

COMMITTEE TITLE: Clean & Green Committee

DATE: 11 September 2023

REPORT TITLE:	Public Conveniences
REPORT OF:	Marcus Hotten, Director of Environment

REPORT SUMMARY

The public toilets in Brentwood Highstreet have recently experienced high levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Initial scoping for the modernising of the facilities to reduce risk of vandalism suggests that it would not be financially feasible to undertake, with the installation of new smaller facilities or conversion of the Changing Places facility being presented as the only feasible options. It has not been established what the footfall of the toilets currently is, therefore, it is proposed that they are re-opened, and monitoring is undertaken to determine the size of facility that the public require.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to:

- R1. To approve the necessary repairs to the existing toilet facility and reopen to the public.**
- R2. To approve installation of counters to monitor use, and report back to Committee, seeking final decision on the future of the toilets.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To establish existing use of the public toilets before arriving at an any final decision, so as to gauge impact of any potential closure or alteration.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The current public conveniences located at Brentwood Highstreet, consist of male toilets (4 urinals & two toilets); and female toilets (4 toilets (one with baby changing facilities). There is also an additional Changing Places unit that benefits from level access to the pavement, whereas the remaining facilities are below pavement level and accessed via steps down to the toilet

lobby. The Changing Places, and the general public toilets can view broadly as two separate but interlinked buildings.

- 2.2 The toilets have as previously reported experienced persistent vandalism and anti-social behaviour, with the current below ground layout and large lobby space thought to significantly contribute to the issue, due the toilets remaining obscured from the adjacent public pavement.
- 2.3 In discussion with contractors regarding the feasibility of modernising the facilities, it was recommended that the Council does not proceed with attempting to invest significantly in the existing facility. Essentially any modern facility would usually be designed so as to be accessible at street level, with cubicles directly opening onto the street (an example can be seen in Appendix 1). To redesign the existing block it would require, its demolition, and essentially a rebuild brought up to street level.
- 2.3 The alternative suggested design options are as follows:
- To leave the changing rooms facilities as they are, closing the general toilets, and providing a new purpose-built modular toilet at street level upon the pavement near-by. This would be at an estimated cost of £110,000 (for a single cubicle), a typical example can be seen in Appendix 2.
 - To repurpose the changing places facility to provide a new general toilet facility, at an estimated cost of £65,000, with signposting for alternative changing places facility given at the Brentwood Town Hall. This option would also allow the existing toilet block to be repurposed or closed.
- 2.4 At present the demand and use of the existing toilet facility has not been established, therefore, although it is believed to be low, cannot be predicted with certainty. Any future design that potentially reduces the facilities, or results in the closure of facilities would require consideration to be given to current footfall and could potentially draw criticism from residents if this cannot be demonstrated.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the necessary repairs to the existing toilet facility, at an approximate cost of £15,000, are undertaken to facilitate the re-opening and use of the toilets. That counters are installed to establish regularity of use. That the level of use is reported back to committee, with a view to using the information to finalise a decision on the future of the toilets.
- 2.6 A dedicated cleaning contract will be arranged for the monitoring period to ensure that the toilets are maintained to an acceptable standard so as to capture typical footfall whilst monitoring.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer
Tel & Email : 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

The expenditure of £15,000 reflected in the decision to reopen the existing toilets is within existing budgets. A further report may well have cost implications and will be addressed at that stage.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Joint Acting Up Director People & Governance & Monitoring Officer

Tel & Email 01277 312500 / claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

The Public Health Act 1936 gives Local Authorities the discretion to provide public toilets, but it imposes no statutory duty to do so.

5.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

5.1 None Identified.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

6.1 That the reopening of the toilets raises public expectations that they will remain open and in place for the foreseeable future.

7.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation with relevant stakeholders will be considered once the business case for the different options has been finalised.

8.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health

Tel & Email 01277 312500 kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk

8.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

8.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

8.3 The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on anybody with a protected characteristic.

10. ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place

Tel & Email 01277 312500 / phil.drane@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

10.1 None identified

REPORT AUTHOR:

Name: [OBJ] Marcus Hotten

Title: [OBJ] Director - Environment

Phone: 01277 312500

Email: Marcus.hotten@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Danfo Toilets, Plymouth

Appendix B – Single Cubicle Toilet, Oxford

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

None