

Date of Meeting: 27th April 2021

Public Toilets

1. Purpose of Report

To consider recommendations of the working group set up to review a holistic approach to public toilet provision in the town.

2. Background

Market Street toilets – In December 2020 the full-time member of staff who maintained the Market Street Toilets retired. To consider possible financial savings and improved/extended service provision the Town Council obtained proposals from external contractors to open, close and clean Market Street Toilets. Since December 2020 the cleaning of the toilets has been carried out by existing members of staff possible due to the current lockdown restrictions and reduced service delivery in other areas of the Town Council.

Snowhill (redundant) toilet block – Through an asset transfer the Town Council obtained Snowhill toilet block in 2012, with Cheshire East Council retaining the freehold of the land. Over recent years the Town Council has considered options for delivering a public toilet provision at the site including refurbishing the existing building or demolishing the block and erecting modular units in its place.

Corporate Plan – The Town Council's approved Corporate Plan contains an action to review the current provision of public toilets, introduce annual refurbishment programme, and carryout a feasibility study on former Snowhill site.

During recent consideration by Council for the future cleaning of Market Street toilets there were several ideas and concerns discussed by members preventing a final decision. The Clerk suggested a working group be set up to work with the Clerk on a holistic review of toilet provision in the town and return to full council with recommendations.

3. Considerations

The working group met on the 23rd March and firstly considered the current provision at Market Street, they reviewed the proposals from external contractors to clean Market Street and considered the historical information obtained in 2015 for the redevelopment at Snowhill.

The group discussed the issue of providing a 7 day a week toilet provision, and agreed to address this by improving the promotion of the Comfort Scheme. David Thomas also agreed to review the existing comfort scheme providers and what they have to offer, which could be promoted once lockdown restrictions are relaxed.

Having the background information, the group then discussed how future provision might look. They discussed whether there was a need for additional public toilets in the town and if so, what that service should look like.

The Facilities Manager, aware of the current financial constraints of the Town Council suggested the group could consider the benefits of incorporating the cleaning of Market Street toilets within the new Town Ranger role, as this had not yet been filled as the appointment had been on hold for the last 12 months due to the pandemic. The cleaning could also be supported by the Market Supervisor and Market Assistant. The Town Ranger role could replace the full-time cleaner who retired in December with the added value of having additional duties to benefit the town and Council further (on the same pay grade as the cleaner), and would save on external contractor cleaning fees.

There were varying views on the approach with Snowhill, and a suggestion was made for the development of a business case. The Clerk suggested in preparing a business case evidence could be obtained through a resident survey and a footfall count of the Market Street Toilets, which the group supported. The survey could include a number of options including a “do nothing” approach. As there has been no additional cost associated with installing a footfall counter at Market Street toilets, this has already been installed.

Following the working group meeting the Clerk has also considered the benefit of not only surveying the residents but also the key stakeholders of the town such as local businesses/traders and other service providers including the Museum, and voluntary organisations like Nantwich in Bloom and Nantwich Partnership, all of which contributed to the vibrancy of the town.

4. Recommendations

4.1 That Council incorporate the opening/closing and cleaning of Market Street Toilets within the Town Ranger role supported by the Markets Supervisor and Assistant;

4.2 That the Facilities Manager review the existing Comfort Scheme provision and promotion;

4.3 A survey is carried out with all residents and key stakeholders as detailed in the report, the results of which will determine a business case for or against additional public toilet provision at Snowhill;

5. Financial Implications

There would be costs associated with the appointment of a Town Ranger, but this would be off-set against the savings from the retired cleaner or the appointment of external contractors to maintain Market Street Toilets, and has been budgeted for.

It would be too soon to determine toilet provision costs at Snowhill until the results of a survey are known. There would be a small cost associated with preparation and distribution of a survey, but there would be no financial costs in preparing a business case as this would be done in-house.

6. Equalities Impact

In considering the possible future public toilet provision at Snowhill the Town Council will need to ensure the provision does not disadvantage any protected groups from using them. The existing Market Street toilets do currently provide for all disadvantaged groups. The different groups covered by the Equality Act are referred to as protected characteristics: disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), and age.

7. Personnel Implications

The current arrangements for cleaning Market Street toilets can be covered by existing staff. However, once normal services at the Town Council resume following the easing of lockdown restrictions there would be a significant impact on staff to incorporate the opening/closing and cleaning of the toilets within their substantive duties.

8. Environmental implications

Any future decision on Snowhill would need to consider the environmental impact.

9. Consultation

It is recommended that a survey is carried out with all residents and key stakeholders.

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