

COMMITTEE	COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	19 May 2016
TITLE	Public Conveniences
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor John Wynn Jones
PURPOSE	To consider and make recommendations on a Scheme to keep public toilets under threat of closure due to the cuts open for the future

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the Gwynedd Challenge engagement exercise, the Council in its meeting of 3 March, 2016 recommended making cuts which included 'closing 50 out of 73 public toilets in the County' in order to achieve a budgetary reduction of £244,000.
- 1.2 If implemented, the decision as to which toilets to close would likely be based on an appraisal of the 'importance' of the toilets as developed by the Public Toilet Task Team (Environment Committee) in 2008/2009 and in relation to the following considerations:
- level of use
 - link with tourist attraction
 - use by motorists on Trunk Roads, Class 1 and 2 Roads
 - link with shopping centre
 - facilities for the disabled
 - link with public transport exchanges e.g. bus stations
 - link with Blue Flag Beach.
- 1.3 The £244,000 cuts have to be achieved by the 1 April, 2017 at the latest. With the assistance of the Head of Service, I have been looking at the possibility of developing an alternative scheme to keep as many toilets as possible open despite the significant cuts to the budget.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Report is to obtain the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on an alternative scheme to meet the cuts and which keeps the current level of provision of Public Toilets in the County.

2 A PARTNERSHIP SCHEME TO MAINTAIN THE PROVISION

2.1 Appendix 1 of this Report contains a list of public toilets which this Council currently provides.

The list includes:

- town/village/relevant community or town council
- location of the toilet
- opening periods: either all year or seasonal (normally from Easter to the end of October)
- details of any current partnership arrangement
- best estimate of average annual cost of operating the toilet.

2.2 The Scheme is dependent on attracting the interest of Town and Community Council's in having a partnership to ensure the continuation of the provision in 2017/18. A financial contribution is expected from Town/Community Councils for the purpose and there are two options available to achieve this:

- **Option 1:** contribution level of £4000 per toilet open all year and a contribution of £2000 per toilet opened seasonally.
- **Option 2:** contribution equivalent to a third (33.3%) of the average annual cost of operating the toilet.

2.3 It is obvious that some town and community councils have more than one facility in their town or community. The list in Appendix 1 includes total annual contributions expected from town/community councils willing to be a partner under the Scheme.

2.4 The Scheme has a second phase, to be implemented from 2017/18 onwards, and which gives the Town/Community Committee the option to:

- continue with the partnership arrangement for the next year/s, or
- to develop arrangements for the transfer of responsibility in full for the provision after 2017/18.

2.5 From experience, it can take up to two years to make arrangements for Town/Community Council's to take responsibility for the property and service in full.

2.6 In Appendix 2 of this Report is a draft standard letter which would likely be sent to town/community councils upon implementation of this Scheme.

2.7 It is anticipated that the advantages of partnering for Town/Community Councils would be:

- keeping the provision open
- possibility to develop alternative arrangements for its provision, if desired
- providing the community with an influential role in ensuring the provision for the future
- providing adequate time to adjust precepts
- providing opportunities to attract external grant funding for improving the facility in the future.

2.8 Advantages of partnering for this Council would be:

- keeping the provision open
- better certainty of continuing employment of staff involved in cleaning and maintaining the provision
- ensuring the cuts are achieved by 1 April, 2017
- having a solid foundation for a strategy to provide public toilets in the County and which would meet any possible statutory obligation by the Welsh Government in future.

2.9 If there is no interest in entering into a partnership to maintain the provision, then it is expected that the toilet under consideration would close during this financial year, i.e. 2016/17.

3. RECOMENDATIONS

3.1 The Scrutiny Committee to consider the Scheme and to advise:

- 3.1.1 If there is support for the Scheme (including any suggestions as to how the Scheme could be improved).
- 3.1.2 If supportive, which option (1 or 2) should be followed.
- 3.1.3 If supportive, that the Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Cabinet amends the decision made to cut £244,000 by first seeking to establish a partnership with local communities in order to avoid closing the facilities whilst achieving the same amount of savings.