenient toilet for coach passengers
- The Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade identified 'Wilton Road toilets and St Mary's Way toilets as the two most important toilets as both are situated adjacent to Coach/Bus and Car Parks'.
- Melton Mowbray Chamber of Trade stated their preference for all 3 town toilets to remain open 'in an ideal world' – however they recognised this may not be realistic in the current economic climate.
- The Council will have to fund the refurbishment of Wilton Road toilets at an approximate cost of £20,000.

### **Issues associated with this option**

- This is cheaper than options 1 and 2 but still requires additional ongoing revenue costs of between £9.1k (savings) and £15.9k over and above the funded base budget for public conveniences which would need to be found.
- In the current economic climate and in light of the 2010 comprehensive spending review, all councils are facing significant pressure to find budget savings. Discretionary areas of spending, such as public conveniences, will be subject to review up and down the country at the present time. This option will place additional pressure on the Council.
- 19% of respondents consider that Park Lane toilets were most important to the Town Centre
- Ongoing maintenance costs of Wilton Road toilets are likely to be higher than either of the other two toilets due to the age & design of Wilton Road toilets compared with the others.

The impact of this action would be to inconvenience people using the Park, the market traders and also availability of toilets when the town is hosting events. People would have to travel to Wilton Road toilets or St Mary's toilets as an alternative. This could be mitigated if a local business agreed to welcome non paying customers onto their premises to use their facilities however to date the businesses we have approached have not been keen on such a scheme. The impact of closure of Park Lane toilets could be mitigated by making public conveniences at the new Council offices available for use by the public when completed in Summer 2011. The implications of making such a decision would still be that the Council are likely to receive complaints from traders, park users and event organisers.

**For supporting evidence and issues for each permutation below please refer to Options 1a, 1b and 1c above.**

#### Option 3a – Fully attended with existing charges of 20p

##### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 3a**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £15.9k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

#### Option 3b – Fully attended with charges increased to 30p

##### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 3b**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £11.7k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

#### Option 3c – Roving attendants with no charges

##### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 3c**

- The ongoing revenue saving of this option will be £9.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 4 – Keep Park Lane and St Marys Way public conveniences open based on existing standard opening hours. Declare Wilton Road public conveniences surplus to requirements.

**Supporting evidence**

- Wilton Road toilets when previously fully operated were the least used toilets with only 23.8% of paying customers using Wilton Road
- The age & condition of the Wilton Road toilets are such that they are the least suitable for use, built pre 1960s in a poor state of repair, flat roof requires repair and new boiler needed
- Wilton Road toilets if declared surplus could be sold for in the region of £60k

**Issues associated with this option**

- This option is the decision made in 2007, but due to the £28k efficiency target from the 2010/11 budget only being partially met it may still require additional ongoing revenue costs of between £8.1k (savings) and £15.9k over and above the funded base budget for public conveniences.
- In the current economic climate and in light of the 2010 comprehensive spending review, all councils are facing significant pressure to find budget savings. Discretionary areas of spending, such as public conveniences, will be subject to review up and down the country at the present time.
- Public consultation showed that Wilton Road toilets were considered to be the most important toilets in the town centre
- The Chamber of Trade identified Wilton Road and St Mary's Way toilets as being more important to the Town Centre than Park Lane
- There were several complaints received by the Council in 2008 when Wilton Road toilets were first closed
- Wilton Road toilets are more prominently located (visually) than Park Lane toilets and are ideally situated for people using the bus and coach park at Wilton Road

**For supporting evidence and issues for each permutation below please refer to Options 1a, 1b and 1c above.**

Option 4a – Fully attended with existing charges of 20p

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 4a**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £15.9k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 4b – Fully attended with charges increased to 30p

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 4b**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will require an additional £11.7k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 4c – Roving attendants with no charges

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 4c**

- The ongoing revenue savings of this option will be £8.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 5 – Keep St Marys Way public conveniences open based on existing standard opening hours. Open Park Lane on Tuesdays and Saturdays only. Declare Wilton Road public conveniences surplus to requirements

**Supporting evidence for this option**

- St Marys Way traditionally has highest usage of all Council owned toilets
- This decision recognises peak times of demand for Park Lane toilets

- Takes into account age and condition of toilets in deciding which to retain operationally
- Service provision still above levels provided by similar sized towns
- See also above supporting evidence for 4

#### **Issues associated with this option**

- Wilton Rd toilets were identified as the most important toilets in public consultation
- Closure of Wilton Road toilets has proved unpopular with certain visitors and also local residents

**For supporting evidence and issues for each permutation please refer to Options 1a, 1b and 1c above.**

#### Option 5a – Fully attended with existing charges of 20p

##### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 5a**

- The ongoing revenue saving of this option will be £21.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

#### Option 5b – Fully attended with charges increased to 30p

##### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 5b**

- The ongoing revenue savings of this option will be £25.3k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

#### Option 5c – Roving attendants with no charges

##### **Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 5c**

- The ongoing revenue savings of this option will be £19.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

#### Option 6 – Keep St Marys Way public conveniences. Declare Wilton Road and Park Lane public conveniences surplus to requirements.

