

## **Cabinet Report**

### **Title:**

All Saints Toilets – Review of Service Provision

### **Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

This is not a key decision, but has been included on the Forward Plan

### **Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Damien Wilson, Strategic Director, Regeneration & Environment

### **Report Author(s)**

Kim Phillips - Catering & Facilities Services Manager  
Bernadette Rushton – Retail Investment Manager

### **Ward(s) Affected**

All

### **Summary**

The public toilets in All Saints Square are managed by the Council and provide a service for the general public visiting the Town Centre.

The cost of the facility is not covered by the income generated by entrance charges. In recent years employee costs have increased whilst income has decreased. The budget setting report approved by the Council on 2 March 2016 agreed a saving of £6,000 which was to be achieved by the installation of a turn-style system creating an unattended facility. This is no longer a feasible option following a full surveyor's investigation which identified that it would not allow accompanied/assisted adult access to the toilets or access for wheelchairs and some child carriers. In addition an initial consultation with Town Centre businesses identified that there were significant concerns regarding safety and security if the facility became unattended.

Alternative options to reduce the budget pressure have been considered and consultation has been undertaken with users and businesses to assess their feasibility.

The report presents the findings of the consultation and makes recommendations regarding the future provision of the facility and ability to achieve the required savings.

## **Recommendations**

1. That a Public Toilet Facility in All Saints Square continues to be provided by the Council.
2. That an increase to the entrance charge of 10p (raising the charge up to 30p) for adults only be approved.
3. That the opening times of the facility be reduced by 2 hours per day, from 08:30-17:00 to 09:30-16:00.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 - Map of current facilities

## **Background Papers**

Summary of consultation results

Percentage usage July/August 2016

Equality Impact Assessment

## **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

## **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Main report: All Saints Toilets – review of service provision**

### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 That a Public Toilet Facility in All Saints Square continues to be provided by the Council.
- 1.2 That an increase to the entrance charge of 10p (raising the charge up to 30p) for adults only be approved.
- 1.3 That the opening times of the facility be reduced by 2 hours per day, from 08:30-17:00 to 09:30-16:00.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The public toilet facility located at All Saints' Square is one of 5 toilet facilities in the town centre as outlined in Appendix 1. It is the only facility operated by a full-time attendant and is the most centrally located. The charge is currently 20p for adults and free for children (under 10) and along with Rotherham Interchange (Managed by South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive) is one of two chargeable facilities.
- 2.2 The continued provision of public toilet facilities in town and city centres is highly sensitive, with other locations publically debating the need to balance the ongoing provision of facilities for visitors, families and more vulnerable members of the community with the management of budget pressures. Decisions made over maintaining public facilities in other areas are highly dependent on the local circumstances.
- 2.3 In Rotherham there is a clear aim to ensure that the town centre offers a family-friendly shopping destination (which in turn drives footfall and spend), particularly given that the facilities at competing centres are plentiful and the need to widen the appeal of the town centre is recognised. In acknowledging the current profile of our existing shopper base, the toilets provide a valued facility for the more vulnerable members of the community, including the elderly. The importance of having good quality well maintained toilets is evident.
- 2.4 Sheffield no longer has any Council owned facilities still operating with the remaining facilities closing some years ago but with a plethora of bars, restaurants & department stores, there are several other options for visitors to the centre at any time of day or night. In Doncaster and Barnsley the toilets are provided free of charge. Any closures in these boroughs have not been the Town Centre facilities but rather those located in the outlying areas.
- 2.5 In Rotherham there are limited opportunities for users to find alternative facilities in the vicinity of All Saints' Square particularly given the independent businesses have limited toilet provision and it would be unrealistic to ask them to open their facilities to non-customers as per Community Toilet Schemes introduced elsewhere.

- 2.6 An initial option to install a turn-style and remove the attendant (employee) cost for this provision was considered however this option is no longer feasible as it does not allow accompanied/assisted adults access to the toilets or access for wheelchairs and some child carriers. In addition initial consultation with Town Centre businesses raised significant concerns with an unattended facility attracting anti-social behaviour.
- 2.7 Given the sensitivities of the subject it was felt that a full consultation process with existing users of the facility and town centre businesses was required. A full summary of the consultation is available as a background paper.
- 2.8 The consultation showed that public toilets are of importance to all groups and a significant proportion are dissatisfied with a perceived under-provision of facilities. Users are largely supportive of an increase in charging, particularly given that cleanliness and safety & security are their main priorities when choosing public toilets. Businesses are not supportive of increasing charges. The toilets are clearly valued by vulnerable groups including the elderly, those with mobility issues and those with children.
- 2.9 Consideration of the usage over July and August 2016 is available as a background paper. The headlines for the analysis show that:
- The average income per day over the period analysed is £21.35 although the projected figure for the year is £27.00 per day.
  - 86% of usage takes place between 9:30 and 15:30
  - 6% of customers use the facilities before 09.30
  - 8% of customers use the facilities after 15.30

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 The provision of the Public Toilet in All Saints Square is a budget pressure of £21,000. Employee costs have increased following living wage implementation and the income has reduced. The budget pressure has been met from other Facilities Services budget surplus for the past two years, this is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve and the reason for the need to remove/reduce the pressure.
- 3.2 An initial proposal to improve the budget pressure position through the installation of a turn-style has been discounted following a full survey as the option would not allow accompanied/assisted adult access to the toilets or access for wheelchairs or some child carriers due to insufficient space to accommodate a gated barrier alongside the turnstile. The option produced an Equality Impact Assessment which was not supportive. In addition, initial consultation with Town Centre businesses raised significant concerns with an unattended facility attracting anti-social behaviour.

