

Report to the Leader of the Council

Subject: Reopening of Public Conveniences

Date: 3 July 2020

Author: Acting Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

To seek authority to reopen public conveniences in the borough as detailed in the report and in line with government guidance.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Recommendation(s)

THAT the Leader of the Council:

- 1) Authorises the reopening of public conveniences in the Borough as detailed in this report from 4th July 2020.**
- 2) Delegates authority to the Director responsible for Parks and Street Care to take any operational measures and make any operational decisions necessary to facilitate the safe reopening and continued management of the public conveniences as detailed in the report.**

1 Background

- 1.1 On 23rd March 2020, the Council took the decision to close all Council operated public conveniences in line with government lockdown measures. As lockdown restrictions eased, on 14th May 2020, the decision was taken to reopen public conveniences at Bestwood Country Park, Gedling Country Park and Arnot Hill Park. This was in order to

encourage park use as the government lifted restriction on the limitations of outdoor exercise.

- 1.2 As businesses have started to reopen from 15th June 2020 and the government has further relaxed restrictions from 4th July which will enable a number of other businesses within the hospitality sector to reopen, consideration has now been given to the reopening of Council owned public conveniences on a wider scale.
- 1.3 On 28th June 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, wrote to local authorities in relation to the reopening of toilets. Local authorities are strongly urged to reopen public toilets in a way that is consistent with government guidance. Authorities were advised to consider the harm to public health and the local environment from residents relieving themselves in public whilst access to public toilets remained restricted. Whilst some of the Council's public conveniences have already reopened, in parks, government advice and guidance encourages reopening of all conveniences if it can be safely managed.
- 1.4 The government guidance accompanying the letter of 28th June set out some practical considerations on the reopening of public toilets including: displaying signage to remind customers of the need to wash their hands frequently and for longer, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets with increased frequency of cleaning in line with usage, providing more waste facilities, displaying a visible cleaning schedule which is kept up to date, making sure handwashing facilities and sanitiser is available and considering the use of social distancing if necessary where queues may form.
- 1.5 As well as public conveniences in Gedling Country Park, Arnot Hill Park and Bestwood Country Park, which have already reopened, the Council has public conveniences in Burntstump Country Park, Wood Street in Arnold, Redhill cemetery, Cavendish Road (Cemetery) and Calverton shopping precinct, although the latter are managed by the Parish Council. Cavendish Rd toilets were however closed down prior to Covid-19 due to complaints from the Police about anti-social behaviour, there is no proposal to reopen these toilets at this time as it is not considered safe to do so.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 It is proposed that from 4th July 2020, public conveniences at Burntstump Country Park, Wood Street, Calverton, and Redhill cemetery reopen. Cavendish Road will remain closed as it was prior to lockdown. In line with government guidance measures will be taken to ensure regular

cleaning of these conveniences and suitable handwashing facilities are provided and replenished as necessary.

- 2.2 To ensure the continued safety of residents using these facilities and to ensure compliance with government guidance a delegation is sought to the Director responsible for Parks and Street Care to ensure all necessary operational measures and operational decisions can be taken.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 The toilets could remain closed, however this would be contrary to government advice which encourages the safe reopening of public toilets. In particular the government are concerned that “closed toilets may impact disproportionately on certain groups who for health reasons rely on access to public toilets to be able to leave their homes.” Keeping the toilets closed, particularly in town centres would not support the public in returning to town centres which is necessary to improve local economies.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Additional resource will be necessary to ensure regular cleaning of public toilets in line with government guidance and to ensure that there are suitable handwashing facilities provided regularly. The estimated cost associated with reopening the toilets safety which includes additional staff time, appropriate cleaning and hand washing equipment and diesel costs associated with regular visits to the different sites totals £5220 per month. Whilst there is an existing budget for maintenance of the toilets, any extra costs will have to be met from existing budgets.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The public conveniences were originally closed to support lockdown measures. Whilst there is no specific legal requirement to reopen, this is the advice from government. Any reopening however should be done in accordance with government guidance and appropriate health and safety measures need to be deployed to ensure residents are safe when using the facilities.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 As indicated by the government, the reopening of public toilets will have a positive impact on those falling within the protected characteristic of disability as for health reasons individuals may rely on access to public conveniences to be able to leave the house.

7 Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications

7.1 There are no direct carbon reduction or sustainability implications, although more regular cleaning will require more vehicular trips by staff to ensure standards are maintained.

8 Appendices

8.1 None

9 Background Papers

9.1 Government guidance and letter to local authorities on reopening public toilets.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/896040/Joint_letter_Simon_Clarke_MP_and_Rebecca_Pow_MP.pdf

10 Reasons for Recommendations

10.1 To enable the public to use public conveniences in our town centres and parks.

10.2 To enable operational decisions and actions to be taken swiftly without overburdening the Executive to ensure safe reopening and management of the public toilets.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by: Tina Adams
Date: 3/7/20
On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by: Francesca Whyley
Date: 3/7/20
On behalf of the Monitoring Officer