

Service Delivery EAB

Public Conveniences Review

Thursday 4th November

Stuart Riddle – Project Lead

1. Outline

The review seeks to explore options 3 and 4 from the approved mandate. This includes the potential removal of grant funding paid to 2 Parish Councils, and a limited number of Guildford Borough Council owned toilets closing or being passed to other organisations. We aim to achieve a revenue savings target of £65k per annum and reduce future capital investments on refurbishments.

The Budget Survey 2021, undertaken by SMSR Research, asked residents to consider Council services in terms of importance, priority, and spending. The survey found that public facilities ranked 9th for all 3 categories, out of the 12 noted services we provide.

The Council has no legal duty to provide public conveniences.

2. Costings

Salaries and on costs	£92k
Overtime	£22k
Operating costs (utilities/consumable)	£35k
Transport	£18k
Maintenance	£19k
Grants	£14k
Overheads	£47k
Business Rates	£8k
Depreciation	£54k
Income	(£16k)
Total Budget	£293k

The £65k savings target will largely come from making one of the toilet cleaner roles redundant. Although one of the toilet cleaner roles will no longer exist, we hope to redeploy the individual into a new role, avoiding redundancy costs.

In order to suitably reduce the current toilet cleaning workload, it is viewed that 4 or 5 facilities will need to be closed, or be passed to another organisation. We can then achieve smaller workload savings by moving the cleaning of all the town centre car park toilets to the Town Centre Team. However, this may just move a budget cost to a different team.

Assuming the highest cost 4 facilities, of those 8 listed below for consideration, we would achieve expenditure savings of £51k.

3. Grant Funding – Ash & Shere

We currently issue grants totalling £14k to Ash and Shere Parish Council's for their toilets. It is acknowledged that removing this funding would result in pressures on their own finances. However, Parish Councils can raise increased funds via their precept, comparatively to other tiers of local Government, due to no referendum principles for all Parish and Town Councils.

The saving target of £65k cannot be met without removing the £14k grant funding paid to these two Parish Councils.

4. Sites to Consider – alphabetical

Site	Reasons	Issues
Allen House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be reused as storage. • Frequent ASB. Cleaners find needles and blood. • Low use compared to other toilets (12th out of 15). • Shopper car park so majority of users will be going to hospitality or shops that have plenty of private provision. • One of the few we have to pay Business Rates for - £1.75k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative usage is limited, no commercial opportunity. • Closure could move ASB to the grounds or elsewhere in the car park.
Bedford Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbours the linked Friary Centre and its toilets. • Frequent ASB. Cleaners find needles. • Shopper car park so majority of users will be going to hospitality or shops that have plenty of private provision. • Medium use compared to other toilets (9th out of 15). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only 24-hour toilet in the Borough. • Alternative usage is limited, no commercial opportunity but can be used for storage by Parking.
Farnham Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second lowest footfall of all out toilets (14th out of 15). • 'Tired and dated' with no baby changing facilities. • Long stay car park but used primarily for commuters. Commuters will either be working nearby in Guildford or going to the train station. • The largest spend on utilities - £2.6k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative usage is limited, no commercial opportunity but can be used for storage.
Onslow Recreation Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low footfall (13th out of 15) and least popular Parks toilet. • Poorer condition compared to other Council offerings. • One of the few facilities without disabled or child changing provisions. • Potential for tennis club to take over the toilet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users of the park and play area may have no other alternative.