- 3.3 In order to identify viable options for the reduction in the budget pressure consultation was undertaken by the Retail Investment Team. An outcome of the consultation was an indication that an increase in charges would be supported by the majority of existing users with 30p being deemed acceptable to 77% of those respondents who were supportive of a price increase. The business community however were largely unsupportive of any increase in charges.
- 3.4 The percentage of use figures indicates that 86% of visits take place on each day between 9:30 and 15:30. Discussion with the attendant have indicated that the users of the facility 08:30 to 09:30 are ambient users who could use other facilities (predominantly those working in the town). Using the same source of information, the users of the facility after 16:00 vary significantly with numbers. The detailed analysis of usage has taken place over the summer months, the attendants have indicated that during winter months the usage from 16:00 to 17:00 reduces further.

#### **4. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 4.1 Option 1: Remove the Council provision of Public Toilets in All Saints Square
- 4.2 This option would not be supported by businesses, town centre shoppers and current users and would be directly opposed to the consultation outcomes; however it would remove the budget pressure completely. This option is not the recommended option.
- 4.3 Option 2: Installation of a turn-style and remove the attendant service
- 4.4 A full structural survey identified that this option would not allow accompanied/assisted adult access to the toilets or access for wheelchairs or some child carriers due to insufficient space to accommodate a gated barrier alongside the turnstile. The option produced an Equality Impact Assessment which was not supportive. In addition, initial consultation with Town Centre businesses raised significant concerns with an unattended facility attracting anti-social behaviour. This is not the recommended option.
- 4.5 Option 3: Make no changes to current arrangements
- 4.6 The consultation indicated support for the service to continue and local businesses did not want to see any changes to the charges. The budget pressure for 2016/17 is projected at £21,000 and this would remain. This is not the recommended option.
- 4.7 Option 4: Increase the charge for adults by 10p (from 20p to 30p)
- 4.8 The consultation with users of the facility indicated that 75% would support an increase in charges. It should also be noted that of this 75%, 77% indicated the maximum they would be prepared to pay is 30p.

- 4.9 An increase in entrance charge from 20p to 30p would generate an increase in income of £4,000 based on the same level of custom, which would still leave a projected annual budget pressure of £17,000. There has not been an increase in charges for the uses of the facility for 5 years. This is not the recommended option
- 4.10 Option 5: (Recommended Option) Increase the charge for adults by 10p (from 20p to 30p) and reduce the opening hours
- 4.11 The consultation with users of the facility indicated that 75% would support an increase in charges. It should also be noted that of this 75%, 77% indicated the maximum they would be prepared to pay is 30p.
- 4.12 An increase in entrance charge from 20p to 30p for the reduced opening times would generate an increase income of £2,500. There has not been an increase in charges for the users of the facility for 5 years.
- 4.13 The percentage of use figures indicates that 86% of visits take place on each day between 9:30 and 15:30. The budget pressure is significant and therefore it is proposed that the opening hours for All Saints Toilets be reduced by two hours per day to 09:30 to 16:00 (from 08:30 to 17:00) to accommodate the period of high customer demand. These change will generate a saving on employee costs of £6,500. This option will reduce the annual budget pressure to £12,000. This budget pressure will be funded from other budgets within Facilities Services detailed in section 7.5. This is the Recommended Option.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 Consultation was undertaken with town centre shoppers, existing toilet users and with town centre businesses. The findings are available as a background paper. The headlines as follows:
- The vast majority of businesses and existing users feel that toilet provision in the town centre is 'very important' or 'important' (over 90% in both consultation groups)
  - 43 % of shoppers are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with public toilets in the town centre (compared to 31% that were very satisfied or very satisfied).
  - Similarly 35% of businesses stated they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with public toilet provision (compared to 20% that were satisfied or very satisfied)
  - 50 % of existing toilet users feel there is adequate provision of toilet facilities within the town whilst 48% feel there is an under-provision
  - 63% of businesses feel there is an under provision of toilet facilities within the town

- The cleanliness and safety & security (owing to the fact the toilets are attended) are the two most important factors for existing users in choosing the facility to visit
- The majority of existing users are regular customers with 88% visiting at least once a week
- 75% of respondents (existing users) would support an increase in charges if this meant a similar provision was maintained at All Saints' Square
- 77% of those that supported a price increase and who noted the maximum price they would be willing to pay stated 30p or above
- 74% of businesses would not support an increase in charges
- If the toilets were unavailable the majority of existing users would opt to visit the facilities at Rotherham Interchange with a smaller number choosing facilities in nearby shops/ cafes or Rotherham Markets
- Qualitative comments received from existing users clearly highlight the importance of the facility in terms of providing a safe and accessible facility for vulnerable groups (including the elderly, those with mobility issues and those with children).

