

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE Housing and Environment

DATE 10 May 2011

DIRECTOR Pete Leonard

TITLE OF REPORT Community Toilet Scheme

REPORT NUMBER: H&E/11/63

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At the City Council Budget Management meeting of 10 February 2011 a request was made to investigate the provision of a community toilet scheme in Aberdeen City.

This report is to advise Committee of the proposal to introduce such a scheme across Aberdeen. This proposal would form part of the long term public toilet strategy for Aberdeen and both complements and improves upon existing public toilet facilities already in place both publicly and privately.

Introduction of this scheme would be at a cost to the Council and would potentially negate the budget savings already proposed (£30,000), against the public toilet revenue budget, as part of the Council's 5 Year Business Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:

- (i) instruct that an additional £30,000 be added to the revenue budget to cover funding of the community toilet scheme, subject to the approval of the Finance and Resources Committee of 16 June, 2011;
- (ii) further to the approval of recommendation (i) by the Finance and Resources Committee, to instruct the Director of Housing & Environment to report back to Council before December 2011 via a future meeting of the Housing and Environment Committee on progress of the proposal. This report to determine the benefits, risk and impact of introducing a Community Toilet Scheme as part of the long term strategy for public toilets in Aberdeen.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Once a decision has been made and an option agreed to take forward, further budgetary implications will be outlined to Committee for consideration in future years' budgets.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Bright, clean and well maintained toilet facilities enhance the local environment and improve facilities available to residents, visitors and tourists to the city.

Failure to provide and improve these services places risk on our ability to implement our vision in future Clean City Challenges.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

Public Toilet Review

Providing public toilets is not a statutory function of local authorities. However, public toilets are an important service for visitors and residents alike. Aberdeen City Council has to look at different options to allow for adequate public toilet provision across Aberdeen.

The Council's traditional stand-alone public toilets are no longer the sole toilets available for public use. Shopping centres, supermarkets and others increasingly provide toilets for the public. There are a number of civic buildings which provide toilet facilities but these are not promoted for general public use. Public expectations of what should be provided have also altered; for example, people now expect baby-changing facilities and the law requires disabled provision where practical.

Aberdeen City Council currently has 13 public toilets open and available to the public for use.

Aberdeen's current toilets are very well managed and maintained. The toilets receive good feedback from the public and in 2010 four toilets, Upperkirkgate, Footdee, Chapel Street and Beach Central were awarded 'Loo of the Year' awards in recognition of their standard of maintenance and cleanliness.

Aberdeen has many other sites that have in the past been used as public toilet facilities but many of these properties are old, in poor condition and no longer meet accepted standards. Over the years these site have gradually been closed down and accordingly, in 2009 a Council decision was made to further reduce the number of toilets open

to the public and close a number of facilities across the city. This represented a budget saving of £81,000 in year 2009/10.

Revenue budget for public toilets is on budget for the financial year 2010 / 11.

Community Toilet Scheme

Introduction of a Community Toilet Scheme across Aberdeen could include:

- a) conveniences to which the public have access but are not in the ownership of the Council, and
- b) conveniences which are in the ownership of the Council but are not open for general public use, such as the Museum, Library, Art Gallery, etc.

The Community Toilet Scheme involves the Council engaging with local businesses to ask them to open up their toilets to the Public.

Typical businesses might be larger retail stores, cafes, hotels or pubs. In return the business receives a small annual payment from the Council, and a heavier footfall of potential customers. An estimated payment of £500 would be made per business and this would equate to £12,500 revenue spend with 25 partners.

Careful selection of the community scheme members is important as this will ensure that the toilets are open for the majority of the day and comply with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.

The Community Toilet scheme would incur additional staffing and administration costs. There would also be a need to provide signage directing public to the community toilets. The cost of this would be in the region of £17,500.

Currently £30,000 of a budget saving has been put forward for the closure of Upperkirkgate public toilet. Should Council wish to pursue the option of a Community Toilet Scheme then this saving would not be made as an estimated £30,000 revenue budget would be required to run and manage the Community Toilet scheme.

6. IMPACT

This report supports the Community Plan's vision for land use and the environment, namely, for Aberdeen to be a City that protects, enhances and values its environment. It also links generally to the Council's policy statement, Vibrant, Dynamic and Forward Looking, in terms of its declared intention to be an efficient Council.

Public toilet provision also links generally to the “health” and “clean city and environment” aspects of the Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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