
CARDIFF COUNCIL PUBLIC CONVENIENCE STRATEGY 2016

Purpose of Report

1. To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the Cardiff Council Public Convenience Strategy 2016 and provide feedback before it is considered at Cabinet.

Background

2. In March 2016 Welsh Government declined to adopt the adoption of the Public Health (Wales) Bill. Notwithstanding, the Council has a continued ethical and operational commitment towards public convenience provision in the City. Including the establishment of a strategy to address the toileting needs of the community, improving both the standards and availability of public conveniences under the local authority's control. To address this requirement the Council has created the 'Cardiff Council Public Convenience Strategy 2016'; a copy of this document is attached to this report as **Appendix 1**.
3. **Appendix 1** details a number of key concerns around the provision of public conveniences, these include:
 - The various partnership approaches which can be taken in the provision of public conveniences;
 - The adoption of best practice;
 - The use of new technologies; and
 - How the access to public conveniences will be communicated in future.

4. The 'Cardiff Council Public Convenience Strategy 2016' (**Appendix 1**) is the first step being taken by the Council to address the new legislative requirement. The document sets out a series of recommendations which need to be considered before a formal timetable of plans is established. The hope is that the approved plans will help realise the Council's aspiration of providing good quality public convenience facilities for all residents and visitors.

Cardiff's Public Convenience History

5. Historically, the management of public conveniences has been spilt across four of the Council's service areas, these are:
 - Street Cleansing – they have managed the city centre public conveniences;
 - Parks – they have managed the public conveniences in Cardiff's parks;
 - Bereavement Services – they have managed the public conveniences in cemeteries; and
 - The Harbour Authority – they are responsible for the public conveniences in Cardiff Bay.

Appendix 1 provides an overarching strategy for all Council service areas to ensure consistent service delivery.

6. Public conveniences provide infrastructure necessary to facilitate the enjoyment of the city by visitors and residents. They can make a significant impact upon the comfort of individuals and families who visit public spaces in the city and their perception of the city as a desirable place to visit and live.
7. Although the proposed Welsh Government, Public Health (Wales) Bill, Part 6 focuses on 'Provision of Toilets', currently a local authority provision of public conveniences is not a statutory duty. Increasingly the Council faces challenges to maintain standards of toilet provision, maintenance and cleaning due to limited funding.
8. A 2007, Public Conveniences survey found that 75% of respondents found public conveniences to be poor or very poor across Cardiff; in particular the survey identified that 48% of public conveniences in the city centre were poor or very poor.

9. Changing demographics, human activity in the city and the regulatory provision of these facilities in private businesses (for example, hotels and shopping precincts) has impacted on the demand for public conveniences. This now means that to meet public demand / expectations many private businesses are now providing public conveniences which meet the highest of standards; this generally means that they are modern, very clean, accessible and hygienic. As a consequence there is a view that the historic role of providing public conveniences is less of an imperative. Local authorities now mainly provide public conveniences where they create demand as service providers themselves, for example, in libraries and community hubs.
10. The reduction in the Council's public convenience provision has over the last 10 to 15 years been further impacted in by major infrastructure development and regeneration of many locations. For example, many private retailers now provide public conveniences as part of their developments as a consequence of building regulations. This type of quality provision is designed to satisfy the demands of a wide ranging demographic of customers; including those with a range of disabilities, parents with children and older people.
11. Cardiff's position in terms of the provision of public conveniences is not unique. In an attempt to address public convenience issues across the United Kingdom the government produced a document in 2008 titled 'Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets – A Strategic Guide'; this aimed to provide a blueprint for local public toilet provision. Furthermore, whilst adopted the Welsh Government; Public Health (Wales) Bill, expresses under Part 6 'Provision of Toilets' a number of duties that local authorities must meet regarding public convenience provision.

Aims & Objectives of the Strategy

12. The aim of the Strategy is to meet the needs of residents and visitors to the city by reviewing and accounting for the quality and quantity of public conveniences in Cardiff, their usage, maintenance, and opening hours. Broadly the strategy seeks to achieve the following:

- Providing a unified holistic Council approach to a strategy for all the Council's public conveniences which are implemented and supported corporately;
- Creating a unified approach to high quality public convenience and sanitary provision across the Council;
- Generation of guide lines for the integration of public accessible facilities into any new council building development where practicable;
- Providing a selection of clean, safe, accessible and high standard public conveniences with a 'home from home' experience when using both Council and partner facilities;
- Provision of public conveniences by the Council and its partners to support activities where people are encouraged to stay for long periods in excess of three hours;
- Provision of public conveniences to support events including the consumption of food and beverages: ideally supported in partnership by the private sector and retailers that benefit from customers comfort.

