



<b>Council</b>	<b>Tuesday, 05 December 2017</b>	<b>Matter for Information and Decision</b>
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**Title:** **Review of Public Conveniences within the Borough**

**Author(s):** **Margaret Smith (Facilities and Administration Team Leader)**

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## **1. Introduction**

This report gives an overview of the public conveniences provided by the Council in the Borough and considers what alternative options may exist for running the facilities.

## **2. Recommendation(s)**

That all current public conveniences be closed permanently with the exception of the toilet at Wigston Cemetery, and a Community Toilet Scheme be introduced accordingly.

## **3. Current Position**

3.1. Under the Public Health Act 1936, the provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is at the discretion of local authorities who have a power under Section 87 to provide public conveniences, however there is no duty to do so.

3.2. This Council provides six public conveniences at the following locations:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Gents</b>	<b>Ladies</b>	<b>Unisex</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<b>Baby Change</b>
South Wigston Superloo Blaby Road Park	0.20p	-	-	Yes	Yes	No
Oadby Superloo East Street Car Park	0.20p	-	-	Yes	Yes	No
Wigston Junction Road Car Park	Free	Urinal and 1 x cubicle	2 cubicles	-	Yes with RADAR key	No
Wigston Peace Memorial Park	Free	Urinal and 1 x cubicle	2 cubicles	-	Yes with RADAR key	No
Wigston Willow Park	Free	-	-	Yes	Yes with RADAR key	No
Wigston Cemetery	Free	-	-	Yes	No	No

3.3. The annual cost of providing public toilets (not including insurance and central/direct support costs) is:

Income		Expenditure	
Superloo income at £0.20p per use	£400	Utilities	£3,800
		Opening/closing/cleaning	£6,997
		Superloo contract and alarm system	£7,800
		NNDR (Business rates)	£7,300
		Legionella testing	£1,800
		Cyclical maintenance and responsive repairs (based on 2016-17 costs)	£3,546
<b>Total income</b>	<b>£400</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£31,243</b>

- 3.4 The two Superloos are self cleaning and are available for use 24/7. These units were leased but are now owned by the Council following negotiations to exit the original lease arrangement.
- 3.5 The cost of using a Superloo is £0.20p per visit. Combined income from the two Superloos for the year 2016-17 was £276 equating to 3.78 visits per day. Combined income to 31 October for 2017-18 is £229 equating to 5.74 visits per day. Income by the 31 March 2018 is anticipated to be £400.
- 3.6 The other four facilities are open 8am until 6pm seven days a week. There are no usage figures kept for these facilities. The opening, closing, cleaning and provision of consumables is contracted to Pinnacle Housing Limited under the recently awarded Borough-wide cleaning contract at an annual cost of £6,997. The cleaning contract does not specifically include for removal of this figure if cleaning is no longer required. This would therefore be a matter for negotiation with the contractor.
- 3.7 In 2016-17, cyclical maintenance costs were £1,092 (deep cleans, re-painting etc) and responsive repairs costs were £2,454, mostly as a result of vandalism. The total annual cost therefore to the Council of operating and maintaining public conveniences is in the region of £31k but not all of this would necessarily be saved if the Council decided to close public conveniences as explained later in this report.
- 3.8 Unfortunately, public conveniences are targets for vandalism and anti-social behaviour such as drug taking and sexual activity. This problem is not specific to Oadby and Wigston but is a national problem in certain locations. Willow Park toilet block was re-furbished in 2007 for this reason, when it was decided to do away with the separate (large) gents and ladies toilets and have one small unisex toilet with a door that opens directly to the road. This has reduced but not eliminated the problem.
- 3.9 The accessible toilets at Peace Memorial Park and Willow Park, Wigston in particular have suffered repeated vandalism over the last two years. Since December 2015, five new RADAR locks have been vandalised and replaced at a cost of £145 per time. The RADAR lock is a national scheme, whereby locks can only be operated using a RADAR key. These keys are available to disabled or registered blind people to enable them to access the facilities. The aim is to give protection against vandalism or misuse, so that a clean functional toilet is available. However, these toilets are suffering anti-social behaviour as the locks are being broken in order to gain access to a large well lit room away from the elements. There is evidence of drug taking and drinking and

on two occasions the internal facilities have also been vandalised.

