

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 22 April 2021

Future Provision of Public Conveniences

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Transport and Environment Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Approves the approach for the future provision of public conveniences in Edinburgh set out in paragraphs 4.3 - 4.10;
 - 1.1.2 Notes the assessment of the existing facilities and gaps in existing provision as set out in Appendix 1;
 - 1.1.3 Notes that it is intended to focus initially on provision of public conveniences in premier parks which do not currently have facilities;
 - 1.1.4 Notes the estimated investment required to create new or refurbish public conveniences; and
 - 1.1.5 Notes the requested information on reopening all of the Council's existing public conveniences while the COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.

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Future Provision of Public Conveniences

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out plans for future provision of public conveniences in Edinburgh and seeks approval to progress with focusing on ensuring there are appropriate facilities in premier parks in the first instance.
- 2.2 The report also provides an update on the costs and associated arrangements required to reopen all of the Council's existing public conveniences from April 2021, as requested by Council on 12 March 2021.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [6 October 2020](#), the Policy and Sustainability Committee noted the approach set out for developing a public convenience strategy and approved commencement of assessment of possible locations for new/or improved public convenience facilities.
- 3.2 Committee also:
 - 3.2.1 Noted that communication of community facilities was key to any community toilet scheme and agreed to a revised Community Scheme, including communications and signage campaign, being included within the public convenience strategy;
 - 3.2.2 Agreed to provide a review of the facilities within the Community Toilet Scheme.
- 3.3 On 16 December 2020, the Council's Equalities Working Group requested that the public convenience strategy fully considers equalities and that access to conveniences across the city is considered in the strategy.
- 3.4 At its meeting on 12 March 2021, Council agreed that this report should include costings on reopening facilities in both a COVID context and as part of the wider public convenience strategy.

4. Main report

4.1 As set out in the report to Committee in October 2020, the age and design of the Council's public conveniences means many are no longer fit for purpose, nor are they necessarily in the best locations for residents and visitors.

4.2 Whilst public toilets are not a statutory service, it is generally expected that there will be facilities in areas where people are likely to visit or spend a sustained amount of time.

Future Provision of Public Conveniences

4.3 As the availability of public conveniences often makes an area more viable to visit for a longer period of time, it is proposed to focus the Council's provision in future to the following areas:

4.3.1 Premier parks;

4.3.2 At locations which are promoted as places for a higher number of visitors (e.g. Portobello beach or the Pentland Hills Regional Park);

4.3.3 Each of Edinburgh's official town centres; and

4.3.4 Travel centres where people arrive after journeys on which facilities are typically limited.

4.4 The October report highlighted that new or refurbished facilities should:

4.4.1 Provide an opportunity to introduce features that reduce the spread of viruses (e.g. non-touch flushes and taps), reduce anti-social behaviour and potentially provide additional space for productive use which will add value in terms of either revenue or utility value of the building;

4.4.2 Provide gender neutral toilets which are easy to clean and allow easier management of physical distancing (given that all toilets would be individual contained units) whilst maintaining proper privacy and dignity and are cost effective;

4.4.3 Allow charging to be considered, with a contactless entry approach;

4.4.4 Ensure facilities are fitted with sustainable features, are Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant and provide Changing Places facilities where possible; and

4.4.5 Provide an opportunity to assess possible addition of space for a concession, such as a small café to allow for enhanced maintenance funding and more footfall around the facilities.

Premier Parks and Higher Footfall Locations

4.5 For premier parks and locations where footfall is expected to be higher, it is proposed to either:

4.5.1 Create new toilet premises;

4.5.2 To adapt current buildings to allow toilets to be installed; or

4.5.3 To upgrade existing facilities to meet with the standards expected.

- 4.6 For the Pentland Hills Regional Park, their Committee recently applied for funding for the purchase of accessible toilets. These facilities have been designed to meet the standard expected (as set out in paragraph 4.4). If funding is approved, it is anticipated that a small fee could be introduced for use of the toilets to help to meet the annual cost of maintenance.

Town Centres

- 4.7 In town centres, it is considered that purpose-built toilet blocks with small cafés would provide unnecessary additional competition to local businesses, and gap sites are likely to be difficult to find.
- 4.8 It is therefore suggested that the approach taken would be to include provision of public conveniences within the multi-service 'hubs' which will be created in town centres as part of the 20 minute neighbourhood approach. This will particularly support disabled and elderly citizens looking to access Council services.