5.2 Information was collated regarding other local authority practices as referenced in paragraph 2.4 of this report.

5.3 Analysis of the times of use and income generated during July and August were considered as part of the process to inform the outcome of this report.

5.4 An Equality Impact Assessment on the original proposal identified the need for consultation with specific user/impact groups. Following the outcome of the consultation a review of the EIA has not raised any further concerns.

5.5 The Council employees located at All Saints Toilets (attendants) have been involved in the consultation process and have received updates on a regular basis regarding the proposals. Staff knowledge of users' needs and demographic have been used to inform the outcome of the report.

## **6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

6.1 There is currently a projected budget pressure of £21,000 for 2016/17. It is proposed that changes are implemented from 1 January 2017, to allow notice to customers and adherence to the Council's Human Resource Policy. This would still enable some savings to be generated to improve the budget position in 2016/17. The remaining pressure will be funded from other Facilities Services budgets detailed in Section 7.5.

## **7. Financial and Procurement Implications**

- 7.1. The net revenue budget for the service in 2016/17 is £121.00. The budget reduction allocated to All Saints Toilets in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) of £6k in 2016/17 has been implemented. This budget is projecting a pressure of £21,000 for 2016/17. (The budget overspent by £11,251 in 2015/16).
- 7.2 Option 1, to close the facility, would remove the budget pressure and offer revenue savings of £121.00. (The balance of the revenue budget left for 2016/17).
- 7.3 Option 2, to install a turnstile, has been disregarded. One-off capital costs for the conversion to an unattended facility of £12,841 will be avoided.
- 7.4 Option 3, to make no changes to the facility, results in a potential budget pressure of £21,000 per annum (based on forecast costs and income against budget for 2016/17).
- 7.5 Option 4, to increase the charges by 10p would result in an increase income level of £4,000 based on the same level of custom. This is would offer a reduction on the annual budget pressure to £17,000
- 7.6 Option 5, to increase charges by 10p and reduce opening hours by 12 hours per week. This would generate an increase in income of £2,500 and a reduction in employee costs of £6,500. This would offer a reduction on the annual budget pressure, leaving £12,000. This budget pressure will be met from the wider Facilities Services building cleaning trading account. This action will correct the budget pressure.
- 7.7 Actual redundancy costs, from either option 1 or 5, would not be confirmed until the HR process is complete. It is anticipated the maximum, one-off redundancy cost would be approximately £2,970 to be funded from usable capital receipts.

## **8. Legal Implications**

- 8.1 There are no issues which require legal consideration.

## **9. Human Resources Implications**

- 9.1 The employees currently located at All Saints Toilets have been updated regularly on the progress of these proposals. Staff 'at risk' have been given the opportunity for one-to-one discussions.
- 9.2 The process required to achieve the reduction in hours will be in-line with the Council's Human Resource Policy.



## **10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 10.1 By having an attendant on site at the facility there is an effective safe-guarding measure in place for children and young people and vulnerable adults to access the facility safely.
- 10.2 Similarly maintaining the facility, rather than closure, ensures that there is a central facility in the town centre which is of particular significance for children and vulnerable adults.

## **11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

- 11.1 It is imperative that any subsequent changes to staff jobs and status are handled according to employment legislation and the policy of the Council.
- 11.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the original proposal which identified access restrictions for wheel chairs and some child carriers. The Assessment has been reviewed through the appropriate processes and identified no issues.

## **12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates**

- 12.1 Consultation with Town Centre businesses as part of the original proposal identified concerns regarding the facility being unattended and the potential for anti-social behaviour. Businesses also opposed any increase in charges.
- 12.2 The outcome of the initial discussions led to a collaborative approach to the issue with Children and Young People's Services and Officers in Rotherham Investment Development Office to ensure all implications were considered and addressed.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 The initial proposal to install a turn style system was discounted due to posing the following risks that could not be mitigated:
- Equalities access claims
  - Vandalism costs due to unattended facilities
  - Council reputational issues if the unattended facilities resulted in anti-social behaviour issues.
- 13.2 **Financial Risk** – There is a risk that the usage levels will decline following an increase in charges, impacting on the annual income. In order to mitigate this risk the new payment structure has been based on feedback from users who identified what they perceived to be acceptable charges.

**13.3 Reputational Risk** – There is a risk that a reduction in the service provided will negatively reflect on Rotherham Council. In order to mitigate this risk the reduced opening hours have been based on usage patterns to ensure minimal impact for users. In addition communication will be undertaken with all stakeholders to explain that any changes are based on consultation and have ultimately enabled the public toilets to be maintained.

#### **14. Accountable Officer(s)**

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Customer Services – approved by:  
Finance Manager R & E Business Partnering:- Rob Harrison,

Assistant Director of Legal Services:- Ian Gledhill

HR Business Partner:- Paul Fitzpatrick,

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):- Not applicable

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