

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 6 NOVEMBER 2012
title: UPDATE ON THE PUBLIC TOILETS
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform members of the outcome of the review of the provision and operation of the public toilets by the Public Conveniences working group and to confirm the recommendations of the group.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - To be a well managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.
 - To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley, encompassing our objective to encourage economic development throughout the borough with a specific focus on tourism.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The January meeting of the Community Services Committee confirmed that 8 of the 24 sets of public conveniences operated by the Council were to be closed. A series of operational measures were to be developed and introduced to improve the focus and efficiency of the cleaning and support of the remain facilities, and that the operation of the revised service be reviewed by the by the Conveniences Working Group and the outcome reported back to this committee.
- 2.2 This report gives a summary of the improvements made in the operation of the of the supporting services and outlines a disposal strategy for the now disused facilities with subsequent recommendations.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 General comments – Closed facilities:
 - 3.1.1 The 8 sets of toilets were closed at the end of February 2012 and have therefore been closed for eight months. The closures were clearly unpopular and representations against the closure have been made from several quarters. Never the less, the former regular users of the now closed facilities have made alternative arrangements and the original patterns of use have been replaced with others.
 - 3.1.2 One of the frequent criticisms of the closures was that the facilities were no longer available for visitors to the area. When considering this point it should be noted that all external direction signs to the closed facilities was promptly removed as was any identifying signage on the actual facilities, and so any new visitor to the area will not be

aware that the facilities were at one time provided. Furthermore, the majority of visitors to the area will have transport, for example a coach, car or bicycle, and these visitors hence have the means to visit the alternative toilet facilities, and having recognised that the original facility is now closed those seeking toilets will be unlikely to repeat the visit to the closed facility.

3.1.3 It is worth noting that residents in villages where the toilets are now closed, were unlikely to be users of the facilities as they would prefer to use those in their own homes.

3.1.4 A frequently received comment relating specifically to the former conveniences at Gisburn, adjacent to the A59, is that “these conveniences were the only ones on the A59 between Preston and Harrogate, and they were used by HGV drivers”. There are in fact recognised service areas adjacent to the A59 both at Barrow Brook and on the approach to Skipton, as well those at the A59 /M6 junction. Unlike the former facilities at Gisburn, these modern service areas are designed to accommodate motorists, including HGV drivers.

3.2 Community Toilet Scheme

3.2.1 The development and promotion of the Community Toilet Scheme (CTS), which offers the use of toilet facilities to the public in commercial, retail, licensed and public premises, is a key element in the provision of publically accessible toilet facilities across the Ribble Valley. Membership of the scheme, which currently stands at 50, continues to grow. The proprietors of premises that could potentially be CTS members are now more willing to join the scheme safe in the knowledge that their facilities, if included in the overall scheme, are an additional provision in the Ribble Valley and are unlikely to be “swamped”. Hence another 8 members have recently joined the scheme. A list of CTS premises is attached as Appendix A, and efforts to promote these facilities are to be made in order to increase the public’s awareness of the arrangement. The location of these facilities and the 16 sets of Council operated facilities are also included on an interactive map on the Council’s website (www.ribblevalley.gov.uk). It can be seen that some facilities are in rural locations where no provision of accessible toilets has previously recognised.

3.2.1 It is also recognised that for the CTS to create the full added value to the area, the signage of the facilities, meaning both on the premises so that people are aware the facilities are there, and direction signage to them, needs to be improved. This will be addressed as a mater of priority.

3.3 Operational Comments

3.3.1 The overall number of operating hours of the RVBC toilet cleaners have been reduced with the closure of 8 of the 24 sets of the facilities. Rotas and servicing routines have been revised and a greater emphasis on support of the facilities at the weekends has been scheduled when the usage of the facilities is at its highest. Further increased emphasis on the weekend support is proposed . This move clearly supports the large number of events that are staged in the Ribble Valley at weekends.

3.3.2 Automatic locks have been installed and are now working satisfactorily in the Church Walk, Castlefields, Edisford, Whalley and Sabden facilities. The installation of these

systems has eliminated the visits to the sites to simply unlock and lock the facilities. A feature of the electrical locking is that the facilities can be readily made available to support the late night events, such as the fair at Castlefields and the Torchlight procession in Clitheroe town centre. This year's Pickwick Night (Whalley) and the Santa Dash (Church Walk) will be similarly supported.

- 3.3.3 Similar locking systems will be fitted in the Slaidburn and Dunsop bridge facilities which are currently left open overnight. This measure will improve the resilience of the facilities against subzero temperatures and provide night time protection against vandalism.
- 3.3.4 The role of the toilets "Guardians" at Downham, Sabden and Chipping has been enhanced to include a watching brief on the facilities, reporting if standards fall, or replenishing tissues and soaps as required. The frequency of the programmed visits of the Council cleaning staff is such that intervention by the guardians is minimal, if at all. The introduction of "local management" of the facility at Stonebridge, Longridge (adjoining the service station) has resulted in longer opening hours for this facility,
- 3.3.5 All these improvements will be accommodated within the ongoing reduced budget provision for the service.

3.4 Future Use of the Closed Facilities

- 3.4.1 The 8 closed sites continue to attract part or all of the residual property based charges that arise from National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR), electricity and water supply connections, and surface water and highway drainage connections. It is therefore important to dispose of the sites in order to eliminate future unnecessary charges which total approximately £7,000 p.a.