Travel Centres

- 4.9 Public conveniences are already established in the city's main travel centres – Edinburgh Waverley and Haymarket Train Stations and Edinburgh Bus Station. The facilities within the train stations are maintained by Network Rail.
- 4.10 It is proposed to consider communication and signage towards these locations as part of the wider strategy for communicating the locations of public conveniences in the city.

Additional Considerations

- 4.11 The [City of Edinburgh District Council Order Confirmation Act 1991](#) Part VI (which is an Act of Parliament) specifies what buildings can be erected on The Meadows, Bruntsfield Links, Leith Links, Inverleith Park, Princes Street Gardens and Calton Hill. Whilst public conveniences are included in this list, ancillary uses such as cafes are not.
- 4.12 This may limit the commercial opportunities available within the premier parks if new facilities are required. If a café is to be included in these premier parks, developing existing buildings (within the current footprint) is likely to be the only option.
- 4.13 A further consideration will be the number of toilet cubicles required, as it will be essential to balance the cost to create and run the facilities with providing a sufficient number of cubicles for busy times. The Council currently has people counting information in some existing facilities and it is proposed to base the assessment of future requirements on the footfall data gathered.
- 4.14 There may be a desire for other local communities to have toilets in their local parks. It is proposed that these be assessed on a case by case basis and other opportunities explored where possible (for example community ownership) in order to ensure that these facilities can be maintained on a sustained basis.

- 4.15 There are some locations that have more than one toilet currently (e.g. Princes Street Gardens) or where locations fall into the seaside and town centre categories (e.g. South Queensferry and Portobello). It is proposed to utilise footfall data to establish if these facilities all continue to be required, or whether there is scope to consolidate these facilities into single sites.
- 4.16 It should be noted that there are other public conveniences or access to other facilities in other locations in the city, but this analysis is focused on the facilities which are owned or managed by the Council.

Analysis of Existing Provision

- 4.17 An assessment of the current provision of the publicly accessible toilets (public conveniences and Community Toilet Scheme), in terms of how they fit with the plans set out above, has identified where:
- 4.17.1 There are gaps in quality;
- 4.17.2 Facilities are no longer fit for purpose; and
- 4.17.3 There is little or no provision currently.
- 4.18 The details of this analysis are shown in Appendix 1. For the purposes of this analysis, all of the existing facilities have been considered irrespective of whether they are currently open or closed (due to COVID-19).
- 4.19 The analysis shows that almost all of the Council's current facilities require investment to align them to the priorities set out above.

Colinton Public Convenience

- 4.20 The analysis of existing provision shows that the public convenience at Colinton sits outside the terms of the proposed plans. It is suggested that this location be discussed with local stakeholders to consider whether there is potential for a community asset transfer. If this is not possible, then a further decision would need to be made by Committee on whether to maintain the facility (outside of the plans for future provision) or close it.

Community Toilet Scheme

- 4.21 The Community Toilet Scheme utilises local buildings (such as libraries and leisure centres) and a small network of local businesses to offer the use of toilets within their premises for the general public to use (in the case of local businesses, without the need to purchase anything). Generally, these are in local town centres.
- 4.22 Businesses currently included within the Community Toilet Scheme receive an annual payment of £500.
- 4.23 However, it is proposed in future to phase out the business element of the Community Toilet Scheme, as multi-hubs within neighbourhoods become established. The Council will continue to promote where Council buildings have toilets which are available for public use.
- 4.24 In the meantime, it is proposed to continue to offer the Community Toilet Scheme and improve communications with businesses and citizens regarding this initiative.

Consideration will also be given to how local signage can be improved to allow residents and visitors to locate Community Toilet facilities. This work will obviously not be possible until such a time as the COVID-19 restrictions on the use of businesses allow this.

Use of Public Spaces for Events and Filming

- 4.25 The Culture and Communities Committee on [16 March 2021](#) considered an update on the engagement on the Public Spaces Management Plan.
- 4.26 A working group will now progress with developing a guidance document for the use of public spaces for events and filming and will consider arrangements for public conveniences as part of their work. The output of this work will be presented to Culture and Communities Committee on 14 September 2021.

