

Midlothian Public Conveniences

Report by Director Resources

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to put options forward to Council regarding proposals on how to reduce the annual budget for public conveniences by a minimum of £40,000 as approved by Council on 20 December 2016

2 Background

The Strategic Leadership Group officers made a series of recommendations to the Council in a report to Council on 20 December 2016, with a view to reducing the projected financial gap for future years as part of the Council's strategy to maintain financial sustainability.

One of these recommendations was the closure of all Midlothian public conveniences which was estimated to save £100,000 per annum. This recommendation was not approved at the Council meeting however a decision was approved to reduce the public conveniences budget by £40,000 per annum from 2017/18.

Presently there are five public conveniences located in Midlothian situated at:-

	Usage	Usage	Annual
Location	Mon – Fri	Sat – Sun	Usage
• Penicuik, Bank Street, EH26 9BG	140	49	41,496
• Loanhead, Station Road, EH20 9RQ	76	14	21,216
• Bonnyrigg, Woods Court, EH19 3JR	146	92	47,528
• Gorebridge, Hunterfield Road, EH23 4TS	15	14	5,356
• Dalkeith, Eskdaill Court, EH22 1AG	280	185	92,040
TOTAL	657	354	207,636

These toilets are open seven days per week between the hours of 9.00am and 6.00pm and are maintained and cleaned by two full time staff who works a 3 days and 4 days rota from 8:15am to 19:15pm. There is one vehicle to operate the mobile system covering the maintenance and cleaning on a regular daily programme.

3 Financial Budget

Council on 20 December 2016 approved a saving of £40,000 per annum with effect from 2017/18, to be achieved from a review of all Midlothian Public Conveniences.

The Council's overall revenue budget for 2017/18 was approved at the Council meeting on 7 February 2017. The approved budget for public conveniences is:-

The historic cost of operating the public toilets and the 2017/18 budget is:-

	Actual 2013/14	Actual 2014/15	Actual 2015/16	Actual 2016/17	Budget 2017/18
Employee Costs	£88,500	£42,000	£46,500	£45,100	£49,300
Premises Costs	£48,000	£45,900	£50,900	£51,200	£56,700
Transports Costs	£5,500	£2,100	£3,100	£2,600	£2,700
Supplies & Services	£2,700	£1,800	£1,600	£1,600	£1,000
Total	£144,700	£91,800	£102,100	£100,500	£109,700
Approved Saving					£(40,000)
2017/18 Approved Budget					£69,700

The historic cost of repairs and maintenance for the public toilets in Midlothian is:-

	Actual 2013/14	Actual 2014/15	Actual 2015/16	Actual 2016/17
Repairs Day to Day	£6,800	£4,500	£5,600	£9,200
Repairs Vandalism	---	---	£1,000	£3,100
Lump Sum Maintenance	£6,500	£8,300	£6,400	£6,600
	£13,300	£12,800	£13,000	£18,900

It is noticeable that the incidence of vandalism has increased in the last financial year.

The table below details the amount of days in 2016/17 when the public toilets have been closed due to vandalism:-

Location	Total Days Closed
Bonnyrigg Public Toilets	84 days
Dalkeith Public Toilets	66 days
Gorebridge Public Toilets	12 days
Loanhead Public Toilets	5 days
Penicuik Public Toilets	27 days
Total	194 days

4 Options

Four options other than complete closure of the facilities have been identified to allow the Council to bridge the budget gap or to generate income, and these are as listed below.

4.1 Option 1: Reduce Staffing and Close Two Facilities.

Reduce staffing levels from 2 to 1 full time equivalent
 Reduce operational days from 7 to 5 (Tuesday to Saturday)
 Reduce operating times (currently 09.00am – 18.00pm) to 09.30am – 17.15pm.

Close the two least used public conveniences at Gorebridge and Loanhead.

In Loanhead the Paradykes Hub is available for the public to use allowing the closure of the Loanhead facility.

In Gorebridge the Gorebridge Hub would be available for the public to use allowing the closure of the Gorebridge facility. In the short term the leisure centre would be available until the Hub opens.

The proposed figures for the above option are as follows, resulting in a saving of £4,200 in a full year and an over spend in 2017/18 of £18,200 assuming the revised arrangements commence in October 2017.

	Approved Budget	2017/18 Forecast Actuals	Required Full Year Budget
Employee Costs	£49,300	£36,500	£26,700
Premises Costs	£56,700	£47,900	£35,500
Transport Costs	£2,700	£2,700	£2,700
Supplies and Services	£1,000	£800	£600
Total	£109,700	£87,900	£65,500
Saving	£(40,000)		
2017/18 Budget	£69,700		
Over spend/(Under spend)		£18,200	£(4,200)

4.2 Option 2 Five Toilets Open with Reduced Staffing

Keep all 5 public conveniences open.

Reduce staffing levels from 2 full time equivalents to 1.07 full time equivalents.

Reduce staffing cover to the following functions.

Open	Clean	Clean and Close
08.30 – 09.30	12.00 – 14.00	16.30 – 19.00

The proposed figures for option 2 are as follows, resulting in an over spend in a full year of £15,400 and over spend in 2017/18 of £27,600 assuming the revised arrangement commence in October 2017.

	Approved Budget	2017/18 Forecast Actuals	Required Full Year Budget
Employee Costs	£49,300	£36,900	£27,000
Premises Costs	£56,700	£56,700	£53,000
Transport Costs	£2,700	£2,700	£2,700
Supplies and Services	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
Total	£109,700	£97,300	£85,100
Saving	£(40,000)		
2017/18 Budget	£69,700		
Over spend/(Under spend)		£27,600	£15,400

.3 Option 3: Community Ownership/Management

Explore the option of transferring the public conveniences to local community groups or consider selling/leasing them to a private company to operate.

In order to proceed with this option an initial investment of £25,000 in each of the five locations would have to be invested to refurbish the public toilets to a respectable standard.

The proposed figures for this option are as follows, resulting in a £55,200 saving in a full year and an over spend in 2017/18 of £40,000. However, an initial £125,000 one off investment would have to be made by the Council.

It is envisaged that considerable efforts would be required to engage and work with communities to provide this service.

	Approved Budget	2017/18 Forecast Actuals	Required Full Year Budget
Employee Costs	£49,300	£49,300	£0
Premises Costs	£56,700	£56,700	£0
Transport Costs	£2,700	£2,700	£0
Supplies and Services	£1,000	£1,000	£0
Loan Charges	£0		£14,500
Total	£109,700	£109,700	£14,500
Saving	£(40,000)		
2017/18 Budget	£69,700		
Over spend/(Under spend)		£40,000	£(55,200)

4.4 Option 4: Automated Services at the locations

Close all public conveniences and sell the resultant vacant land.
Install new automatic self cleaning, opening and closing public conveniences in the 3 town centres of Bonnyrigg, Dalkieth, and Penicuik.

In Loanhead the Paradykes Hub would be available for the public to use allowing the closure of the Loanhead facility. In Gorebridge the Gorebridge Hub would be available for the public to use this allowing the closure of the Gorebridge facilities. In the short term the leisure centre would be available.

Income would be generated by charging 20p admission fee.
Current usage is estimated at approximately 180,000 users per annum at the three locations. Based on an estimated drop in usage of 50% following introduction of a charge, income is estimated at:-

Projected No's	Charge	Projected Yearly Income
90,000	20p	£18,000

The proposed figures for the above are as follows, resulting in a £17,200 saving in a full year and an over spend in 2017/18 of £40,000 but an initial £289,000 one off investment would have to be made in order to purchase the 3 new automatic public toilets.

Note an additional allocation of £289,000 of capital costs in the General Services Capital Plan will increase the overall level of debt outstanding (which is already significantly above the cap set by Council) and will have a corresponding increase in loan charges as shown in the table.

It is envisaged that this proposal would not be available until 2018/19 due to the requirement to obtain planning permission, installation of services and delivery of the units.

	Approved Budget	2017/18 Forecast Actuals	Required Full Year Budget
Employee Costs	£49,300	£49,300	£0
Premises Costs	£56,700	£56,700	£46,500
Transport Costs	£2,700	£2,700	£0
Supplies and Services	£1,000	£1,000	£0
Loan Charges	£0	£0	£24,000
Income	£0	£0	£(18,000)
Total	£109,700	£109,700	£52,500
Saving	£(40,000)		
2017/18 Budget	£69,700		
Over spend/(Under spend)		£40,000	£(17,200)

5 Report Implications

5.1 Resource

Council on 20 December 2016 approved reducing the Public Toilet budget by £40,000. The tables below provide details of the savings and the input on resources that could be achieved by implementing each of the four options.

The option of complete closure of the facilities would reduce savings of £69,700 and requires to be considered alongside the options set out in the review.

6.2 Risk

A risk assessment of the cleaning standards for all options has been undertaken.

However there is the Risk of buildings falling into further disrepair with options 1 and 2. Viability of finding group willing to take on toilets and bearing full cost including vandalism for option 3 may prove challenging for this option. Option 4 income may be less than projected depending on public usage.

Overall any changes to the public toilet provision may lead to criticism of the Council.

6.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☐ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☐ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

6.4 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The review of public conveniences will alter the way in which the services are provided and depending on the selected option public access to facilities could be reduced.

6.5 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Provision of facilities in town centres adds to the range of services offered and may influence public choice in where to visit.

6.6 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Full consultation will be undertaken with staff, community groups and publicity campaign will operate alongside the chosen option.

6.7 Ensuring Equalities

An equalities input assessment has been carried out.

6.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Changes to the way in which public conveniences are operated will contribute to the overall financial viability of the Council.

6.9 IT Issues

There are no IT issues arising from this report.

7 Recommendations

The Council are recommended to;

- a) Note the options set out in this report; and
- b) To instruct the Director Resources to progress with the closure of five public conveniences in light of the budget position facing the Council.

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Background Papers