#### 4. Options

4.1. There are a number of options that Members may wish to consider in order to reduce the spend on public conveniences as set out below.

#### 4.2. **Close all public conveniences in the Borough but leave the buildings standing:**

Total savings in the first year of closure would be around **£24k** assuming that all cleaning costs could be removed. In subsequent years, the saving would reduce to **£22.5k** as full National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) would still be payable if the buildings are left standing. This is because there is an initial 3 months exemption from NNDR when buildings first become unused but thereafter full rates are payable.

It is unlikely that a saving would be made on legionella testing as this is a fixed price contract for all Council facilities and would then be re-negotiated when the current contract expires.

If the buildings are left standing then external maintenance would still be required.

#### 4.3. **Close and demolish all public conveniences in the Borough:**

Closing and demolishing the toilets (except East Street – see below) would give a revenue saving of around **£31k** as no NNDR would be payable. There would be a capital cost for demolition and clearing the sites.

NNDR costs for the individual sites are given below:

Location	NNDR payable	Other considerations
East Street Superloo	£1,323	The Superloo is inside a building also used as office accommodation by the Civil Enforcement Officers (parking) and space used by Oadby Town Centre Barrow Operative
Blaby Road Superloo	£1,130	
Junction Road	£1,771	Some space also used by Wigston Town Centre Barrow Operative
Peace Memorial Park	£1,794	Some space also used by grounds staff as storage and mess room.
Willow Park	£1,257	
Wigston Cemetery toilet	£0	No NNDR payable
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£7,275</b>	

4.4. As an alternative to demolition, consideration could be given to selling off the toilet blocks for an alternative use.

#### 4.5. **Closing Superloos only:**

This would give an annual saving of around **£8.5k** assuming Blaby Road Superloo is removed from site. East Street Superloo is a slot-in unit inside a building which also contains the Civil Enforcement Officers' Office and an area used by Oadby barrow operative; it could be closed off but remain in situ. There would be a capital cost for removal of Blaby Road Superloo and making the land good.

#### 4.6. **Closing some toilets but keeping others open:**

There are four public conveniences other than Superloos. There is an option to close some but not all of these facilities. In this case it is recommended that Wigston Cemetery toilet and Junction Road toilets remain open and that Willow Park and Peace Memorial Park toilets close.

This would be a saving of approximately **£6k** assuming that the cleaning costs could be removed from the contract and the buildings remain standing, or approximately **£9k** if the buildings were demolished. This sum is arrived at from calculating proportionate costs for utilities, structural maintenance and cleaning.

#### 4.7. **Retain public conveniences and introduce charges:**

It may be possible to fit coin operated toilet door locks to cubicles in order to generate an income from all users. This option would need to be investigated further but the following is brought to Members attention:

- There would be a capital cost to obtain and fit the locks;
- There is potential for vandalism and theft from the lock units;
- There would be a cost to emptying the lock units on a regular basis;
- The toilets may need internal alterations so that there is no discrimination between male and female users since otherwise men would have free access to urinal facilities whereas women would need to pay to use a cubicle. Payment on entry to the gents may be a solution; and
- As there is no usage data collected for public toilets potential income (assuming a charge of £0.20p per visit) cannot be calculated.

This option is not considered to be viable due to the high probability of vandalism of the lock mechanisms and theft from the coin units. The coin units would require emptying daily the costs of which are likely to outweigh the income generated.

#### 4.8. **Close public toilets (with the exception of Wigston Cemetery) and introduce a Community Toilet Scheme:**

In order to provide quality facilities at low cost, a number of local authorities that have closed all or some of their public toilets have successfully introduced a Community Toilet Scheme whereby local businesses receive incentives in order to freely open their toilet facilities to the public.