Strategy Key Recommendations

13. The strategy sets out a series of 17 areas for consideration; each of these are set out as an issue / opportunity and followed up by a number of recommendations for each area. Full detail of these considerations can be seen in **Appendix 1**.
14. The list of considerations includes:

Provision;	Access and inclusion;
Legal position;	Cleanliness standards & maintenance;
Council position;	Funding potential;
Revised opening hours;	Awareness and partnership;
Improve the offer / availability / use of	Marketing & sponsorship;
existing Council facilities;	Public consultation;
Community toilet scheme;	Planning;
Night time economy;	Antisocial behaviour and Events.

15. A summary briefing on the strategy identifies the most important considerations and describes what they aim to achieve, these include:
- **Improve the offer / availability / use of existing Council facilities** – Mapping of existing provision. Conduct a mapping exercise of existing provision within the Cardiff Council offering.
 - **Provision** – Improved communications to the public via new media will be a key driver for change and information relay regarding provision and quality; web sites and apps, such as ‘public toilet map’ and ‘looseker’ are already used by Cardiff to list the Council facilities could be promoted to visitors. Best practice and innovative ideas should be explored, such as a case study of the SatLav text messaging service operated by Westminster City Council, which makes use of mobile phone technology to help the public locate their closest accessible toilets as well as numerous ‘apps’ that could be explored to help visitors find the nearest toilet facilities.
 - **Legal Position** – Whilst un-adopted, under the Public Health (Wales) Bill; the Council is ethically required to develop a strategy for public conveniences, independently and or in partnership with the public sector. It is recommended that all elements of the un-adopted Bill be accounted for in advance of any potential adoption / statute.
 - **Legal Position** – Improved communications to the public via new media will be a key driver for change and information relay regarding provision and quality. By way of example in the high footfall areas of Cardiff (Bay & City Centre) there are hundreds of toilets. The Council will work with retailers and food outlets to signpost their facilities better in partnership.
 - **Unified Approach** - Led by City Operations, a unified approach to high quality public convenience provision across the city should be implemented in partnership with other directorates, for example, communities. Using existing and growing provision (for example, community hubs & libraries) based within community facilities would satisfy upcoming Bills and gaps in service provision / availability, augmenting services based within City Operations responsibility.

- **Community Toilet Scheme** – Partnership Offering / Provision. The Council will benefit by working in partnership to encourage a wide range of premises to make their facilities available to the wider public. (Currently there are over 100 toilet facilities provided by the private sector in the City Centre and Bay area).
- **Access and Inclusion** – Ensuring that ‘Changing Places Specification WCs’ are considered for installing in all Cardiff Council properties, but in particular those having a public function, for example, hubs, shared facilities, schools and parks / leisure. Within this consideration the business case should allow for future proofing, for example, installing appropriate drainage and tanking if not hoists and sanitary ware.
- **Cleanliness, Standards & Maintenance** – Defined cleanliness standard for Cardiff council public conveniences. This should be used to establish / provide uniformity and allow for efficiencies in cleansing, procurement and maintenance; Compliancy. Ensure that facilities are compliant to Part M Building Regulations as a minimum standard; In accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 the Council will also aim to cater for elderly users and those with special medical conditions, paying attention to the distribution of public conveniences and the frequency, distance between them but importantly the specification.

16. **Appendix 1** concludes that public conveniences which are managed by Cardiff Council are in a wide ranging state of repair, and are often of poor quality, poorly maintained and resourced. It is only through three key drivers that public conveniences can be provided in Cardiff to a standard demanded by an international capital city, these are:

- Working partnership across council and externally;
- Communication and information;
- Availability / frequency and quality.

17. In addition to the ‘Cardiff Council Public Convenience Strategy 2016’ (**Appendix 1**) an Equality Impact Assessment for the ‘Cardiff Council Public Convenience Strategy 2016’ has been attached to this report as **Appendix 2**.

Way Forward

18. Officers from the City Operations Directorate have been invited to attend to give a presentation and to answer Members' questions. The meeting will provide the Environmental Scrutiny Committee with the opportunity to scrutinise and comment on the content of the Draft Public Conveniences Strategy prior to it being considered at Cabinet.

Legal Implications

19. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

20. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- Consider the information in the report and appendices, and provided at the meeting;
- Decide whether they would like to make any comments to the Cabinet;
- Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

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