##### **Supporting evidence**

- Wilton Road toilets when previously fully operated were the least used toilets with only 23.8% of paying customers using Wilton Road and Park Lane toilets were the second least used of the Council owned toilets
- The age & condition of the Wilton Road toilets are such that they are the least suitable for use, built pre 1960s in a poor state of repair, flat roof requires repair and new boiler needed; Park Lane toilets are less prominently located than St Mary's toilets
- Wilton Road toilets if declared surplus could be sold for in the region of £60k and Park Lane toilets if sold could realise a further capital receipt for the Council
- The provision of St Mary's Way toilets within 500 metres of the town centre would also meet the British Standards guidelines on level of provision for public conveniences.
- Four towns of a comparable size to Melton Mowbray have only 1 public convenience to serve the town
- The reduction in service level would generate estimated annual savings of between £32.1k and £38.1k over the funded base budget and the potential for capital receipts of in the region of £100,000
- Reducing this discretionary service to one town centre toilet would help the Council achieve some of the budgetary savings that must be made.

##### **Issues associated with this option**

- Public consultation showed that Wilton Road toilets were considered to be the most important toilets in the town centre and 19% considered Park Lane toilets to be the most important

- The Chamber of Trade recognised in the current economic climate that a reduction in provision of public conveniences may be necessary and identified Wilton Road and St Mary's Way toilets as being most important
- Reducing the service to one toilet would be unpopular.

**For supporting evidence and issues for each permutation below please refer to Options 1a, 1b and 1c above.**

Option 6a – Fully attended with existing charges of 20p

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 6a**

- The ongoing revenue savings of this option will be £33.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 6b – Fully attended with charges increased to 30p

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 6b**

- The ongoing revenue savings of this option will be £38.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 6c – Roving attendant with no charges

**Issue associated with roving attendant option**

- Few economies to be achieved by having a “roving attendant” with only one toilet the attendant would have no other toilets in town to rove. Although could possibly combine with other cleaning duties.

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 6c**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will provide a saving of £32.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 7 – Carry out the necessary works to open Wilton Road public conveniences and declare St Marys Way and Park Lane as surplus to requirements.

**Supporting evidence**

- Wilton Road toilets were marginally the most popular toilets according to the recent survey
- St Mary's Way car park is conveniently located in the centre of the town and if the toilets were closed and demolished an additional 8-10 car parking spaces could be created
- The provision of Wilton Road toilets within 500 metres of the town centre would meet the British Standards guidelines on level of provision for public conveniences.
- Four towns of a comparable size to Melton Mowbray have only 1 public convenience to serve the town
- The reduction in service level would generate estimated annual savings of between £35.1k and £39.3k over the funded base budget

**Issues associated with this option**

- Public consultation showed that 38% of respondents considered St Mary's Way toilets to be the most important toilets in the town centre and 19% considered Park Lane toilets to be the most important
- The Chamber of Trade recognised in the current economic climate that a reduction in provision of public conveniences to 2 toilets may be necessary and identified Wilton Road and St Mary's Way toilets as being most important
- Age, condition and repairing liabilities and ongoing maintenance would need to be addressed

**For supporting evidence and issues for each permutation please refer to Options 1a, 1b and 1c above.**

Option 7a – Fully attended with existing charges of 20p

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 7a**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will provide a saving of £36.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 7b – Fully attended with charges increased to 30p

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 7b**

- The ongoing revenue cost of this option will provide a saving of £39.3k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

Option 7c – Roving attendant with no charges

**Issue associated with roving attendant option**

Few economies to be achieved by having a “roving attendant” with only one toilet the attendant would have no other toilets in town to rove. Although could possibly combine with other cleaning duties.

**Ongoing Revenue Costs for Option 7c**

The ongoing revenue cost of this option will provide a saving of £35.1k per annum over and above the existing funded base budget for public conveniences.

**4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The provision of public conveniences is linked to the priority objectives of town centre development and enhancement. Access to good quality toilet provision is an important element for welcoming visitors and locals into the town centre. However, members are asked to note that in regards to economic vitality in the town centre for the period 2008 and 2009:

- A higher number of market traders in the town compared to the East Midlands comparator
- A higher and largely sustained proportion of business owners reporting on increased profitability compared to the East Midlands comparator.
- Vacant units below the East Midlands comparator
- Average footfall counts higher than the East Midlands comparator.
- Increased footfall on typical ‘Tuesday’ from 2008 to 2009
- Same proportion of visitors to the town as the East Midlands comparator.
- Lower % of tourists in 2008 than the East Midlands comparator, but the same in 2009.

