

SOUTH HOLLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Portfolio Holder for Place and Executive Director - Place

To: Cabinet Tuesday, 29 October 2019

(Author: Charlotte Paine Environmental Services Manager)

Subject Public Toilet Task and Finish Group Update and Future Proposals

Purpose: To provide an update on the progress of public toilet task and finish group recommendations reported in January 2019 and propose future options

Recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1) That the toilets of Spalding and Holbeach are re-configured and updated as suggested in recommendation option two.
- 2) That the new public toilets are fitted with payment facilities to charge for users a minimum of 20p.
- 3) That Vine Street toilets be decommissioned as a public toilet and an alternative use of this building be considered.
- 4) That capital funding for the recommended option be released from the Market Towns programme.
- 5) That the Executive Director for Place, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Place, be given delegated authority to complete any associated actions necessary to enable the commencement of re-configuring the toilets and initialising charges for use.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The following report was presented to Performance Monitoring Panel on 11th September 2019. Originally the report was an update to the previously commissioned task and finish report of 2018/19. At this meeting the original recommendations of the task and finish group were updated with new recommendations proposed on how to address the toilets in a longer term approach as set out in this report.
- 1.2 This report is now presented to Strategy Board with the proposal that these new recommendations are considered for Cabinet and, should they be agreed, how funding for these recommendations would be achieved.
- 1.3 It is worth noting that the PMP members asked for the originally suggested timescale to review of the toilets outside of Holbeach and Spalding but shortened.
- 1.4 Commencing in April 2018, a task and finish group of 5 elected members assembled to consider South Holland District Councils provision of public toilets.
- 1.5 The agreed terms of reference for the group were:

- To review public toilets in the District in relation to location, cleaning regimes, usage, reasons for closure and running costs.
- To use information gathered to ensure value for money, good service and that the right money was being spent in the right place.

- 1.6 The group visited the SHDC owned and maintained toilets to understand the current facilities and consider their condition and locality. The group made its recommendations to Cabinet on 12th February 2019 and this report is set out to update the Performance Monitoring Panel on the progress of these recommendations as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.7 This report will also consider in further detail the potential options available for upgrading or replacing the current toilet facilities for better, more modern and suitable for heavy use and easier to clean toilets.
- 1.8 Since the recommendations of the group were agreed at Cabinet in February 2019, there have been a number of improvements made to the process of reporting issues and repairs, increased and improved cleaning schedules and research into how we best continue to provide a good quality public toilets to the residents and visitors of South Holland.
- 1.9 In order to fully consider the best options for the future provision of the toilets a consultation was undertaken with residents of South Holland, and visitors to the area, to understand what they would like to see available and the current usage of our toilets. The full details of this consultation are available in Appendix B.
- 1.10 The recommendations of the task and finish group are detailed in Appendix A and within this table is detail of the work that has been undertaken to implement these recommendations. Cleaning and reporting changes have been made immediately with further work being done to digitise the processes to further streamline the process. The additional Pride in South Holland funding has allowed for much of the additional cleaning including dedicated toilet cleaning resource and a programme of deep cleans across all toilets.
- 1.11 Whilst there has been an increase in the number of times the toilets are cleaned and the introduction of a deep cleaning schedule for all toilets, residents and visitors still reported as part of the consultation that the cleanliness of the toilets was lacking with 46% of respondents rating them as poor. Due to the age, types of fittings in the toilets and the tendency for people to misuse the toilets, they are not seen as clean or fresh and this puts people off using them and is considered by the public to attract anti-social behaviour (ASB). 30% of people said they think that the toilets being open later would attract ASB and drug use.
- 1.12 Given that additional cleaning is not making the toilets more attractive to users and that a number of the recommendations are reliant upon investment in our facilities, including the recommendation to refurb the Holbeach toilets which was estimated to cost £20,000, research has been undertaken to understand the best options for investment in the toilets. The options detailed in this report would, all but option four, address the remaining recommendations of the original task and finish group report.