Ripley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Ripley remains open then 5 toilets will be needed, otherwise only 4 may be needed. • Stops small grant funding for the Parish Council to open and close toilets. • Lowest footfall of all our toilets (15th out of 15). • 4th highest budget cost of all toilets - £6.3k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important asset for Ripley Parish during events but this makes it likely they could take it over. • Small building with no real alternative use being viable.
Tunsgate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to clean without a strict rota due to Tunsgate barrier and High Street closing to vehicles. • Due to location there are many other locations via private provision. • High possibility Experience Guildford could take it over. • One of the few we have to pay Business Rates for - £1.7k • 3rd highest budget cost of those on this list - £5.9k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used by High Street market traders. • Highest footfall (1st out of 15) due to location. • Limited commercial opportunity due to its small size. • Closest public alternative is Ward Street. Not feasible to close both.
Ward Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong chance of commercial use generating an income. • Surrey CC are looking to include toilets in nearby library. • Of the few that require Business Rates payable it is the most expensive - £3.2k. • The highest depreciation rate at £15k. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently installed a water fountain. • Used by North Street market traders. • High footfall (3rd out of 15). • Closest public alternative is Tunsgate. Not feasible to close both. • Recent refurbishment and one of the highest quality toilets we provide.
Woodbridge Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily used by customers of the café. • Potential for cricket club or café to take over toilets. • 4th highest budget spend of those on this list - £5.5k • Large use by commuters walking to Guildford train station, which provides public toilets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High footfall (5th out of 15). • Heavily used by customers of the café. • Recently installed a water fountain.

5. Officer Recommendation

To achieve the needed expenditure savings I recommend that, as part of the consultation, we set out a preference for –

- 1) Allen House, Bedford Road, Ripley and Woodbridge Road to be closed, or passed to another organisation. These 4 locations will allow us to reduce the total workload suitably to make one of the toilet cleaner roles redundant.
- 2) The removal of grant funding from Ash and Shere Parish Councils.

6. Sites not Suggested

Site	Reasons
Burchatt's Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to Stoke Park's sports facilities. • Close to the larger parking area in Stoke Park. • Home Farm has already been approved for closure. • We believe this is used by a lot of taxi drivers. • Provision supports Green Flag award.
GLive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standalone purpose-built modern toilets with no alternative usage opportunities. • One of the highest quality conveniences we provide. • Shopper car park but further away.
Guildford College & Stoke Park Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd highest use toilets in the Borough. More impressive as the facility is not in a town centre high street location. • Next to the playground, mini golf, tennis courts and paddling pool. • No nearby alternative for young children and disabled residents. • Provision supports Green Flag award.
Pop-up Urinal (North Street)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision supports night-time economy and Purple Flag award. • Reduced public urination at night – reduces ASB and cleaning pressure on other Street Scene operations. • One of the most unique provisions in Surrey. The installation made national news.
Shalford Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used as a long stay car park for commuters in the week. The station has no toilet facilities. • Large facility adjacent to changing rooms for sports in the park. • Remote location so commercial opportunities not easily viable. • No nearby alternatives.
Stoughton Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive an income to clean these toilets. Removing this location would have to be approved by third parties and would remove the scale of our operations.
Sutherland Memorial Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used by residents using the playground and playing fields. • Nearby large parking facilities. • No nearby alternative and no real alternative use.
The Mount Cemetery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive an income to clean these toilets. Removing this location would have to be approved by third parties and would remove the scale of our operations.

7. Risks

There will likely be extensive negative feedback from all external stakeholders. There is also some potential for any agreed closures to affect our future bidding to retain our Green Flag and Purple Flag awards.

Any closures could have a negative impact on the number visitors to the Borough in a post COVID world. This made equalities impact very important but does not rule out closures needed for our savings target. As always, we need to ensure the correct balance between the benefit of cost savings and the negative impact on, or perception with, residents.

8. Equality Impact Assessments

We have undertaken equality impact assessments for the 8 public conveniences on the “sites to consider” list found on point 4. As these toilets are the ones we will be going to consultation with, alongside the officer’s recommendation as the preference, we need to ensure any action Guildford Borough Council takes does not discriminate against any resident or visitor that may fall into a protected group as defined in The Equality Act 2010.

The 8 assessments all concluded that the facilities have existed for many years, and although closures would directly affect all regular or potential users of the public toilet, its potential additional negative effect on those in protected groups is indirect. Leaving facilities open purely for one or more protected group is not financially viable given the Council’s financial position.