Re-opening Public Conveniences which have been closed due to COVID-19

- 4.27 In response to COVID-19, the Scottish Government published [guidance](#) on the opening of public and customer toilets on 27 June 2020. At the time of writing this report, this guidance remains valid. This guidance recognises that the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is high in public conveniences given the low levels of natural light, lack of ventilation, the number of surfaces to touch and the purpose of a toilet. These risks continue to be deemed by officers to be higher due to the age and design of public conveniences in the city.
- 4.28 On 12 March 2021, Council agreed funding to maintain the opening of seven public conveniences, which were re-opened in July 2020 with additional measures in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission within these facilities.
- 4.29 The report to Policy and Sustainability Committee in October 2020 set out the measures which would be required to reopen the remaining nine public conveniences which are currently closed.
- 4.30 To reopen the remaining nine facilities with the additional measures (as set out in Appendix 2) which are in place in the facilities which are currently open is estimated to cost around £6,300 per week.
- 4.31 Further, there will also be costs associated with additional signage, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), regulatory testing and cleaning supplies as well as for repairs to the fabric of some of the buildings given many have now been closed for over a year.
- 4.32 As detailed in October some facilities, such as those at the West End of Princes Street Gardens, cannot currently be re-opened as it is not possible to put adequate physical distancing measures in place at this location. Further facilities closed prior to COVID-19 will also not be re-opened.
- 4.33 However, it is expected that the Scottish Government will take a cautious approach to easing COVID-19 measures over the coming months.
- 4.34 At the time of writing, the Pentland Hills Regional Park are considering applying for funding from NatureScot to install temporary public conveniences within the Regional Park in time for the spring/summer season 2021. It is anticipated that any

funding could be used for the hire of facilities and for the on-going cleaning for the spring/summer visitor season.

- 4.35 In summer and autumn 2020 residents living around the Meadows reported experiencing anti-social behaviour, with people urinating in public places, especially in good weather. It is intended to continue with the measures put in place previously to support residents and to work with Police Scotland on this by, increasing the opening hours of public conveniences during good weather (this is dependent on staff agreeing to work overtime, often at short notice, so is not always possible) and increased cleaning in the area.
- 4.36 Whilst not specific to public conveniences the Scottish Government has outlined some broad timings for Scotland moving into Level 1 at the start of June and further relaxation across areas of the economy and society and moving into Level 0 from the end of June.
- 4.37 As the guidance is updated, officers will review this to determine whether the current measures for public conveniences can be eased and whether an approach of enhanced cleaning could be adopted.
- 4.38 In addition, as the Council plans for reopening of Libraries and Community Centres and works closely with Edinburgh Leisure on the reopening of their centres, consideration will be given to the reopening of their toilets for use by the public.
- 4.39 Officers have previously reviewed alternatives to using the Council's existing facilities, such as 'portaloos'. However, with the additional measures required and/or significant additional cost for the hire of 'portaloos' these have not been progressed.
- 4.40 Other Local Authorities have taken a wide range of approaches to their public conveniences. These range from having all public conveniences remaining closed, through a mixed approach (as has been taken in Edinburgh), to some where all of the Council run facilities are open (with either additional staff or enhanced cleaning). It should also be noted that not all facilities are buildings, as is the case in Edinburgh.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If Committee approves the plans for future provision, as set out above, the initial focus will be on exploring funding and/or opportunities to work with partners to ensure appropriate provision of public conveniences in premier parks which do not currently have any facilities, such as Leith Links and Inverleith Park, whilst acknowledging the restrictions outline in Section 4.7. In addition, discussions would begin with local stakeholders on the future of the Colinton public convenience.
- 5.2 The approach set out in the report aligns closely with the Thriving Green Spaces project which was approved by the Culture and Communities Committee on [26 January 2021](#)
- 5.3 . This project is currently in its development phase, collecting and collating information, data, ideas, opinions and evidence across a range of workstreams, but

the importance of public toilets will be taken into consideration when determining it's focus areas.