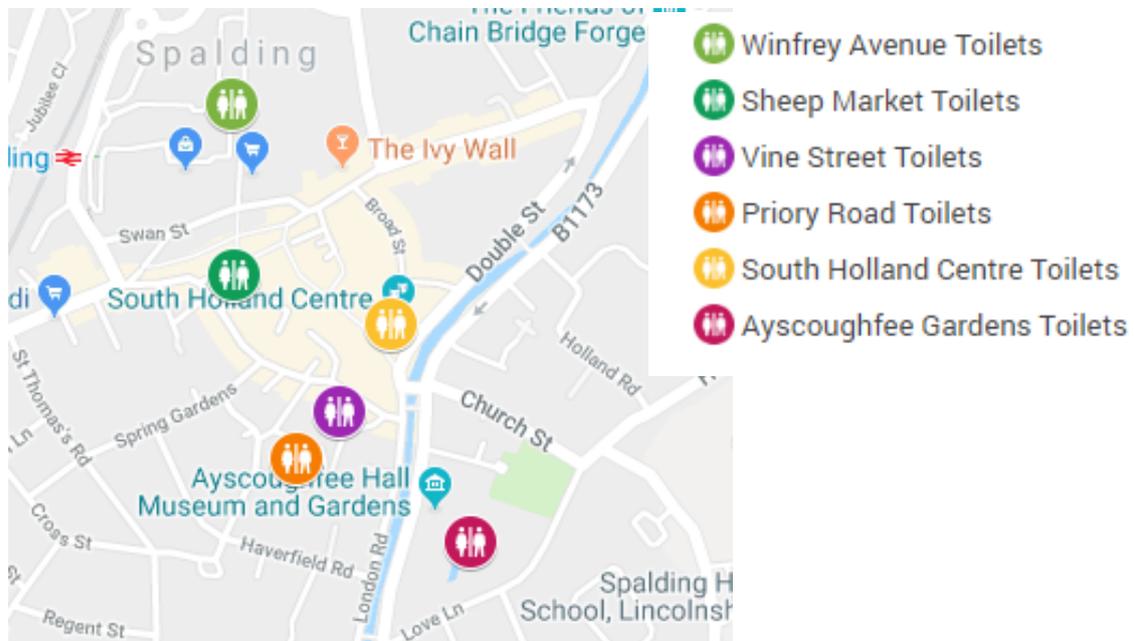
2.0 **OPTIONS**

- 2.1 **Option One - Refurbish some of the current facilities**, including painting, replacement of doors and new fixtures in keeping with the current layouts and fixtures. This option does not address issues such as misuse of the toilets as it does not remove the areas in the toilets for multiple people to congregate and therefore people would remain put off from using the toilets due to potential ASB, or the fear of it, as highlighted in the consultation responses. Therefore this is not the recommended option.
- 2.2 **Option Two - Re-configure the current buildings** to create individual cubicles which reduce the potential for ASB, include automatic locking doors and create a more modern and easy clean facility. This option addresses a number of the issues raised in the consultation, removing the fear of ASB, allowing the toilets to be open longer whilst reducing the need for manual locking and unlocking each day and creating clean and fresh toilet facilities that can be easily maintained and reduce potential for vandalism. This option provides the same standard of toilet as option three but without the need to demolish the building and is therefore cheaper and provides space in the current buildings for additional use potentials and is therefore the recommended option.
- 2.3 **Option Three – Demolish the current buildings** and replace with purpose built toilets with individual cubicles. As with option two these will reduce the potential for ASB, include automatic locking doors and create a more modern and easy clean facility. This option addresses a number of the issues raised in the consultation, removing the fear of ASB, allowing the toilets to be open longer whilst reducing the need for manual locking and unlocking each day and creating clean and fresh toilet facilities that can be easily maintained and reduce potential for vandalism. This option is the most expensive whilst creating the same standard of toilet as option two and therefore is not the recommended option.
- 2.4 **Option Four - Do nothing** and continue to clean the toilets whilst the quality of them will reduce and complaints and usage of the toilets will reduce. This is not a recommended option as we have plenty of evidence that the residents and visitors to Spalding and Holbeach especially would like to see the toilets improved as a matter of urgency.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 As detailed above, option two is the recommended option of this report as it addresses the recommendations of the task and finish group and the feedback received from the consultation with the residents and visitors to South Holland. Whilst it is likely that option one would be cheaper, as it does not address key issues including anti-social behaviour and misuse of the toilets, option two considered the best option and is therefore the option further detailed in this report.
- 3.2 The task and finish group highlighted the Holbeach toilet as needing urgent consideration for refurbishment and due to the number of visitors that are seen in Spalding, the report talks about the recommendation to improve the facilities in Spalding and Holbeach as a first phase. These areas would be ideal to trial the new facilities due to their high usage. Then as part of the recommendations from the original report there would be a capital programme to improve the toilets in the other areas within a rolling programme created.
- 3.3 As part of the research undertaken to understand current provision and what our options are for the future, consideration has been given to the toilets in the local area in Spalding including others in SHDC ownership. By considering toilets in Priory Road and in South

