

Public Conveniences - Operational Issues

Following approval by the Community and Social Affairs Committee at its meeting on 22 June 2016 of the Project Mandate for the replacement/renewal of the existing public conveniences at Wilton Road and St Marys Way with two blocks of semi automatic public conveniences at Wilton Road and St Marys Way for inclusion into the capital programme, this paper supports the Business Case for the project.

Taking into account the views received from the two public consultations carried out in Spring 2015 and early 2016 as well as proposed example costings for the market leader, Healthmatic, to service the new facilities, the below sets out proposals for the operational matters following the installation of semi automatic public toilets at St. Mary's Way and Wilton Road.

The comments received in the consultation provided insight into people's concerns on the introduction of semi automatic toilets and some of these comments around wheelchair access, safety, cleanliness, vandalism, maintenance etc have been addressed when considering operational issues.

The areas for consideration are as follows :-

1. Cleaning arrangements and costs
2. Personal security
3. Disabled access
4. Opening hours
5. Charging arrangements

1.0 Cleaning arrangements and costs

- 1.1 The cost of cleaning the toilets depends on how many times they are cleaned per day, and how the service is provided. For the business case and illustration below 3 cleans per day of each facility have been assumed. This is more than the recommended 2 cleans by Healthmatic.
- 1.2 Semi automatic toilet provision is designed to not require a fully staffed service. It is modern, hard wearing, smart, vandal-resistant and easily cleaned. As with all toilet provision regular cleaning is required as well as re-stocking throughout the opening hours.
- 1.3 Currently the staff of 4 (2 full-time and 2 part-time) run the service during the opening hours as fully attended facilities and the staff are managed by the property team based at Parkside. To provide regular cleaning for the new semi automatic toilets would require staff to cover holidays, sickness and Sunday working. If this was to be provided in house it would require rest facilities to be built in on site, increasing the size of the building and therefore cost. Also the working hours involved in servicing semi automatic toilets would not be the same as the fully managed service that is now the case and therefore it is considered unlikely that the new arrangements would suit an in-house team. The requirement is likely to involve 3 short periods of work per day, one in the morning, one in the middle of the day and one in the late afternoon/evening. The

highest percentage of the £78,000 revenue cost associated with running the current facilities relates to cleaning and restocking arrangements.

- 1.4 To obtain the cost savings proposed it would be more practical to use contractors who will absorb the flexible hours required and the holiday and sickness cover and would have resilience built in. A leading Local Authority toilet provider, Healthmatic, was consulted in July 2015 and has quoted on the 'usual standard' cleaning frequency including consumables as below for 3 visits per day. This is for indicative purposes only as the service would need to be tendered.

Venue	Number of visits	Cost
St. Mary's Way	3 visits per day	£11,250 pa
Wilton Road	3 visits per day	£11,250 pa
Total		£22,500 pa*

*Assume 4 visits per day would cost £30,000pa

- 1.5 The proposal includes an overall saving of approx. £63,275 through introducing 2 sets of semi automatic toilets. This was based on the above indicative costs with 3 cleans per day provided through a contracted service.
- 1.6 The maintenance matters (legionella etc) can also be passed onto the contractor or kept in house at MBC.
- 1.7 Should contractors be appointed to service the public toilets, there will be one-off redundancy payments to existing staff and/or TUPE rules may apply.
- 1.8 It is proposed that
- contractors be appointed to service the new facilities twice per day Monday to Saturday at both sites and once on a Sunday and Bank Holidays at St. Mary's Way
 - Consultation and engagement be continued with the existing staff and HR advice be sought on whether TUPE or redundancy is applicable. Should redundancy be applicable, the one off payment costs will be factored into the overall finances of the business case.

2.0 Personal security

- 2.1 Semi automatic toilets offer enhanced personal security due to their direct access from the street and being visible from the car park and passing pedestrians.
- 2.2 It is proposed that the facilities will be checked three times per day and concerns around door failure will be addressed with the supplier as to a process for releasing the lock remotely by use of an intercom or alarm system.
- 2.3 The toilets will be closed after 8 p.m. to reduce night-time anti-social behaviour.

3.0 Disabled access

3.1 The proposed toilets are purpose built to accommodate wheelchairs and pushchairs and they are fitted with a baby changing area.

3.2 The same disabled fobs that are currently used will be transferrable to the new facilities. It is proposed that the existing charge for fobs of £3 be continued.

4.0 Opening hours

4.1 The opening hours are controlled electronically (like a central heating control) and therefore there is no need for staff to lock up and open.

4.2 The cost of servicing depends on how many times a day the toilets should be cleaned and therefore this could impact on the opening hours.

4.3 Opening hours can be extended with semi-automatic toilets, for example they can be open in the evening until 8 p.m. and on Sundays from 10 a.m. until 3.45 p.m. The proposal for extended opening times were welcomed by many respondents and stakeholders in the survey. Comments were received on behalf of Melton BID and the town's intention to apply for Purple Flag status that late opening toilets are needed, particularly at the St. Mary's Way location to satisfy the criteria of the Purple Flag award and to support the development of the evening economy.

4.4 The consultation indicated that when special events are held in the town, event organisers will be required to arrange for additional toilets to be provided for these special events at a scale appropriate to the size of the event.

4.5 It is proposed that opening hours are as shown in the table below :-

Location	Proposed opening hours
St Mary's Way	Monday to Saturday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
St Mary's Way	Sunday, Bank Holidays and *special celebrations 10 a.m. to 3.45 p.m.
Wilton Road	Monday to Saturday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Wilton Road	Sunday, Bank Holidays and *special celebrations 10 a.m. to 3.45 p.m.

*Special celebrations – at the discretion of the Council

5.0 Charging arrangements - Payment at point of use

5.1 Doors can be fitted with pay by coin systems which can be overridden by the current form of generic disabled fob. The cost of regular coin collection is included in the cleaning and costs section at paragraph 1.4.

- 5.2 Charging is generally thought to reduce the instances of anti-social behaviour within the cubicles save that it can attract theft and damage to doors. It is not generally felt that the price can ever cover the cost of provision. The charge for using public toilets varies in other facilities from 10p up to 50p, Melton's charge is currently set at 30p and has been at this level since April 2011.
- 5.3 Free customer toilets are provided in local supermarkets, pubs and cafés. The most recent consultation supported the view that the Council work with businesses to provide a business incentive scheme for continuing this community toilet use.
- 5.4 Healthmatic confirm that around 90% of Councils now charge for public toilets, the ones that don't are the small rural and parish councils with low usage figures but have a service need nonetheless.
- 5.5 The current waiver of fees for young people and parents and children cannot be over-ridden on the proposed door payment system of semi automatic toilets, save for issuing of similar fobs as those distributed to the disabled on request with an inherent cost implication per fob.
- 5.6 Healthmatic confirm that in all 90% cases where charges are applied they only have a waiver by fob use for the disabled and not for young people, parents and children etc.
- 5.7 The consultation indicates that the community are prepared to pay for the service and there was little expectation for toilet provision to be free of charge. Also there was low if any pressure for fee waiver for special groups other than the disabled.
- 5.8 For comparison purposes the income received has been left as currently achieved, however with new facilities, there may prove to be a small increase in income as the toilets will be modern, well located and attractive to use by all.
- 5.9 The disabled fobs can be bought at Parkside and on the internet and should be handed back if a person no longer qualifies. It is known that there are issues of misuse however this is not easily proved and to investigate such claims is not considered cost effective.
- 5.10 It is proposed that charging arrangements be as follows :-
- 30p at point of use continues to be the charge, collected on a door entry system
 - continue to charge £3 for a fob for disabled users
 - there be no waiver of fees for any other groups including young people, parents and child etc.