This scheme was started in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames in 2005 and has since been introduced by other Councils in areas such as Ashford, East Herts, Test Valley, Poole, Wealden, Bedford, Maidstone, Gloucester and Oxford. In some areas the scheme runs alongside Council owned public conveniences and in others it replaces them altogether. The public are made aware of the location of participating businesses by posters and directional signs and businesses provide their facilities during normal opening hours without any expectation to make a purchase of their goods or services.

- 4.9. Incentives for businesses to take part in the scheme vary from local authority to local authority but most make a small annual payment to the business (around £600 appears to be the norm) as well as free advertising on the Council's website and in Council publications.
- 4.10. Should such a scheme be introduced by the Council, it would need to be actively managed and promoted in order to be successful.

Advantages of the scheme include:

- Public access to clean safe toilets;
- Low capital costs to the Council; and
- Opportunity for the Council to work with local businesses.

Disadvantages of the scheme include:

- Toilets only available during hours business is open;
  - Difficulties should large numbers of people require toilet facilities at the same time (a problem in tourist locations but possibly not in Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston); and
  - Some users may be put off by entering a business to use the toilet without using the businesses services.
- 4.11. Assuming two businesses in each of the town centres are prepared to sign up to the scheme, the cost of this would be an estimated £1k capital costs to establish (signage and window notices) followed by approx £5k per year (plus staff time) for annual payment to the businesses and promotion costs.

The scheme has been discussed with the Town Centre Manager who is currently speaking to businesses in the area to gauge their enthusiasm for such a scheme. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

- 4.12. In summary, closing and demolishing all public conveniences except the Cemetery toilet and introducing a Community Toilet Scheme would save approximately **£18,243** as detailed below assuming the cleaning costs of **£6,997** can be removed.

Annual revenue savings		Annual revenue costs	
Close Superloos	£7,800	Loss of Superloo income	£400
NNDR	£7,300	Estimated cost of keeping Cemetery toilet open	£2,000
Save on costs associated with other toilets	£10,543*	Costs associated with Community Toilet Scheme	£5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£25,643</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£7,400</b>
<b>Minus costs</b>	<b>-£7,400</b>		
<b>Total savings*</b>	<b>£18,243</b>		

#### Background Documents:

Report to Full Council (Extraordinary) on 6 July 2017

Appendix A – Equality Assessment (Initial Screening)

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<b>Implications</b>   Review of Public Conveniences within the Borough	
<b>Finance</b>	The financial implications are incorporated in the report.
<b>Chris Raymakers</b> (Head of Finance, Revenues and Benefits)	
<b>Legal</b>	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Dave Gill</b> (Head of Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer)	
<b>Corporate Risk(s) (CR)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1)</b> Retaining public conveniences is a cost to the Council that could be reduced by the introduction of a Community Toilet Scheme.  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Effective Utilisation of Assets/Buildings (CR5)</b> The current toilet buildings are costly to maintain and subject to vandalism and anti social behaviour.
<b>Margaret Smith</b> (Facilities and Administration Team Leader)	
<b>Corporate Priorities (CP)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Effective Service Provision (CP2)</b> Opportunity to improve toilet facilities available to the public via a Community Toilet Scheme.
<b>Margaret Smith</b> (Facilities and Administration Team Leader)	
<b>Vision &amp; Values (V)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Customer Focus (V5)</b> The needs of different users needs to be taken into consideration when considering the options contained in this report.
<b>Margaret Smith</b> (Facilities and Administration Team Leader)	
<b>Equalities &amp; Equality Assessment(s) (EA)</b>	A further equalities assessment will be completed once Members have agreed which option(s) to take forward.
<b>Margaret Smith</b> (Facilities and Administration Team Leader)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Initial EA Screening</b> (Appendix A)