

**MEMBERS' ADVISORY GROUP FOR PUBLIC CONVENIENCES
(Report of the Advisory Group)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Advisory Group was re-constituted by the Cabinet at its meeting on 4th November 2004 to consider "the present position in relation to the Council's public conveniences, their future maintenance and the revised financial implications thereof" (Minute No. 82 refers).
- 1.2 A meeting of the Advisory Group took place on 2nd February 2005 and Councillors I C Bates, Mrs J Chandler, R L Clarke and N J Guyatt were present.
- 1.3 Councillor I C Bates was elected Chairman and Councillor Mrs J Chandler, Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 To assist their deliberations, the Advisory Group considered a report by the Head of Environment and Transport which had drawn together recent decisions and relevant issues in respect of the provision of public conveniences in the District. The Advisory Group also received a briefing note of existing Town Centre public conveniences and a further copy of the original report considered by the Cabinet on 4th November 2004.
- 2.2 Members also had visited the public conveniences throughout the District prior to the meeting.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 To progress their debate, the Advisory Group acknowledged that it was essential to establish whether the District Council as an authority was committed to the provision and retention of public conveniences in town centre locations given that there was no statutory duty to provide such a service.
- 3.2 Following discussion and having made reference to the contribution made by the service to the local economy and the wellbeing of local people and visitors, the need to provide best value for the council tax payer in terms of service standards and cost and the District Council's aspirations for encouraging increased tourism, the Advisory Group –

RECOMMENDED

that the District Council's commitment to the provision of public conveniences in Town Centres be continued.

(In accordance with paragraph 14.5 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor R L Clarke requested that his decision to dissent from support of this principle be recorded in the report of the meeting).

4. EVALUATION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES IN THE TOWNS

4.1 With the benefit of their recent visits, the Advisory Group considered standards of provision in each of the individual towns vis-à-vis the location of facilities and their general condition.

4.2 Tebbutts Road, Riverside Park and South Street, St. Neots

The Advisory Group were unanimously of the view that the facilities at South Street, St. Neots were in poor condition, lacked baby changing facilities, would require significant investment to upgrade to an acceptable standard and were now inappropriately located having regard to the improved character of South Street. As an alternative, the Advisory Group discussed the possibility of public use of the facilities at the Priory Centre in the short-term and alternative provision, perhaps as part of the redevelopment east of the railway line in the long term. In that light the Head of Environment and Transport was requested to –

- ◆ seek to dispose of the facilities at South Street at the earliest opportunity;
- ◆ open preliminary discussions with St. Neots Town Council to achieve agreement to public use of the Priory Centre facilities using in negotiations, if necessary, the funding currently available for maintenance and cleaning of the South Street facilities;
- ◆ seek to improve signposting to the remaining public conveniences in the town; and
- ◆ undertake a survey in the Market Square to ascertain customer requirements for public conveniences in St. Neots.

It was the view of the Advisory Group that the facilities at Tebbutts Road and the Riverside Park, St. Neots should be retained in their current form.

4.3 New Street, Ramsey

Regarding the public conveniences in New Street, Ramsey, it was the view of the Advisory Group that, given their recent refurbishment and the condition of the fabric of the building, the facilities should be retained until such time as their location may require further review as part of the future development of the town. Notwithstanding the possible requirement for the land upon which the facilities were currently located, the Advisory Group agreed that public conveniences should be retained in Ramsey especially in view of the occurrence of market days in the town. Attention having been drawn to some unfinished maintenance tasks, the Head of Environment and Transport undertook to ensure these would be completed.

4.4 Bus Station and Riverside Park, Huntingdon

The Advisory Group acknowledged that it would be premature to consider the future of facilities in the bus station in Huntingdon (and in the Cattle

Market, St. Ives) given the potential for redevelopment of both locations in the medium term. In terms of the Riverside Park, the Advisory Group were of the view that these facilities should be retained until such time as a private operator came forward with proposals for development of the Park.

4.5 **Other Locations**

For completeness, the Advisory Group agreed to retain current facilities at School Hill, Godmanchester and West Street, St. Ives and were reminded that the District Council contributed to the upkeep of the public toilets at Waitrose supermarket in Huntingdon. The Advisory Group –

RECOMMENDED

that the outcome of their review of provision in the towns be endorsed.

5. **SERVICE STANDARDS**

5.1 Having regard to a series of options for maintaining and enhancing service standards, the Advisory Group were of the view that public conveniences and their associated fittings should be maintained at the same standard and quality within existing buildings and configurations across the towns and provide for baby changing and disabled facilities in male and female toilets.

5.2 Attention was drawn to community safety issues associated with communal spaces at some locations but without further detail the Advisory Group were unable to comment specifically. It was

RECOMMENDED

that the Head of Environment and Transport be requested to assess and report to a future meeting of the Cabinet on the financial implications of the decision to bring facilities up to an agreed standard within existing configurations but to maintain some flexibility by considering, should there be a particular problem to overcome, whether it would be cost-effective to vary the structural configuration in a specific location.

6. **MAINTENANCE AND CLEANING**

6.1 With regard to future maintenance and cleaning operations, the Advisory Group, in the interests of consistency of standards, indicated a preference for an arrangement whereby one provider could deliver the service to all District Council public conveniences.

6.2 Given that future provision in St. Neots was to be reviewed in discussion with St. Neots Town Council, the Advisory Group –

RECOMMENDED

(a) that the current arrangements with St. Neots Town Council and Turner Industrial Cleaning System Limited for the cleansing and maintenance of public conveniences in St. Neots and other town centres respectively be retained

pending the outcome of further discussions on agency arrangements; and

- (b) that, in light of the foregoing discussions, on the future arrangements for public conveniences in the District, the proposal, submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet to be held on 3rd February 2005, to consider agency arrangements with Huntingdon and St. Neots Town Councils be deferred.**

[NB – The report by the Head of Environment & Transport, considered at their meeting on 3rd February 2005, was deferred.]

Councillor I C Bates
Chairman of the Advisory Group