

Update on the review of Mid Devon District Council's public convenience provision

Cabinet Member: Cllr Ray Stanley
Responsible Officer: Estates Manager

Reason for this report: To provide an update on the provision of public conveniences across the district following the last report dated 2 September 2014.

Recommendations: To recommend to Cabinet the following:

1. To accept the Crediton Town Council £5k contribution for the 2015/16 financial year and keep both Newcombes Meadow and Market Street toilets open. This contribution to meet 100% costs for the provision of public conveniences in Crediton from 2016/17 onwards.
2. That the transfer of the Newcombes Meadow convenience from MDDC to Crediton Town Council with the appropriate legal conditions to ensure that the property continues to provide public services for the community be agreed.
3. That the transfer of the closed St Laurence Green convenience from MDDC to Crediton Town Council, with the appropriate legal conditions to ensure that the property is not sold for profit or used for commercial purposes, be agreed.
4. To accept the £1k contribution from Cullompton Town Council and to negotiate 50% funding post the May election for the remainder of the 2015/16 financial year to prevent closure on the 1 September 2015.
5. To seek a 100% contribution from Cullompton Town Council, to be in place for 2016/17 to maintain these facilities.
6. To agree the three year transition plan providing for full costs to be met by Bampton Town Council in 2017/18.
7. That the asset transfer from MDDC to Bampton Town Council in the 2017/18 financial year include the appropriate legal conditions to ensure the property continues to provide public services for the Community.
8. To approve the £500 contribution from Sampford Peverell Parish Council for the 2015/16 financial year and to continue to monitor usage during 2015/16.
9. To agree the three year transition plan providing for full costs to be met by Hemyock Parish council by 2017/18.

10. That the transfer of the Hemyock convenience in the 2017-2018 financial year from MDDC to HPC, with the appropriate legal conditions to ensure that the property is not sold for profit or used for commercial purposes, be agreed.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: No direct impact.

Financial Implications: The Council is looking to reduce its net budget by £1m in 2015/16; this is over 10% of the total net budget of £9.2m. This includes the allowance of the circa £580k cut in government grant and inflationary increases on expenditure across services. The Council would look to reduce operational spend by at least £50k on public conveniences over the next three years to match the further anticipated cuts.

Legal Implications: There is no statutory obligation for a local authority to provide public conveniences.

Risk Assessment: Environmental impact considered as to proximity of alternative public conveniences where the review has recommended closure where practicable.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The approved recommendation outlined in the previous report dated 2 September 2014 has resulted in a direct costs saving for public conveniences of circa £12k in 2014/15 and latest reduction of circa £30k from the 2015/16 budget.

2.0 Estimated total cost of running the service

- 2.1 For information purposes, the total net direct budget for the public convenience financial year 2015/16 is £90,420.

2.2 Direct costs

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| • Employees/Transport | £ 40,210 |
| • Premises/Supplies & Services | £ 92,370 |
| • Income | £-42,160 |

Total Direct Cost **£ 90,420**

3.0 Latest responses from Parish Councils

3.1 Tiverton

- 3.1.1 There are six conveniences properties in Tiverton and Tiverton Town Council (TTC) has responsibility for four of these facilities that are identified as Peoples Park, Market Square, West Exe Recreation and Westexe South. The convenience at Phoenix Lane was closed due to extensive vandalism and Lowman Green has been scheduled for development in 2015.

3.1.2 Peoples Park and Westexe Recreation

In previous financial years TTC has paid circa £5k in partnership funding towards the running costs of two public conveniences that are now operational during British Summer Time only and are funded by TTC.

3.1.3 Market Square

MDDC will contribute £2k per annum in the first two years of operating the Market convenience. The Property Services team continues to provide support on maintenance issues whilst the TTC is establishing its service. The costs for non-structural maintenance work is then cross-charged from MDDC to TTC on a quarterly basis.

3.1.4 Phoenix Lane

As previously approved, the Phoenix Lane convenience closed in July 2014 following extensive vandalism. MDDC intends to share the building with TTC for much needed storage space and MDDC will arrange for the business rates to be revaluated. Minor building works are required to make the most of the space that will be completed by MDDC at a cost of circa £5k.

3.1.5 Lowman Green

A planning application has been submitted for an office and/or a retail unit at Lowman Green. A local estate agent will be marketing the conversion on behalf of MDDC and rental charges have been set at £12,500 per annum, that calculates to be £25 per square foot per annum. An advertisement board has been fitted to the side of the building adjacent to the clock tower. Tender documentation will be prepared and works scheduled to start at the end of May 2015.

3.1.6 Shop Mobility Conveniences

The arrangement between TTC and Shop Mobility has ceased following the conveniences being used for solvent abuse. This arrangement was put in place following the closure of the Phoenix Lane convenience. Signage has been placed at the closed convenience to redirect members of the public to Phoenix House and the Market conveniences and details the opening hours.

3.2 Crediton

- 3.2.1 It was agreed with Crediton Town Council (CrTC) and Crediton Ward Members for officers to write to surrounding Parishes to give them the opportunity to contribute towards the running costs for St Lawrence Green. Table 1 lists those parishes who received a letter and responses received.

