

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 8 March 2018

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES REVIEW (REP1734)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In 2015, Waveney District Council commissioned a report to review the stock of Public Conveniences across the district. The aim of this review was to seek to reduce the planned £2.4 million of expenditure over a five year period. This expenditure included the annual running costs of the facilities as well as the planned maintenance programme over the period.
2. The report set out options for divesting and rationalising the estate of public conveniences. In 2015, the estate comprised 28 public conveniences.
3. Since 2015, progress has been made against the review, with ten facilities having been transferred to town and parish councils. A further four are under negotiation. This has released a saving on the cost of operating and maintaining these facilities of approximately £0.5m
4. This paper provides an update on progress, and proposes next steps.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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Wards Affected:	All Wards within the District
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Cabinet Member:	Councillor Graham Catchpole Cabinet Member for Operational Partnerships
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Supporting Officer:	Kerry Blair Head of Operations 01502 523007 kerry.blair@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2015, Waveney District Council (WDC) commissioned a report to review the stock of Public Conveniences (PC) across the district. The aim of this review was to seek to reduce the planned £2.4 million of expenditure over a five year period. This expenditure included the annual running costs of the facilities as well as the planned maintenance programme over the period.
- 1.2 This report identified opportunities to:
- Transfer ownership to town and parish councils where those organisations are in agreement, along with a three year funding package to cover the running costs of the facility.
 - Introduce charging for some facilities, where payback would be achieved within a five year timeframe
 - Identify facilities that could be replaced by low maintenance, modular provision.
 - Close facilities which have low use or little community value
- 1.3 Since the report was published, the Council has been focused on the first of these actions, as this represented the most significant opportunity for savings.
- 1.4 Further scoping work is to be carried out on those facilities where charging – or refurbishment or reconfiguration – could significantly offset or reduce running costs.

2 THE ESTATE AS AT THE 2015 REPORT

- 2.1 The table below sets out the complete number of PCs owned and managed by WDC in 2015.

Parish	Name	
Beccles	Blyburgate Car Park	Old Market
	Hungate Car Park	Beccles Quay*
Bungay	Cross Street	Priory Lane
Corton	Bakers Score	
Halesworth	Market Place*	Thoroughfare*
	Town Park*	
Kessingland	Church Road	Jubilee Parade South
Lowestoft	Gordon Road	Kensington Gardens Park
	Lowestoft Cemetery	Kirkley Cliff
	Sparrows Nest Park	Normanston Park
	Triangle Market	Pakefield Street
		Royal Plain
Oulton Broad	Nicholas Everitt Park	The Boulevard
Southwold	Church Green	Harbour
	Ferry Road	The Pier

2.2 The table above shows those PCs where transfer is under discussion. These facilities are identified with an asterisk*.

2.3 Since 2015, the following facilities have been transferred to parish councils:

Lowestoft	Pakefield Street Triangle Market Kirkley Cliff Kensington Gardens Lowestoft Cemetary Normanston Park Sparrows Nest
Oulton Broad	Boulevard Nicholas Everitt Park
Southwold	Church Green

2.4 In addition, the public conveniences mentioned in 4.5 below are currently the subject of discussion with Halesworth Town Council. The outcome of these discussions will not be known until the end of the 2018/19 financial year, when it is hoped that a decision will have been reached.

3 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO EAST SUFFOLK BUSINESS PLAN?

3.1 The PC review is relevant to the ‘vision’ and strategy set out in the East Suffolk Business Plan.

3.2 Reducing the planned expenditure helps to support the Council’s financial self sufficiency aim. So far, through divestment (some of which are still in discussion) to town and parish councils, the stock has reduced by 37% which alone results in a saving of around £200k per annum.

