

Proposed Mandate For a Reviewing Public Toilet Provision

03 March 2021 v.11

1. Why should a programme/project be started now?

A full review of public toilets was carried out in 2018. This included a user count (see summary in Appendix), condition assessment and review of options at an EAB on 18 October 2018. This was followed on 26 March 2019 with an executive decision to continue with provision with the exception of one of the three toilets within Stoke Park (Home Farm). The current covid crisis has seen a significant change in the Council's financial position and toilets are a non-statutory service.

2. What is the good idea, opportunity or problem to be solved?

The toilets cost approx. £240k per year to operate and also need regular refurbishment. Of this approx. £55k are overheads, leaving a core operating cost of approx. £185k. There are currently 15 toilets within the core provision from this budget, one of these is planned to be closed. There are 8 in the town centre, 3 within car parks structures, 4 in standalone structures and a pop-up urinal in North Street. There will be 5 toilets within parks, 2 remaining at Stoke Park and one at each of Onslow Rec, Shalford Park and Sutherland Memorial Park. The final toilet is Ripley which we clean, but pay Ripley Parish Council to open and close, due to the cost of travel to and from this location. There are 6 other toilet facilities we look after: there are toilets at two cemeteries under Bereavement Services who contract the cleaning to the public convenience team, there are 3 toilets at the Park and Ride sites, the cleaning of these (as well as site opening and closing) are contracted to street cleaning and externally funded from SCC on street revenues. There is a toilet at Slyfield industrial estate which we are contracted to clean. Combined these give us a revenue of circa £50k which means they pay for themselves.

As they are non-statutory, closure or part closure of the core estate would lead to savings. This is, however, a very complex and controversial issue and the delicate balance between the benefit of any cost savings vs the 'social value' of these services will need to be considered carefully in the business case.

3. What is the purpose of the programme/project and what outcomes or outputs will it deliver? List Success Criteria. - to be discussed and directed by CMT

- to deliver revenue savings and reduce future capital investment

- Maintaining service provision

4. What priority, corporate objective or strategy is fulfilled by this project? High priority in Corporate Plan in delivering value for money services.

Options

5. What are the strategic options available to GBC to deliver a solution?

Option 1 – Complete closure of services – This would deliver revenue savings of Circa £200k and future revenue savings associated with removing the need to refurbish, however the process would require extensive consultation and result in challenging issues to resolve. Due to the loss of scale it would also make the provision of services to the current “paid for” toilets very challenging to deliver.

Option 2 – Part closure of Facilities - Seek to close a smaller number of facilities – We would need to close at least 6 toilets to deliver a saving of 1 cleaner – this would generate a saving of between £50k and £60k and reduce future investment need.

Option 3 – removal of Grant Funding – We currently issue grants of £14k to Ash and Shere parish council's for their toilets. Ceasing this would create pressure on the Parish budgets which may lead to closure.

Option 4 – mixed approach – Limited closure aligned with a redistribution of work. Future Guildford phase B has realigned car park cleaning staff into a wider town centre public realm team. We believe this scale would allow for the toilets within the car parks to be cleaned by the town centre team allowing for a saving of one post with the closure of only 4 toilet facilities. This would allow a saving of around £50-£60k and reduce future investment need. A long list of 6-8 toilets would be needed for consideration

Options 5 – Do nothing – This would result in current provision continuing as it is. This avoids the costs associated with this mandate but results in no meaningful costs savings from this service area.

Option 6 – Charge for some of these services. Considered previously and ruled out.

Recommended direction

To pursue Options 3 and 4. Once delivered this would generate revenue savings of between £65k and £75k as well as future reduced capital expenditure.

Considerations

6. Who is the lead Director & Service Manager who will lead and direct the project and who will be managing/using the projects products once they are handed over? – Ian Doyle/Chris Wheeler

7. What impact assessments have been done and what are the impacts on other Service Leaders and/or other programmes/projects? –

Community objections resulting from the impacts of closing any public conveniences is likely to be high, therefore closure of any existing sites must have a robust rationale. The major task is a full and robust consultation exercise, including impact assessments for each facility. Any closure of a facility would have a range of impacts on activities in its vicinity. For example, closing Ward Street would be considered as having a negative impact (dis-benefit) on the market traders but could provide a potential development opportunity (benefit) in North Street (e.g. a future retail unit).

8. What general approach will the projects take to deliver? – this is a BAU project that will be led by Chris Wheeler. He will need a project manager to conduct communications and consultation exercises, to deliver impact assessments and to draft the business case. Although this is a BAU project the full project lifecycle is proposed as such the next stage is the development of a Strategic Outline Case.

9. When and why must the project start and finish? – ASAP – The financial challenges are significant. Any closure process is likely to take 6-9 months from project start.

Resources

10. Which stakeholders are or, will need to be, involved in the project?

Internally – Customer Case and Parking Services and Asset Management. Externally, ward councillors, parish councils and businesses in the vicinity of the facilities.

11. What specialist resources (internal and external) are needed to consider this mandate and develop a strategic outline business case?

Internal – Project management, analytical & communications skills required.

External – If no resources available internally.

12. What Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) are the likely Whole Life Costs (WLC) of the project and live service? – £75k (additional resource costs, see next slide)

Issues, Assumptions & Risks

13. What are the strategic Risks, Assumptions, Issues,

Issues

- Cost reductions can only be achieved by extensive closure, single closures do not allow a reduction in staff costs
- Ash and Shere parishes would be resistant to a reduction of the grant. Shere recently asked for an increase due to additional covid costs.

Assumptions

- These facilities are deemed important if not essential by users of the facilities'
- These facilities provide an important support function at every location they are present
- That sufficient facilities are closed to allow full reductions in staff
- That we are able to resource a suitably experienced PM and BA to develop a deliverable operational plan and progress the consultation exercise
- That the process will be two stage, in principle decision subject to public consultation and then a final decision.

Risks

- That there is extensive negative feedback, petitions and other activity that will delay or result in a reversal of any decisions.
- That there are challenges to a decision based on equalities impacts
- That other support, for example provision of portaloos for market traders to allow a reasonable operation of the market, may result in us substituting one cost for another. We may also wish to explore community toilet provision in some locations affected by closure.
- Removal of facilities could negatively impact on visitor experience to the town or other places where toilets are located.

Dependencies, Constraints & Opportunities

Dependencies

- Would be worth early engagement with interested parties at some sites, to see if other options are available to closure.
- Guildford Economic Development Programme (GERP) need to be kept aware of thinking in this space in light of potential development opportunities.

Constraints

- Current staffing levels are constraining progress

Opportunities

- Phase B street scene structure may afford some scale to deliver significant savings whilst closing a smaller number of facilities
- Some third parties may be willing to fill a gap in provision.
- Some town centre toilets may offer opportunities for alternative commercial use – rent or sale of space. Details on potential future uses and values will be presented as part of any business case.

Annex A - GBC Internal Stakeholders

(Contributors to, and Reviewers of, this Mandate)

- Chris Wheeler – Head of Operational and Technical Services
- Ian Doyle – Director of Service Delivery
- Claire Morris – Director of Resources
- Liz Fleming – Corporate Programmes
- Paul Stacey – Parks, Recreation and Heritage
- Marieke van der Reijden - Asset Management
- Jonathan Sewell – Leisure Services
- Faye Gould – Procurement
- Mike Lee Dickson – Weyside Urban Village Programme
- Andrew Tyldesley – North Street Project Manager
- CMT
- Joss Bigmore, Leader of the Council
- James Steel, Lead Councillor for Environment

To be consulted at the next step.

- Executive Liaison (3 March 2021)
- Service Delivery EAB (1 April 2021)

External

- Ward Councillors after initial steer

CMT consideration

2 February 2021

1. Highlighted that there were other publicly accessible non-GBC toilets in Guildford Town Centre i.e. Friary Centre and Guildford Baptist Church
2. Asked officers to enter discussions with Experience Guildford about businesses opening toilets for general public use.
3. Noted that charging for toilets had been considered previously and rejected as an option.
4. Wanted to avoid considering 'discretionary services' in isolation and recommended this issue forms part of the emerging Saving Programme. This will provide a consistency of approach to evaluating propositions for savings across GBC and the Borough.

Executive Liaison Group Consideration

3 March 2021

The Executive Liaison Group considered this mandate at its meeting on 3 March 2021 and:

- agreed, in principle, that Options 3 and 4 should be pursued;
- requested that further information be provided on the advantages and disadvantages of charging for public conveniences
- noted that consultation and equality impact assessments would be required;
- commented that parish council facilities should be treated in a consistent way; and
- agreed that the mandate should be submitted to the meeting of the Service Delivery EAB on 1 April 2021 for consideration.

Appendix - Public Conveniences Usage

Based on a survey (June to August 2018)

	Total	Average Per Day
Allen House	3455	47
Bedford Road	5266	68
Burchatts Farm	3968	54
Farnham Road	3075	39
G Live	6629	90
Home Farm	6925	95
Onslow	3062	40
Ripley	2767	37
Shalford Park	7955	108
Shere	14557	199
Stoke Park	21622	325
Sutherland Memorial	4520	60
Tunsgate	25502	349
Ward Street	24091	308
Woodbridge Road	11877	152

Impact of charges

- Likely to reduce use by at least 50% which means the savings target will not be met through usage charges (@ 20 pence per visit)
- Risks of theft and damage to cash collection devices
- May result in slightly lower utilities and repair costs, through lower usage
- May reduce vandalism of the facilities
- Locking and unlocking can be automated, reducing some visit costs
- Charges difficult to justify for low quality facilities
- Charges at parks location where no free alternatives exist are likely to be particularly unpopular