Table 1:- Parish contributions for St Lawrence Green

| Parish | (£) | Response |
|-------------------|-------------|--|
| Bow | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Chawleigh | | E-mail sent to seek confirmation |
| Cheriton Bishop | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Cheriton Fizpaine | £50 | Councillors resolved to offer £50 towards the running costs |
| Coldridge | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Colebrooke | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Copplestone | | E-mail sent to seek confirmation |
| Crediton Hamlets | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance and asked if CTC was providing Financial assistance |
| Morchard Bishop | | Felt that this is CTC responsibility |
| Newton St Cyres | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Nymet Rowland | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Sandford | £250 | Councillors resolved to offer £250 towards the running costs |
| Shoebrooke | | Councillors resolved not to provide financial assistance |
| Wembworthy | | E-mail sent to seek confirmation |
| Total | £300 | |

3.2.2 MDDC continued negotiations with CrTC regarding contributions towards the running costs for Newcombes Meadow for the convenience to remain open all year round. It was resolved by CrTC to contribute £5k for the 2015/16 financial year in order to keep both Newcombes Meadow and Market Street toilets open all year, with the condition that both conveniences remain free to use and no coin operated systems are fitted.

3.2.3 CrTC has approached MDDC to consider asset transfer for the Newcombes Meadow and St Lawrence Green properties that will enable CrTC to be 100% financially and operationally responsible for the Newcombes Meadow and Market Street conveniences from 2016/17 onwards. The asset transfers would include covenants to ensure that the properties continue to provide conveniences for the public.

3.2.4 CrTC wishes to use the St Lawrence Green property as a storage facility. Once the St Lawrence Green property is transferred, CrTC will fund the conversion from a convenience to a storage facility. MDDC's capital programme includes £20k for this that will not now be required.

3.2.5 Valuations have been carried out by a chartered surveyor. The Newcombes Meadow property has been valued at £1k-£1.5k with the restriction of providing conveniences. The St Lawrence Green property has been valued at £7.5k with the restriction of storage use only.

3.2.6 As previously approved, MDDC will not be making a partnership contribution in 2015/16 for the Old Town Hall.

Recommendations to Cabinet:

3.2.7 To accept the Crediton Town Council £5k contribution for the 2015/16 financial year and keep both Newcombes Meadow and Market Street toilets open. This contribution to meet 100% costs for the provision of public conveniences in Crediton from 2016/17 onwards.

3.2.8 That the transfer of the Newcombes Meadow convenience from MDDC to Crediton Town Council, with the appropriate legal conditions to ensure that the property continues to provide public services for the community, be agreed.

3.2.9 That the transfer of the closed St Laurence Green convenience from MDDC to Crediton Town Council, with the appropriate legal conditions to ensure that the property is not sold for profit or used for commercial purposes, be agreed.

3.3 Cullompton

3.3.1 From 1 April 2015 Cullompton Town Council (CTC) has offered £1k per annum towards the running costs of the public convenience in Cullompton. Negotiations have continued with CTC who have stated that CTC is committed to retaining the convenience as a facility for the Cullompton community and visitors to the town, however due to the May elections, CTC do not feel that it can make any decisions at present that could have a significant impact on the finances of the new Council. Once the elections are over, and CTC have a new Council, CTC will place this item on its agenda for discussion.

3.3.2 The adjacent public house, 'The Kings Head', has registered interest in using the convenience block for its functions and this will be explored with the Town Council. Terms and conditions of hire would need to be agreed with CTC that will determine who is liable for damage, utility usage and to state what type and level of insurance is required.

Recommendations to Cabinet:

3.3.3 To accept the £1k contribution from Cullompton Town Council and to negotiate 50% funding post the May election for the remainder of the 2015/16 financial year to prevent closure on the 1 September 2015.

3.3.4 To seek a 100% contribution from Cullompton Town Council, to be in place for 2016/17 to maintain these facilities.

3.4 **Bampton**

3.4.1 Bampton Town Council (BTC) has plans to refurbish the public convenience to create individual unisex and disabled cubicles with coin operated locks. BTC will be funding the significant refurbishment works and MDDC will contribute £1k to enable the project. The building will require a pre-demolition/refurbishment survey and our Planning and Building Control service will need to be consulted.

3.4.2 A financial plan has been sent to BTC to outline a three year transition plan that is detailed below. In previous years MDDC has made partnership contributions of £3,696 per annum towards the daily cleaning, in addition to the annual running costs.

Financial year 2015/16

3.4.3 50% reduction on partnership funding with a required contribution of £1,848 from MDDC.

Financial year 2016/17

3.4.4 100% reduction on partnership funding towards cleaning and 50% contribution from BTC towards running costs.

Financial year 2017/18

3.4.5 100% running costs to be met by BTC (£2,846 includes uplift for utilities).

3.4.6 BTC has requested that the asset is transferred from MDDC to BTC in the 2017/18 financial year. A property valuation has been carried out by a chartered surveyor and the property has a value of £1-£1.5k with the appropriate restrictions. The transfer will include legal clauses to ensure that the property continues to provide public services.