The five sites as listed below are suitable for disposal and it is estimated that the capital; receipt from the sale of the 5 sites would be in the region of £70,000 (District Valuer estimate).

Sites suitable for Disposal

- Gisburn
- Market Place (Longridge)
- Mellor
- Newton in Bowland
- Waddington

- 3.4.2 The remaining 3 sites (Berry Lane Longridge, Woone Lane & Brungerley) are part of Council owned larger landscaped areas and it would not be appropriate to sell off these plots. The actual structures or shells of the former toilets, all of which are in a poor condition, are of no operational use to the Council and hence the proposal to demolish the structures and to landscape the cleared sites to enhance the visual amenity of the areas.
- 3.4.3 It should be noted that Waddington Parish Council is considering the purchase and operation, at their cost, of the closed facility on the outskirts of Waddington. The Longridge Town Council is similarly investigating operating the facility on Berry Lane.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources

The disposal of the 5 sites will generate a one off capital receipt estimated at £70,000. The costs of the demolition and resulting landscaping of the sites at Berry Lane (Longridge) Woone lane and Brungerley is estimated to be £15,000. The completion of these works brings the provision of public toilet convenience in the borough to a more sustainable position.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – No particular implications arise out of this report although there may be legal implications or matters attached to the disposal of the individual sites that need further consideration.

- Political - No such implications arise out of this report

- Reputation –

The closure of the toilets has generated adverse responses to the detriment of the Council, but the disposal or treatment of the now redundant sites will open opportunities for alternative uses of the sites to be introduced which should improve the overall amenity of the areas.

- Equality & Diversity – No such implications arise out of this report

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 That members support the recommendations of the working group for the disposal of the sites.

5.2 That a report on the proposed disposals be submitted to the next meeting of the Policy and Finance committee

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List of Background papers:-

Community Services Committee 12 January 2012 (Min No.??)
Community Services Committee 13 September 2011 (Min No. 327)
Community Services Committee 8 November 2011 (Min No. 438)
Policy & Finance Committee 22 November 2011 (Min No.526)

For further information please ask for Terry Longden, extension 4523

REF: TL/CS/06:11:12

APPENDIX A

RIBBLE VALLEY COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME - MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Establishment Name	Location	M F Dis, B/C
Lower Buck PH	Edisiford Road, Waddington	MFD
Waddington Arms PH	Clitheroe Road, Waddington	MFD
Country Kitchen	Clitheroe Road, Waddington	MF
Emporium	Clitheroe (Moore Lane)	M F
Café Nero	Clitheroe TC	M/F
Tesco's	Clitheroe TC	M F D BC
Sainsbury's	Clitheroe (Moor Lane)	M F D BC
Homebase	Clitheroe (Moor Lane)	M F D BC
Atrium Café	Clitheroe Castle	M F D BC
Maxwell's	Clitheroe (King Street)	MFD
Swan and Royale	Clitheroe (Castle Street)	MFD
LCC Library	Clitheroe (Church Brow)	M F D
Callooh Callay	Clitheroe (Moor Lane)	MF
Brown Cow	Chatburn	MFD
The Black Bull Inn	Chatburn	MF
Shackletons	Chatburn	M D F
Sainsbury's	Inglewhite Road Longridge	MFD BC
Jay Z Bar	Berry Lane (mid) Longridge	M F
No.65 (café & deli)	Berry Lane (mid) Longridge	M F
Old Station Cafe	Berry Lane (mid) Longridge	M F
Bite 2 Eat (café)	Berry Lane (mid) Longridge	M F
LCC Library (Longridge)	Berry Lane (Top) Longridge	M F D
Durham Ox, Longridge	Berry Lane (Top) , Longridge	M F
White Bull	Market Place (Longridge)	M F
Ye Horns Inn,	Horns Lane, nr Longridge	M F
Old Oak, Longridge	Preston Road, Longridge	M F
Bull and Royal, Longridge	Derby Road, Longridge	M F
The Corporation Arms	Lower Road, Longridge	M F
Millstone	Mellor	M F D
Traders Arms	Mellor	M F
Sawley Arms	Mellor	M F D
Shireburn Arms	Hurst Green	M F D BC
LCC Library (Read)	41 Whalley Road, Read	M F
Texaco Garage	A59 Gisburn	MF
Blackbull Ribchester	Church St, Ribchester	M F
Ribchester Arms	Blackburn Road , Ribchester	M F
New Drop Inn	Old Clitheroe Road, Dutton	M F

Tosside Community Centre	Tosside	M F
Calves Head PH	Worston	M F
Bashall Barn	Twitter lane	MFDBC
The Plate Backridge Farm	Twitter Lane	M F D
MacDonald's	Barrow Brook Service area	M F D BC
Cooperative Service Station	Barrow Brook Service area	M F D
Primrose Service Station	Little Moor Clitheroe (South)	M F D
Black bull Old Langho	Old Lango	MFD
Broughton Inn, Broughton	Garstang Road Broughton	M F
Stags Head,	Whittingham Lane, Goosnargh	M F
Plough Inn, Grimsargh	Preston Road, Goosnargh	M F
Spring Wood Centre (LCC)	Spring Wood Whalley	M F
Beacon Fell Visitor Centre (LCC)	Beacon Fell	M F D

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Correct as of 25/10/12