9. External Stakeholders

At an early-stage some main stakeholders were made aware of this project and the potential implications of the review. However, it was made clear that no decision has yet been made.

Ash, Ripley and Shere Parish Councils have been contacted and made aware of this review, and the potential for facility closures and removal of grant funding. Ash has not yet responded but comments made by Ripley and Shere are attached.

Guildford Action Group noted that public toilets provide an essential service to all, with attention to those with medical conditions, the elderly and those with babies and young children. They suggested increasing car park charges, seeking funding from Parish Councils, sponsorship and charging at the high-quality toilets to raise funds needed to maintain current provision.

Experience Guildford are against the closure of town centre toilets. They note the Ward Street and Tunsgate facilities being used by market traders. Additionally, residents and visitors often choose a destination, or length of stay, based on the convenience and location of public toilets.

10. Next Steps and Milestones

- 1) Executive – Tuesday 4th January
- 2) Public Consultation – 6 weeks starting mid-January 2022
- 3) CMT – TBC in early March 2022
- 4) Following CMT in March 2022 - Place closure notice on chosen toilets, serve notice to utility providers, commence redeployment of affected staff
- 5) Project Close - Friday 1st April (last working day of financial year)

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Results of the Budget Survey 2021, prepared by SMSR Research.

Service	Importance	Priority	Spending	OVR
Services to the elderly and vulnerable	1	1	1	1
Environmental services	2	3	2	2
Public health and safety	3	2	3	3
Economic development, business, jobs, and unemployment	4	4	5	4
Housing services	5	5	4	5
Services for young people	6	6	6	6
Parks and open spaces	7	7	7	7
Leisure centres and physical activities	8	8	8	8
Public facilities	9	9	9	9
Transport and parking	10	10	10	10
Arts and heritage	11	11	11	11
Tourism services	12	12	12	12

Appendix 2 – list of public toilets taken from www.guildford.gov.uk/publictoilets

Site	Baby changing facilities	Disabled toilet
Ward Street	Yes	Yes
Tunsgate	Yes	Yes
Farnham Road (car park)	No	Yes
Bedford Road (car park)	Yes	Yes
The Friary Shopping Centre*	Yes	Yes
Allen House (York Road car park)	Yes	Yes
Woodbridge Road	No	Yes
Shalford Park	Yes	Yes
Onslow Recreation Ground	No	No
Guildford College and Stoke Park Playground	Yes	Yes
Burchatts Farm	No	Yes
Sutherland Memorial Park	No	Yes
Ripley	No	Yes
Stoughton Cemetery	No	No
The Mount Cemetery	No	No
Pop-up urinal (North Street)	No	No
GLive	No	Yes
Shere*		
Ash*		

*Toilets are not looked after by Guildford Borough Council.

Appendix 3 – Ripley Parish Council's response

From: rpc <clerk@ripleyparishcouncil.gov.uk>
Sent: 22 September 2021 13:12
To: Toilet Review <ToiletReview@guildford.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Public Toilets Provision Review

Hi Stuart,

Thank you for offering the council the opportunity to make representations to the Public Toilets Provision Review. The council considered your correspondence at its recent meeting, and makes the following observation:

Ripley has a 68-acre Village Green which is hugely popular with visitors and provides a number of different uses including recreation, sports, play equipment for young people of different ages, and events such as the award winning Ripley farmers' Market. Footfall on The Green is always large, but during the pandemic we have seen a huge increase in visitor numbers as people sought to access open space for exercise and to meet outdoors. The loos on Ripley Green are an essential facility for visitors and the parish council would have grave concerns over environmental health should the conveniences be closed.

The council would appreciate the loos having a refurbishment in order to fix some of the issues (with hand washing equipment, for example).

Thanks again, and I'll be happy to clarify, if needed, the council's position as the Review continues.

Jim Morris
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Appendix 4 – Shere Parish Council's response



Shere PC Response
Sept 2021.pdf