Recommendations to Cabinet:

3.4.7 To agree the three year transition plan providing for full costs to be met by Bampton Town Council in 2017/18.

3.4.8 That the asset transfer from MDDC to Bampton Town Council in the 2017/18 financial year include the appropriate legal conditions to ensure the property continues to provide public services for the community.

3.5 **Down St Mary**

3.5.1 The Estates Manager has previously attended Down St Mary Parish Council (DsMPC) meetings and the £830 per annum contribution has been approved.

3.6 **Sampford Peverell**

- 3.6.1 The convenience at Sampford Peverell was included as part of the 2006/07 PC refurbishment plan and a Disabled WC has been constructed within the footprint of the property. Total refurbishment costs were circa £20k.
- 3.6.2 It was previously questioned by Sampford Peverell Parish Council (SPPC) members that the toilet facilities are not generally used by the parishioners of Sampford Peverell, so why would it need to finance this amenity.
- 3.6.3 SPPC discussed the partnership funding at its meeting on 27 January 2015 following MDDC request of increasing the annual contribution from £300 to £500 per annum towards the operational costs of the public convenience. SPPC Members were disappointed that the Grand Western Canal is unable to make a contribution towards the operational costs.
- 3.6.4 SPPC allocation towards the Canal will be diverted to assist with the increased contribution of £500 towards the operational costs for the convenience (approximately equal to 50% of the operational costs) payable for the 2015/16 year.
- 3.6.5 The water usage at these facilities indicates a low level of users, averaging 4 per day. In the light of this low level, the water used will be monitored for 2015/16 and the long term sustainability will be reviewed in 12 months.

Recommendations to Cabinet:

- 3.6.6 To approve the £500 contribution from Sampford Peverell Parish Council for the 2015/16 financial year and to continue to monitor usage during 2015/16.**

3.7 **Hemyock**

- 3.7.1 The Estates Manager has met with Hemyock Parish Council (HPC) to discuss the future of the convenience and, following discussions with the Parish Clerk, a three year financial transition plan has been provided.

Financial year 2015/16

- 3.7.2 HPC has agreed to pay £1.5k towards the £4k per year towards the running costs.

Financial year 2016/17

- 3.7.3 Subject to agreed refurbishment works, HPC has agreed to pay 100% full running costs for this financial year. Refurbishment work will be circa £10k and to be funded by MDDC.

Financial year 2017/18

3.7.4 HPC wishes to take on the freehold of the property that will be transferred from MDDC to HPC, so that MDDC releases itself from ongoing liabilities. The property has been valued by a chartered surveyor at a value of £1-1.5k to be kept as an asset for public services.

Recommendations to Cabinet:

3.7.5 To agree the three year transition plan providing for full costs to be met by Hemyock Parish Council by 2017/18.

3.7.6 That the transfer of the Hemyock convenience in the 2017/18 financial year from MDDC to HPC, with the appropriate legal conditions to ensure that the property is not sold for profit or used for commercial purposes, be agreed.

3.8 Partnership arrangements

3.8.1 MDDC will be making the following partnership contributions for 2015/16 as previously agreed:

| | £ |
|--|-------|
| Orchard Way Car Park, Lapford | 250 |
| The Village Hall, Chawleigh | 371 |
| Woodleigh Coach House, Cheriton Bishop | 478 |
| Bampton PC Cleaning | 1,850 |
| Old Crediton Town Hall | 0 |

3.9 Coin Operated Locks

3.9.1 The cost of installing coin operated locks at a convenience has been investigated.

3.9.2 A typical convenience has three entrance doors; Gents, Ladies and Disabled. Individual coin operated locks are available and can be adapted to fit standard doors and can hold up to 200 coins before it needs emptying, which could be carried out by the cleaning team. The cost of the lock is £360 each with an estimated installation cost of circa £70 for each lock.

3.9.3 Further investigation would be required for installing coin operated locks onto disabled cubical doors and the use of the nationally recognised RADAR key that would override the lock and prevent the user from using a coin.

3.9.4 An alternative installation would be a central coin operated point that also locks the doors automatically and has a visual display. This installation would only be suitable for entrance doors that are located close together such as the Market Street, Crediton conveniences. Systems of this type cost circa £1-1.5k each with an estimated installation cost of £500.

3.9.5 There are no plans to implement coin operated locks at the present time as these do not meet the needs of our facilities.

4.0 Method of measuring footfall

4.1 The cleaning team have been monitoring the water usage at five conveniences as shown in table 2 to provide an indication of footfall.

Table 2:- Method of monitoring footfall

| Convenience | Number of days monitored | Water usage (litres) | Average numbers of users |
|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Down St Mary | 73 | 47540 | 42 |
| Sampford Peverell | 86 | 4508 | 4 |
| Cullompton | 36 | 9280 | 16 |
| Newcombes Meadow | 73 | 37540 | 33 |
| Market Street | 73 | 24540 | 21 |

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 A summary of the net cost of toilet provision for 2013-2018 is attached as annex A to show the impact of the changes agreed above.

Contact for more Information: Nick Sanderson, Head of Housing & Property Services or Andrew Busby, Estates Manager, 01884 234948, abusby@middevon.gov.uk

