

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
19 July 2011

Subject: CHANGES TO PUBLIC CONVENIENCES PROVISION

**All Wards
Scrutiny Committees
Cabinet Member for Partnerships: Councillor N Clack**

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 The report seeks to inform Cabinet of progress made towards examining the potential of outside bodies taking on and running the public conveniences within the District. This was one of a number of areas of budget savings agreed to be investigated at the 19 October 2010 Cabinet meeting.
- 1.2 Cabinet agreed at the meeting on 25 January 2011 (Minute CA.94) to transfer the capital assets of the public conveniences to Parish or Town Councils prepared to run the service. The Council will pay a one-off grant of 1.5 times the annual running costs and transfer the freehold. This transfer was subject to a sliding 10 year clawback in the event of disposal and a right to veto any prospective disposal.
- 1.3 Cabinet requested a further report be submitted after six months. This report provides an update on the current position and seeks a decision from Cabinet on further action.
- 1.4 Discussions have been carried out with representatives from all the Parish and Town Councils concerned. At the time of writing the report the District Council has had a positive response from six local councils, a negative response from one and is awaiting a decision from the remaining council. The following table sets out the current position:-

Location	Decision to Transfer	Comment
Northallerton, Applegarth	No	
Thirsk, Millgate	Yes	Details agreed, 1 August anticipated transfer
Great Ayton	Yes	Transfer completed
Osmotherley	Yes	Transfer completed
Stokesley	Yes	Transfer completed
Swainby	Yes	Transfer completed
Easingwold	Yes	Discussion pending, 1 October anticipated transfer. Easingwold Town Council has two further conditions (para 1.5)
Bedale	Yes	Town Council initially declined but have reconsidered. Details to be agreed

- 1.5 Easingwold Town Council has agreed to take over the public conveniences, subject to the following conditions:-
- (1) That satisfactory agreement is reached on the legal and financial terms of the transfer;
 - (2) That Hambleton District Council do not continue to own or manage any other toilet facilities in the Hambleton District Council area; and
 - (3) That the transfer of ownership and management is not before 1 October 2011.
- 1.6 It is not envisaged that agreement for the legal and financial terms will present any significant issues. Condition 2 however presents an issue for consideration given the decision taken by Northallerton Town Council.
- 1.7 At the time of writing the report only Northallerton Town Council has not agreed to a transfer of public convenience responsibilities. This presents Cabinet with the need to consider what the future management arrangements should be for these facilities. The following options may be considered:-
- (1) Continue with the existing service – however this is likely to result in dissatisfaction from councils that have agreed to the transfer and Easingwold has made a clear reference to this (para 1.5);
 - (2) Retain the current facilities but reduce operating costs. Northallerton is the Council's only fully staffed facility and a change of service standard would produce savings. However this would not satisfy the conditions stipulated in Easingwold's agreement to a transfer;
 - (3) Seek an alternative provider of the service;
 - (4) Close the facilities.
- 1.8 In addition to the comments in paragraph 1.7 it is worth noting that the Council refurbished the Northallerton public conveniences in 2002/03 at a capital cost of £139,000. The facility is staffed 7 days a week and requires an entrance fee of 20p. The income does not cover the existing running costs.
- 1.9 It is recommended that option (3) in paragraph 1.7 is pursued.

2.0 DECISIONS SOUGHT:

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider what action to take concerning the public convenience service at Northallerton in regard to the decision of the Town Council not to agree to the transfer of those facilities.

3.0 LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES:

- 3.1 The financial position of the Council underpins the delivery of the Council's Corporate priorities. This report addresses one of the measures which the Council has prioritised to ensure a financially secure position in the future.

4.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

- 4.1 The following risk assessment does not address the option of continuing with the existing service. Seven of the eight Town and Parish Councils have agreed to the transfer offer and it may be seen as inequitable to retain the existing service at Northallerton. The converse

is that the Northallerton facility is of high quality and a decision to close would attract significant adverse comment.

- 4.2 The significant risk in not taking a decision to close or down-grade, in addition to the point in 4.1, is that the District Council will need to fund the remaining costs from reductions in other front line services.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 None.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND EFFICIENCIES:

- 6.1 The current net revenue costs for the facilities at Northallerton is £31,000.
- 6.2 There are no capital schemes for public conveniences in the current 10 year capital programme.
- 6.3 The closure of the Northallerton public conveniences could provide an opportunity for a capital receipt. The Council sold a small area of land adjacent to this site in 2010 for £40,000.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 No implications.

8.0 SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998:

- 8.1 No implications.

9.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:

- 9.1 Any proposed reduction in service at Northallerton would have an impact on visitors to the area and the local community. However the service is discretionary rather than statutory. Any action taken would apply equally and would not differ across any specific groups.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 10.1 It is recommended that:-
- (1) Cabinet agrees to the conditions stipulated by Easingwold Town Council and outlined in paragraph 1.5, in relation to the transfer of the public conveniences; and
 - (2) Cabinet agrees to seek alternative provision of the public convenience service in Northallerton.

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Background papers: None
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