Holland Centre, including the Changing Places toilets highlighted in the original report, it is clear that there is a high concentration of toilets in Spalding. As can be seen on the map below there are 3 toilets within a very close distance of each other (yellow, purple, orange).



- 3.4 It is a recommendation of this report that the Vine Street block be decommissioned as a public toilet and an alternative use of this building be considered. This is because there are already a number of toilets available in this area and funds for re-configuring the toilets can be utilised to improve the Winfrey Avenue and Sheep Market toilets which are considered to be better located and from the consultation would seem to be used more with only 14% choosing to use Vine Street. Closing these toilets would also help to address ASB issues which have been highlighted previously in the Vine Street toilets particularly. It is considered that the removal of Vine Street would not have a huge impact on the provision of the toilets in Spalding given that here are a number of toilets available in the area and with new toilets recommended we could have them open longer, potentially 24/7, therefore, overall provision would improve even with the removal of Vine Street.
- 3.5 The provision of public toilets is not a statutory duty for Local Authorities, however, it is clear that there is public demand for them and the residents and visitors we have consulted with have clearly stated that they would like to see them continue and for the quality of them to be improved. 77% of people said they believe at least one public toilet required improvement with Sheep Market rated as the toilet most in need of improvement.
- 3.6 There was an overwhelming agreement from our residents and visitors that, where there is a better provision of toilet, users would be happy to pay a small fee to access the toilets. 89% of people agreed that they would be willing to pay a reasonable amount to use public toilets if this was used to fund improvements in these facilities. 60% of respondents said would be willing to pay 20p. Therefore the recommendation of this report is to include automatic locking doors which are opened by users paying at least 20p. This is the mechanism that would also allow for the toilets to remain open longer which 39% of consultees said they would like to see. Though a larger proportion were worried about the potential for ASB if toilets were open later, something we would need to be mindful of if longer opening hours were to be trialled.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 Option Two comes with a number of benefits, some of which have already been detailed. The benefits include;

- Improvement via renovation of current toilet provision;
- Retention of current toilet buildings;
- Potential to use areas of toilet buildings for alternative use;
- Removal of communal areas and therefore reduction in fear of ASB;
- Reduction in potential for misuse including;
 - Vandalism of doors (such as holes in cubicles);
 - Vandalism to fixtures which will be built in;
- Implementation of entry fee;
 - Which has been seen to reduce ASB and vandalism;
 - Which can be invested in better toilets throughout the district;
- Improve lighting and cleanliness;
- Improve provisions such as baby changing and sanitary item disposal.

4.2 In particular it is believed that this recommendation will address two key issues for people, cleanliness and fear of ASB. The new toilet areas will be bright and easy to clean and maintain and therefore immediately will address the cleanliness issue and have a psychological impact in reducing fear of ASB when people are using clean and bright facilities.

4.3 The introduction of a small fee to access the individual cubicle again has a positive psychological impact for users in the safety of having your own direct access cubicle that others cannot enter, as well as creating a physical barrier for anyone wishing to use the toilets. There is plenty of information available that suggests that small fees can reduce vandalism and misuse of toilets including guidance from the British Toilet Association done in conjunction with Hertfordshire Constabulary. It is therefore a recommendation that a fee of at least 20p is payable for the toilets and that this should be able to be paid by cash or card. One further consideration will be whether this fee is made payable for disabled toilets also.