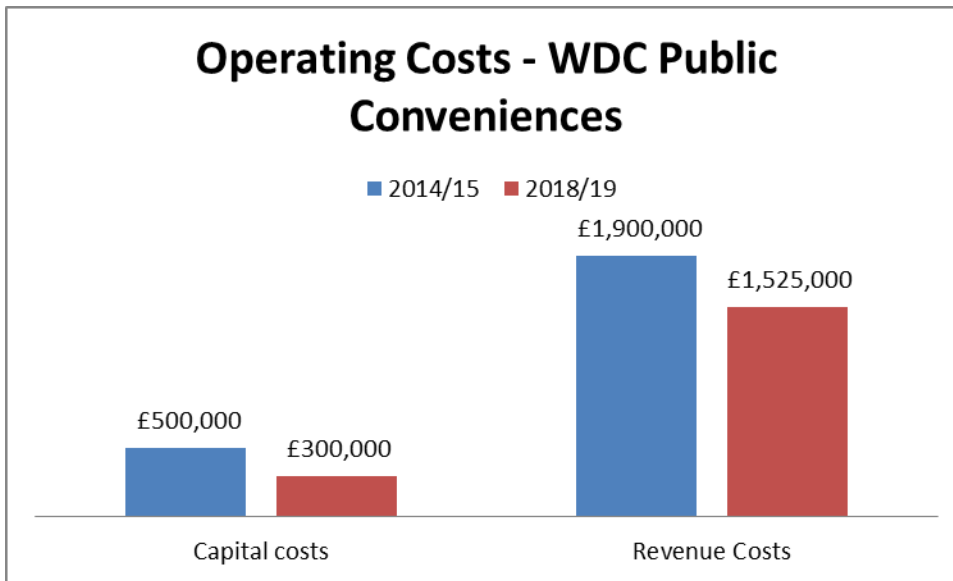
4 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The 2015 report stated that the five year maintenance and investment budget for the 28 facilities was £2.4 million. This amount was a combination of revenue and capital budgets.

4.2 The revenue spend for the facilities was – in 2015 – £390,000 with on costs. This includes running costs, planned inspections, reactive maintenance and staffing costs (primarily cleaning).

4.3 In addition, the capital costs associated with the facilities was estimated to be £500,000 over five years.

4.4 To date, ten public conveniences have transferred to Lowestoft and Oulton Broad Town Council. The transfer of these facilities will save £575,000 across five years – and this saving is broken down into revenue and capital savings as per the chart below:



4.5 In addition to these savings, talks are ongoing around the transfer of the following facilities:

- Market Place, Halesworth
- Town Park, Halesworth
- Thoroughfare, Car Park

4.6 The potential revenue saving across these three facilities is considered to be in the region of £75,000 across five years.

4.7 Discussions are being finalised over the transfer of the public conveniences at Beccles Quay as part of the correction of the registration of the land at the quay.

5 OTHER KEY ISSUES

5.1 Whilst a reduction has been achieved in the budget and savings have been achieved, it should be noted that the bulk of this has been achieved through the transfer of facilities to town and parish councils.

5.2 There remains some potential to continue this approach. The financial model that WDC has adopted in discussions with town and parish councils is to offer financial support for the maintenance and cleaning of facilities for a set period – typically two to three years – on a decreasing scale (100% in year 1, 70% in year 2, 30% in year 3).

5.3 Discussions should continue on this basis with other town and parish councils where local ownership may deliver more tailored services for local communities – and potentially, alternative management methods could be developed using community resources.

5.4 Less rapid progress has been made on the other opportunities outlined in the report. These include:

- Facilities deemed to have low use and little community value should be considered for closure and disposal.
- Rationalise number of units and opening times where possible, in geographical areas
- Consider charging in certain locations
- Look at self contained, modular provision as an alternative in high user areas

5.5 Initially, priority has been given to negotiating divestment arrangements with town and parish councils as this has represented the most significant financial opportunity for WDC.

5.6 It is proposed that a second phase of work now commences, covering the following areas:

- Engagement with the remaining towns and parishes, to identify the potential for other divestments.
- Review the remaining estate and consider the potential for new, low maintenance facilities in place of existing buildings. This will include a financial evaluation of each potential site.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation with town and parish councils has been ongoing.

6.2 The 2015 report was compiled following consultation with local businesses and tourist groups.

6.3 Any proposed facility closure would need to be subject to further local consultation and identification of alternative provision

6.4 The transfer of the Lowestoft and Oulton Broad assets was subject to extensive public consultation.

7 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is recommended that Members review progress and agree whether the approach of divestment and rationalisation is still the correct strategy for public conveniences in Waveney.

7.2 Officers recommend that WDC continues to explore where the potential exists to further divest public conveniences to town and parish councils.

7.3 Further to this, it is recommended that the asset management team carries out a financial appraisal of current sites to identify where modular, low maintenance facilities could reduce the ongoing costs of operating public conveniences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee continues to endorse the strategy of divesting public conveniences, where parties are in agreement.
2. That discussion continues with town and parish councils on the potential for divestment.
3. That consideration is given to the basis of financial support for any transfer of assets – as outlined in point 5.2.
4. That the asset management team carries out a financial appraisal of remaining WDC facilities to identify where lower maintenance facilities could lead to longer-term savings.

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Date	Type	Available From
2015	WDC Public Convenience Review 2015	www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk