

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE WORKING GROUP ON 27 NOVEMBER 2018

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: Strategic Vision for the future of public convenience services in Arun update report.

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DATE: 25 October 2018

EXTN: 37506

PORTFOLIO AREAS: Property, Estates & Facilities. Greenspace & Emergency Planning.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Information and update report on Strategic Vision for the future of public convenience services in Arun which had originally been recommended to Cabinet by the Environment & Leisure Working Group following its meeting on 19th December 2017 and subsequently approved by Cabinet on 12 February 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Members note the update report.

1.0 Introduction

This report provides an update on the various decisions made by Cabinet relating to the Council's Public Convenience Strategy. All decisions made by Cabinet were made following consultation with the Working Group and their subsequent recommendations.

2.0 Update on capital refurbishment programme.

Phase one of the WC improvement programme is well underway with works now drawing to completion. The first phase includes full alteration and refurbishment of public WC's to Culver Road, Felpham as well as those in St Martins Car Park, Littlehampton.

Phase two of the programme commences on 29th October 2018 and this will see refurbishment and improvement of the public WC facilities at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis and Norfolk Gardens, Littlehampton with completion anticipated by Christmas 2018.

Works are generally proceeding well and remain within budget.

The new public toilets on the promenade in Bognor Regis are now installed and open to the public, albeit later than originally anticipated, as a result of the Council being let down by the building manufacturer. This installation has also been funded from the 2018/19 capital toilet improvement budget.

P & E currently have a remaining budget for public toilet improvement work in 2018/19

circa £95,000. It is anticipated that 2019/20 will be the last year of the original agreed investment sum of £1 million fed into P & E budget over the past 5 years. This will see an injection of a further £200K into 2019/20 financial year.

P & E have gathered information regarding the use and condition of remaining public WC's and the next proposed priority public toilet project will be the Bedford Street toilets in Bognor Regis. These toilets receive the heaviest use across the district and regrettably also suffer from the greatest anti-social behaviour and misuse which see significant reactive maintenance expenditure for Arun when compared to other toilets.

3.0 Update in relation to specific public conveniences.

3.1 Crown Yard Public WC's, Arundel.

Decision taken – Investigate the potential for commercial development with retained public conveniences at Crown Yard.

This aspect of the strategy has been delayed due to resource implications within Property & Estates (P & E). P & E have engaged the services of a consultant to look at the feasibility of development of the above site. These WCs are located within a larger, attractive building in the corner of the town centre car park. There is considered to be scope to change the use of the building to an office or catering outlet with retained public conveniences.

ADC has been working with Arundel Town Council on Arundel's street scene with a view to improvements throughout the town. One initiative has included an option for a change of use to the Crown Yard car park to other public use such as a connective public realm space. Although this initiative is not currently supported any development of the toilets will bear in mind possible future changes whilst considering its current use as a car park.

3.2 Ferring Village Green & Rife Public WC's:

Decision taken – retain a public convenience facility at Ferring Rife, looking to achieve this through commercial partnership opportunity that will be explored by the Property & Estates service and Ferring Parish Council in due course. That the public conveniences at Ferring Village Green are retained, on the basis that the Parish Council are prepared to enter into agreement with Arun to support future capital refurbishment costs and continue with their current revenue contribution to Arun.

The Council have received a written agreement in principle from Ferring Parish Council (FPC) confirming that it will support costs for future required refurbishment works but that it wishes to be consulted on any proposals ahead of completion and at the appropriate point.

The Council have met with FPC to discuss the Rife WC's as the strategy was looking to achieve continued viability of this particular WC through commercial partnership opportunity and that this would be explored by the Council and FPC. No commercial proposal has been submitted. The Council have written to FPC to request update on position and we await their response.

3.3 North Street Public WC's, Littlehampton:

Decision taken – That the Council withdraw the North Street Wick public conveniences, but work in partnership to support the Wick Traders Association over provision of a Community Toilet scheme in close proximity.

Property & Estates have engaged the services of a consultant to look at the feasibility of

development of the above site.

This is a small building in poor condition on a very constrained site. There may be scope to convert the building into a small commercial or retail unit or food outlet but P & E are unconvinced regarding demand in this locality. A further option could be to demolish the building and build a one and a half storey residential one bedroom residential unit. The impact on the adjacent residential properties would need to be carefully considered to avoid possible overshadowing.

P & E believe that the site is not of strategic interest to ADC and so are to recommend that the site be marketed in order to gauge commercial interest with a view to disposal of the asset. P & E have been informally approached by two local parties interested in purchasing the site but as yet no offers have been made. In order to demonstrate best value an open marketing exercise or auction is likely to be recommended for a small site of this nature.

When the WC's closed as a result of the arson attack and resultant extensive internal fire damage the Council agreed to work in partnership with Wick Traders Association on the potential for provision of a community toilet scheme. The Council have contacted the traders association representative and have made an offer for ADC to support a community toilet scheme and an acknowledgement response was received. However, the Council have heard nothing further since but this offer remains firmly on the table but the traders association will have to approach the Council in the event that it is interested in pursuing this scheme further.

P & E estimate that the Council will attain revenue and repair savings of around £10K per year as a direct result of closure of this facility.

3.4 Avisford Park Public WC's Aldwick & West Meads Public WC's, Bognor Regis:

Decision taken – That the Council retain Avisford Park & West Meads public conveniences, on the basis that Aldwick Parish Council (APC) are prepared to enter into an agreement with Arun to support future capital refurbishment costs and are prepared to offer a reasonable increase to their current annual contribution towards public conveniences.

When the Council have maintenance works planned to these toilets it will open up further dialogue with APC in advance in order to discuss possible financial assistance towards required works.

3.5 Snooks Corner Public WC's, Felpham, Bognor Regis:

Decision taken – That the Council withdraw the Snooks Corner public conveniences. This decision is made on the basis that the Culver Road facility will remain open all year round in future. The Council will also look to set up a Community Toilets Scheme arrangement with an interested business in close proximity and will explore commercial opportunities for the Snooks Corner building.

P & E have explored commercial opportunities as it was agreed within the strategy to withdraw this toilet from public use. The Council have worked with the owner of the nearby Lobster Pot Café who has agreed to provide a community toilet at this private café. In return for this he wishes to lease the Snooks corner toilet building, once closed, from the

Council in order to convert them to a store for his business. Lease terms are agreed and a lease is drafted with the intention that the Snooks corner WC's are closed once the current planned refurbishment works to the Culver road public toilets in Felpham are fully complete and open to the public (currently anticipated at the end of November 2018). P & E will ensure a communications plan is in place and local Ward Councillors / members are fully briefed in advance of the above action.

The solution agreed will see the Council reduce costs in respect of the toilets and will also remove liability for utility costs and business rates as well as upkeep and maintenance costs associated with the facility.

P & E estimate that the Council will attain revenue and repair savings of around £10K as a direct result of closure of this facility.

3.6 Shrubs Field Public WC's Middleton-On-Sea, Bognor Regis:

Decision taken – That the Council retain the Shrubs field conveniences, on the basis that Middleton-On-Sea Parish Council (MPC) are prepared to enter into an agreement with Arun to support future capital refurbishment costs and are prepared to increase their current annual revenue contribution towards public conveniences.

The Council have been in discussion with MPC have agreed in principle to supporting refurbishment costs and contributions for this facility moving forward. MPC await refurbishment proposals and timescales from the Council, at the relevant time in order to enter into further discussion and agree financial contribution once project costs are known.

3.7 Mewsbrook Park Public WC's, Littlehampton:

Decision taken – That pending the formal agreement of Freedom Leisure, for free public use of their public conveniences at the new Littlehampton Leisure Centre, that the Council withdraw the Mewsbrook Park public conveniences on opening of this facility.

The public will have access to the facilities included in the new Wave Leisure Centre. Then at the relevant time (to be agreed) the public WC facilities in Mewsbrook Park Littlehampton will close.

3.8 Waterloo Square Public toilets, Bognor Regis.

Decision taken – That the Council retain Waterloo square public conveniences at present, pending exploration of commercial development opportunity of this site with retained public conveniences.

This aspect of the strategy has been delayed due to resource implications within Property & Estates (P & E).

These toilets remain open to the public and the current intention is that they remain open for the foreseeable future.

P & E will look to explore possible commercial opportunities with this site and land and in doing so will look to secure the future of some toilet provision in this location as well as seek increased revenue and reduction in liability in respect of premises running and maintenance costs. The timeframe for this is currently unknown due to current workload and work priorities but P & E are planning to gain expressions of interest from the open market during financial year 2019/20.

4.0 Seasonal Public Convenience Closures:

The WC sites proposed for seasonal closure were Norfolk Gardens, Littlehampton, Culver Road, Felpham, West Beach, Littlehampton and Sandy Road in Pagham, Bognor Regis. Due to the Council's capital programme of refurbishments and the direction of the Public Convenience Strategy then no further seasonal closures are proposed at this stage.

It is the Council's intention to open a dialogue with Pagham Parish Council with regard to potential future arrangements for the Sandy Road public conveniences.

Public toilets will therefore continue to be provided during normal prescribed hours. In summer time (1st May to 30th September) from 08:00 Hrs to 20:00 Hrs and for winter time (1st October to 30th April) from 08:00 Hrs to 17:00 Hrs.

5.0 The future of public toilet provision in Arun.

In agreeing the Public Convenience Strategy, the Council are committing to ensuring adequate funding is in place to allow its delivery.

P & E estimate that for the remaining public toilet assets to be converted and fully refurbished to bring them up to the same standard as the phase one and two projects currently underway the Council will need to fund works up to the value of £1.8 Million. This sum is based following the recent procurement exercise and on improving the remaining 14 separate public toilet locations across the Arun district.

The above required funding requirement will be communicated to the Council's finance team in order that this can be considered as part of the Council's medium to long term financial strategy.

It should also be noted that as toilet assets are refurbished they become far easier to clean, maintain and keep clean. This is a very important aspect in respect of the end customer experience when using the public facilities. If the Council proceed in this way then P & E believe that customer satisfaction with the end environment and overall cleanliness would increase significantly.

6.0 Next Steps:

P & E possess a sound working knowledge of the condition of the remaining public toilet stock across the district. Ahead of moving forward in devising a suitable 'fit for purpose' planned maintenance strategy for the Council's public toilets P & E will need to ascertain the level of available funding for future financial years as this will dictate the works that can be undertaken and the programme of delivery.

P & E will look to develop a five year costed planned maintenance strategy based on likely budget availability using its knowledge of existing toilet stock condition combined with the reactive repairs demand in order to deal with the necessary public toilet refurbishments on a need and priority basis. This plan will be reported to the Environment & Leisure Working Group when complete as well as local parish council partners and Arun DC ward members.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPER:

Strategic vision for the future of public convenience services in Arun paper reported to the Environment & Leisure Working Group on the 19th December 2017.