

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 29TH JULY, 2019

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE - 25TH JUNE, 2019

“85 VALE OF GLAMORGAN TOILET STRATEGY (REF) –

Cabinet, on 17th June, 2019 had considered the Vale of Glamorgan Toilet Strategy which was approved in principle and referred to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport presented the Strategy, advising that there was no statutory duty for Local Authorities in Wales to provide public conveniences. As a non-statutory service at a time of austerity there was clearly a risk that Councils could reduce or even discontinue public convenience provision as financial pressures increased. However, any decisions taken on provision of public conveniences must be appropriately considered.

Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 required Local Authorities to publish a Local Toilet Strategy by 31st May, 2019. Earlier reporting on this issue had not been possible, and the publication deadline had now passed. Officers had however written to Welsh Government to advise of the position.

Members noted that the Strategy must be available and published on the Council's website, and there was no requirement for the Strategy to be presented to Welsh Government for approval.

A breakdown of the costs to provide toilets was tabled at the Committee for Members' consideration. Attached at Appendix A to the report was the draft Toilet Strategy while Appendix B was the report and the consultation exercise which had received 1,040 responses. The main findings from the consultation included information regarding usage of each public toilet, public opinion regarding alternative methods of toilet provision, suggestions of how to improve existing facilities and ideas for cost savings.

Regarding the possibility of charging to use public toilets, 49% of respondents stated that they would be willing to pay. 38% of respondents were willing to pay 10p, 47% 20p, 3% 30p, 10% 50p and 2% £1. The main suggestions from the consultation were to improve existing toilet facilities, improve cleanliness, modernise and improve facilities, and amend or extend opening hours.

Ideas for cost savings associated with the provision of public toilets from the consultation included implementation of charges or voluntary charges, improve efficiency, implementation of a community toilet scheme and rationalisation of the Council's toilets.

The Strategy also recommended that the Council continues to discuss the business potential of sharing facilities and the possibility of sponsorship at key locations such as Barry Island and Penarth sea front. In summary, the Strategy acknowledged that the Council would need to discuss with Town and Community Councils the merits of retaining public toilet provision in certain locations and whether a partnership arrangement was appropriate in ensuring that provision could be retained.

As a Local Ward Member for Llantwit Major, a Committee Member stated that it was important for all Council departments to work together as town centres and tourism relied on good public toilets and he referred to the issues being experienced by Bridgend County Borough Council. He outlined that this was raised with Llantwit Major Town Council over 5 years ago but no further approach had been made. He stated that he hoped that other Town and Community Councils would be approached but it would not be acceptable for the toilets to be paid out of an increase to the precept. In relation funding, he stated that the new housing developments around Llantwit Major would bring in extra Council Tax. In regard to Boverton, he stated that the public toilets were not used much and he asked whether opening times could be changed as 9:15am was too late. With regard to rail/bus interchange in Llantwit Major he stated that the bus shelter needed to be addressed as this represented a risk to public health, and again he asked for the toilet opening and closing times to be looked at in order to meet the town's needs.

In response the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that opening times were covered in part 5 of the Strategy, and discussion on this would be held with Town/Community Councils and also on how they can help manage local toilets.

In relation to the Ward of Baruc in Barry, the Local Ward Member, stated that 8 of the 23 toilets were located in his Ward, which provided a lot of benefit for tourism. He stated that most visitors expected to pay to use toilets, and he queried who would be responsible for closing and opening toilets. The Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport outlined that in most instances Vale staff would go around locking up facilities. She added that in relation to any charges should they be implemented at a further date, this had to be set at the right level, referring to Tenby as a good example.

The Chairman referred to the closure of public toilets at the Civic Office in Barry, stating that better information should be provided to the public and the language used by reception staff to advise the public needed to be considered. In addition the issue of public access should also be looked into.

The Cabinet Member, with permission to speak stated that problems around public toilets were well known and there was a need to look at charges. He also referred to getting business on board and encouraging them to open up their toilet facilities for the public.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Cabinet give further consideration to the possibility of introducing charging for the use of public toilets.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet be asked to consider public access to toilets at the Civic Office, and also to look at how Reception staff inform the public that toilets are not currently available.
- (3) T H A T Cabinet give further consideration around how Business' can be involved in assisting the Council to deliver the Strategy
- (4) T H A T an update report be provided to the Committee outlining whether the strategy has been successful.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) In order to ask Cabinet to consider an alternative option which includes the upgrade of the existing infrastructure.
- (2) In order for Cabinet to consider the public access to toilets at the Civic Office and how information on this is relayed.
- (3) To engage with Businesses so that these can assist the Council to deliver its Toilet Strategy.
- (4) To provide the Committee with update on progress.”