4.2 Should Members decide that the social enterprise option is investigated this would link to a theme of ‘Big Society’ and local partnership working.

4.3 The Council is facing the prospect of having to find significant savings against the existing base budget as a result of the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review announced on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

**5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The estimated capital cost of repairing the roof and replacing the boiler amount to £20,000; details for which can also be seen in Appendix 1.

- 5.2 The table at Appendix 8 shows estimated annual revenue costs associated with each option. The net revenue position shown in Column F of Appendix 8 is summarised at the conclusion of each option set out in Para. 3.14 above. Closure of the Park Lane facility will not save any budgeted expenditure as re-opening Wilton Road toilets was not originally budgeted for. Members should be aware that the savings target reflected in the Council's budget of £28k as approved by Full Council on 4 February 2010 has only been partly achieved in the sum of £12.1k (see column D of Appendix 8) and therefore from a financial perspective the preferred option is to re-open Wilton Road and close and sell Park Lane. The public sector is almost certain to see a dramatic reduction in its funding in the coming years
- 5.3 Following the announcement of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) on 20 October 2010 Local Government will see a cut in its funding of 7.25% per annum over a four year period and with Council Tax levels constrained the Council needs to look very carefully at its expenditure plans as well as taking into account the feedback from the consultation exercise. Putting this into context this equates to a £1.1m reduction in funding over the four year period, however, this will be front loaded in year one. In addition to this the uncertainty of the responsibility and funding of concessionary fares to upper tier authorities remains and could increase this reduction significantly.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

- 6.1 The provision of public toilets is a discretionary service and as such Melton Borough Council can determine the appropriate service levels.
- 6.2 The Council has the power to provide public toilets and charge for the service under Section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936.

## **7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

- 7.1 None as a consequence of this report. However, all of the public conveniences have suffered from incidents of anti-social behaviour in the past. There is a perception that unattended toilets are "seen as threatening places" (and less safe and less clean than fully attended toilets, the consultation feedback has also shown that people feel safer when they are using toilets with an attendant).

## **8.0 EQUALITIES**

- 8.1 Public conveniences are an essential part of the Council infrastructure. All conveniences have disabled use and also baby changing rooms. Stakeholders have been consulted on the balance of male and female toilets provision.
- 8.2 An example of an Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 9 relating to the possible closure of Park Lane toilets. Following the report when Members options are known an Equality Impact Assessment form will be completed.

## 9.0 RISKS

### 9.1 Probability

↓

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

→  
Impact

Risk No.	Description
1	Closure of more one or more public conveniences will result in complaints from the public

## 10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 The Carbon Trust Report made several recommendations to reduce carbon emissions and the boilers were replaced in 2008 at Park Lane and St Mary's as part of the improvements to the retained public conveniences.

## 11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 Consultation has been carried out with other Councils regarding the public conveniences. Consultation has also been undertaken with members of the public, all associated staff, local stakeholders including Melton Mowbray Town Estate; Melton Town Centre Partnership; Chamber of Trade; Melton Promotions; Database of group travel operators (exhibitions); Ruth Wakeling, organiser of Victorian Xmas Fayre; Derek Whitehouse, organiser of Melton Show and Chamber of Trade, staff, the British Toilets Association.

11.2 Consultation has been carried out with the staff who manage and deliver the service.

11.3 The visitors' comments provide customers with an opportunity to feedback on the service provision.

## 12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 Wilton Road conveniences are located within the Egerton Ward, St Mary's Way are within Craven Ward and Park Lane conveniences are within Warwick Ward.

Contact Officer                      David Blanchard, Strategic and Regeneration Projects Officer

Date:                                      5 October 2010



- Appendices :
- 1 – Repair works for Wilton Road toilets
  - 2 – Letter from Melton Mowbray Chamber of Commerce
  - 3 – Plan showing location of toilets in Melton Mowbray Town Centre
  - 4 – English Towns Comparison Table
  - 5 – Questionnaires analysis
  - 6 – June total attendance
  - 7 – Signage displayed at Public conveniences
  - 8 – Financial Options Table
  - 9 – Example Equalities Impact Assessment
- Background Papers: The Provision of Public Toilets – House of Commons, Communities and Local Government 2008  
[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/publicaccesstoilets](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/publicaccesstoilets)
- Reference : X : Committees\CSA\2010-11\271010 Special\Public Convenience Service