- 5.4 The guidance being developed for use of public spaces for events and filming will include details of expectations in respect of public conveniences.
- 5.5 The requirement for public conveniences will be incorporated into the work being undertaken to identify local 'hubs' as part of the 20 minute neighbourhood approach.
- 5.6 Officers will continue to review the Scottish Government guidance for public conveniences and will assess the impact of any changes on the existing arrangements for public conveniences in the city.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The creation of any new (or refurbished) toilet facilities will require capital funding. It is estimated that around £250,000 would be sufficient to create a purpose-built toilet facility although the exact costs will depend the location, scale and whether there is an existing building which can be used. A similar sum may be required for refurbished buildings depending on the scale of changed required.
- 6.2 Capital funding of up to £5m will need to be identified in order to deliver all of the new or improved facilities outlined in Appendix 1. If the plans for future provision are approved, officers will commence work to identify external funding sources that help deliver this investment.
- 6.3 Where new toilet blocks are created in parks, it is proposed to include concessions within the facility and two models of maintenance could be considered to address on-going revenue costs – either the concessionaire could be service tenants who are responsible for the maintenance of the toilets; or the lease costs could off-set the running costs of the toilet facility.
- 6.4 Where toilets within Council buildings/hubs are used then the additional revenue costs will be marginal as they will already be being maintained by Facilities Management. Any such revenue costs would be considered as part of the business case for each building.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 An interim integrated impact assessment has been undertaken. This has identified the key topics/subject areas that need to be consulted on when new toilets are being considered and the facilities at each location determined.
- 7.2 A consultation will be undertaken in line with Scottish Government guidelines at every new/refurbished toilet facility.
- 7.3 Many of the Council's public conveniences are not compliant with the current DDA requirements. Any refurbished or new facilities should all be compliant with the current DDA requirements and there is an opportunity to include Changing Places at these locations to ensure that they are accessible for all.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Edinburgh's [Public Parks and Gardens Strategy 2006](#).

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1: Analysis of current public convenience provision aligned to proposed plans for future provision
- 9.2 Appendix 2: Measures required to reopen public conveniences during the COVID-19 pandemic

Appendix 1 – Analysis of current public convenience provision aligned to proposed plans for future provision

Current Location	Aligned to plans for future provision	Accessible toilets	Assessment for Future Provision
Princes Street Gardens – West End	Premier Park	Yes	Maintain current facility: Yes Investment required: Yes
Princes Street Gardens – Ross Bandstand	Premier Park	Yes	Maintain current facility: Yes Investment required: Yes
The Meadows - Hope Park	Premier Park	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes
Bruntsfield Links	Premier Park	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes
Saughton Park – Courtyard	Premier Park	Changing Place facility	Maintain current facility: Yes Investment required: No
Pentland Hills – Harlaw	Higher Visitor Numbers	No	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes
Lauriston Castle	Higher Visitor Numbers	No	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes
Portobello – Pipe Lane	Higher Visitor Numbers	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes
Portobello – Bath Street	Town Centre	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: yes Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
South Queensferry – Hawes Pier	Higher Visitor Numbers	No	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes
South Queensferry – High Street	Town Centre	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: yes Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
Cramond	Higher Visitor Numbers	No	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes

Castlehill – 386 Castlehill	Higher Visitor Numbers	No	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
Castle Terrace – NCP car park	Higher Visitor Numbers	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: No
Leith/Leith Walk – Taylor Gardens	Town Centre	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: Yes Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
Stockbridge – Hamilton Place	Town Centre	yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: yes Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
Nicolson Street – Nicolson Square	Town Centre	Yes	Maintain current facility: No Investment required: yes

Toilet locations which do not align with proposed plans for future provision

Colinton	300 A Colinton Road
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Identified Gaps in Future Provision.

Location	Strategic Location	Facilities Required
Inverleith Park	Premier Park	Yes
Leith Links	Premier Park	Yes
Calton Hill	Premier Park	No, seek access to toilets in Gallery
Corstorphine	Town Centre	Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
Morningside/Bruntfield	Town Centre	Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme

Tollcross	Town Centre	Align with 20 minute neighbourhood programme
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Appendix 2: Measures required to reopen public conveniences during the COVID-19 pandemic

There are currently measures and costs associated with reopening public conveniences include:

- Adequate staffing to maintain public health;
- Legionella flushing (as the facilities have not been used for so long);
- Installation of public health signage;
- Deep cleaning of facilities; and
- Minor remedial repairs to enable the facility to reopen (e.g. installation of hand sanitiser dispensers, hand towel boxes, replacing toilet seats); and
- Internal adjustments (e.g. closing cubicles if more than one to maintain physical distancing).