4.4 The site visits we have had to consider the appropriateness of option two in our current toilet buildings have been positive. On both occasions it has been clear that only a proportion of the current toilet blocks would be required for the new cubicles. This would leave some of the building available for alternative use, as would the decommissioning of Vine Street toilet. Therefore there could be potential for the buildings to be multi use and this could be further considered once the works have taken place.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Data Protection; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be

implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 Corporate Priorities

- 5.1.1 Option two ensures we are working to meet our corporate plan priority to ‘*Support the expansion and growth of Spalding and Holbeach to be attractive places where people want to visit, live and work whilst supporting all other towns and villages in the district to meet the needs of their communities*’ by meeting the needs of our residents and visitors who have told us that they would like to see the toilet provision improved.

5.2 Crime and Disorder

- 5.2.1 As detailed previously, there are a number of elements in option two that help to reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour by putting in barriers for people to misuse our toilets and improve the provision for the residents and visitors that would like to use our facilities.

5.3 Equality and Diversity / Human Rights

- 5.3.1 Consideration is being given to ensure that all changes proposed will not negatively impact residents and visitors that require the use of the toilets for health and medical reasons and there will be a provision for accessible toilets in each of the new toilets in Spalding and Holbeach.

5.4 Financial

- 5.4.1 All of the options have a financial impact to SHDC with option three considered the most expensive. In order to establish an indicative cost for options two and three, two separate companies have visited to consider our current building and what would need to be done to improve them. Where costs have been provided we have detailed anticipated costs below, though these are not exhaustive and currently indicative costs.

Option One Costs – based on stock condition survey’s completed recently, costs includes are to bring the toilets up to a suitable standard of repair, but not including cosmetic repairs such as replacement of tiles and decoration. The costs estimated for this, whilst lower than option two and three, do not address any of the current issues regarding use of space and antisocial behaviour and are just for immediate works that are required. Estimated costs for this option are between £20,000 to £50,000 depending upon the toilet block. This is not considered the most effective use of that level of spend given the other options available.

Option Two Costs – considering utilising the current toilet blocks and re-configuring them with direct access cubicles is the preferred option of this report. It is seen as a better use of money which will give the toilets a new, fresh and clean feel, the same as would be achieved with option three, without demolishing the current buildings. The estimated cost for a larger cubicle which would be fitted with baby change facilities and be Disability Discrimination Act compliant, is just under £50,000 for the first cubicle and £20,000 for each additional cubicle. It is recommended that the blocks have 2 or 3 cubicles fitted at a cost of between £70-90,000.

Option Three Costs – to replace the current toilet blocks would involve demolition which is estimated at around £10,000 per block, plus any additional costs for asbestos removal, where required. The price to replace the toilet blocks with modular buildings with the same direct access cubicles as option two, is estimated at £120,000 per block. This does have the benefit for providing new steel frame buildings which would not be expected to have any works to the roof or brickwork required in the short term like the current blocks may need, though these types of work are not currently highlighted as required in the stock condition surveys.

5.4.2 It is worth noting that the building in Holbeach is a listed building and therefore further costs may become necessary as we move forward with getting more detailed costs.

5.5 Health & Wellbeing

5.5.1 A communities and local government report states that *'A lack of public toilets results in certain groups feeling anxious about going out. Older people, for example, do not readily leave their homes without the reassurance that they will have access to public toilets, which can lead to ill-health, with consequent burdens on the NHS.'* This further supports the need for SHDC to maintain good quality public toilets for the benefit of our residents and visitors.

5.6 Reputation

5.6.1 As previously noted, the provision of public toilets is not a statutory duty but rather one that the residents and visitors of South Holland wish to remain. Therefore the improvement of the provision of toilets could have a positive reputational impact for SHDC.

5.7 Stakeholders

5.7.1 It is the intention that this report, whilst providing an update to PMP on the earlier task and finish recommendations, then goes on to propose to Cabinet that option two is implemented to improve the provision of public toilets in South Holland.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All

7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 SHDC – South Holland District Council

7.2 ASB – Anti-Social Behaviour

7.3 PMP – Performance Monitoring Panel

Background papers:- Review of Public Toilet Facilities provided by South Holland District Council (January 2019 Task and Finish Group Report)

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Key Decision: Y

Exempt Decision: N

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Recommendation Tracking

Appendix B Consultation Responses

Appendix C Pictures of Options