

**PUBLIC CONVENIENCES – IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS
(Report by Head of Environment & Transport)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At their meeting on 17 March 2005 Cabinet considered recommendations by the Members' Advisory Group for Public Conveniences in respect of the future provision and standard of public conveniences. The Advisory Group's recommendations are reproduced at Annex A.
- 1.2 Cabinet also gave, in principle, approval to the proposed disposal of the site of public conveniences located at South Street, St Neots, subject to consultation with St Neots Town Council.
- 1.3 The Advisory Group met again on the 24 November 2005 and endorsed the recommendations of this report.
- 1.4 This report provides Cabinet with the latest position and provides detailed proposals for the improvement and ongoing maintenance of town centre public conveniences.

2. TOWN COUNCILS

- 2.1 The Chairman of the Advisory Group has met with representatives of the St Neots Town Council to discuss the disposal of the South Street public conveniences. The Town Council considers the retention of public conveniences, which are easily accessible from the Market Square, as essential. They do not consider that the public conveniences at Tebbutts Road or Riverside fulfil this criterion.
- 2.2 Consideration has been given to the use of the existing toilets in the Priory Centre and the provision of new, externally, accessible public conveniences as an adaptation of the existing Priory Centre building. Neither approach was acceptable to the Town Council. Technical difficulties also meant that any adaptation would have been prohibitively expensive.
- 2.3 It is understood that the St Neots Town Council remains interested in the transfer of the three St Neots public conveniences to the Town Council.
- 2.4 With the exception of St Neots, no further dialogue with town councils has been held.

3. FUTURE SERVICE STANDARD

- 3.1 The decision of Cabinet on 17 March 2005 required consideration to be given to bringing the facilities up to an agreed standard, within existing configurations, but to maintain some flexibility. This required

consideration as to whether there is a particular problem to overcome, or it would be cost effective to vary the structural configuration in a specific location.

3.2 Good practice guidance suggests the following as an appropriate basic standard –

- standard fittings be used in all public conveniences to facilitate easy maintenance and repair;
- at least one fully disabled facility per location, to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act;
- baby changing facilities in male and female toilets; and
- easily maintainable internal finishes

3.3 In addition to suffering vandalism public conveniences often are misused by drug addicts and others. Where there is a perceived community safety concern the following enhanced standards also are proposed:

- timed locks to control out-of-hours access to a restricted level of service;
- reduction or removal of communal areas to prevent groups of people associating in the public convenience;
- replacement of existing provision with less easily abused purpose made units; and
- charging for entry.

3.4 The standards proposed for cleaning and maintenance are:

- establish a common standard throughout the district for the quality of service provided;
- establish a performance specification that can be monitored and enforced; and
- combine the cleaning and maintenance in one contract to avoid separation of responsibilities.

4. POSSIBILITIES FOR EACH SITE

4.1 Each of the nine sites have been evaluated to assess their condition, short and long term development possibilities, and present community safety problems. The evaluations are detailed in Annex B.

4.2 The outcome of the evaluation is summarized in the table that follows:

Location	Proposed Standard	Estimated Cost
Ramsey, New Road	Basic	£38k
Huntingdon, Bus Station	Basic	£38k
Huntingdon, Riverside Park	Enhanced	£132k
Godmanchester	Enhanced	£88k
St Ives, Bus Station	Basic	£38k

Location	Proposed Standard	Estimated Cost
St Ives, West Street	Enhanced	£116k
St Neots, Riverside	Enhanced	£205k
St Neots, Tebbutts Rd	Basic	£38k
St Neots, South Street	Replace	£86k

4.3 The total capital cost of these improvements is £779k. This assumes the replacement of the South Street public conveniences on an alternative site and on land currently owned by the District Council as the estimate does not include for any land purchase.

4.4 A three-year, phased programme of improvements is proposed such that –

- only one public convenience in any town is out of commission at any time; and
- work on sites likely to be included in redevelopment proposals is undertaken last, by which time there may be greater certainty about their future.

The proposed programme follows –

	Public Convenience	Cost in year
2006/07	St Neots – Tebbutts Rd St Neots – Riverside St Ives – West St Godmanchester	£447k
2007/08	St Ives - Bus Station Huntingdon – Riverside St Neots –South St (New site)	£256k
2008/09	Ramsey – New Road Huntingdon - Bus Station	£76k

4.5 Subject to approval of the above programme it is proposed that a contract be tendered for the 2006/07 schemes. The contract could be framed to allow for a negotiated extension to encompass schemes in subsequent years subject to the Council being satisfied as to the cost and quality of the work delivered under the initial contract.

4.6 Because of a recent fire to the Tebbutts Rd site, urgent work is needed. It is proposed that this is brought up to the new standard at this time. This may require some monies to be brought forward to 2005/06 to enhance the insurance money.

5. FUTURE MAINTENANCE

5.1 At present the cleaning and minor repair of public conveniences in St Neots is undertaken by St Neots Town Council on an agency basis. The cleaning of all other public conveniences, excepting automatic public conveniences, is undertaken by a contractor engaged by the Operations Division. Minor repairs to sites outside of St Neots, and

all major repairs, are commissioned by Environment & Transport Division.

- 5.2 The discussions with Town Councils on future maintenance arrangements were abandoned following the decision of Cabinet in February 2005 as, at that time, it was unlikely that any coordinated service was likely to be available from the councils. Only St Neots and Huntingdon Town Councils retained an interest in providing a service within their own towns.
- 5.3 The letting of a single contract for the cleaning and maintenance/repair of all public conveniences is still considered most likely to provide a consistent district-wide service standard and the most cost effective service. The present budget for this is around £100k per year, and it is hoped that a new contract for this work will be similar, but this will depend on the standards required. An extra contingency of £20k per annum is proposed to allow for increase in the service cost. This contract would need to be let for a minimum of three years and would, therefore, be subject to EU procurement regulations.

6. AUTOMATIC PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

- 6.1 At the meeting of 12 October 2004, the Cabinet approved the removal of the village APCs. However, the intention was to retain two APCs in Huntingdon (Trinity Place and the disabled unit in St Germain Street Minor Car Parks)
- 6.2 Although not identified during the negotiations with JC Decaux it was subsequently confirmed that any notice of early termination would have to apply to all APC units, or retain a minimum of four units. An agreement now has been reached that the Council will retain the three APCs sited in Huntingdon together with the APC at Coneygeare, St Neots until their leases expire in October 2008, or the Council serves twelve months notice of early termination on all four.
- 6.3 There is a financial implication on retaining these APCs above the present MTP budget and this is shown in Annex C. The usage of the APCs from January to September 2005 is:

APC location	Total visits in period	Usage per day
Huntingdon- St Germain	789	2.9
Huntingdon – St Germain Disabled	1684	6.2
Huntingdon – Trinity Place	1433	5.2
St Neots - Coneygeare	709	2.6

- 6.4 The table shows that the use of the units is minimal.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The full details of the financial implications are given in the table in Annex C. The table compares the existing MTP capital provision and that proposed in paragraph 4.4 and 5.3 above.

7.2 The revenue impact on the MTP of retaining four, rather than two APCs, as detailed in paragraph 6.2 above is also shown in Annex C as Option A. For the purpose of comparison the cost if the APCs are removed in 12 months time are also given as Option B. The contractual position with JC Decaux is such that either Option A or Option B must be proceeded with and for MTP purposes the variation must be regarded as unavoidable.

7.3 The consequential revenue changes to the MTP of the proposals contained in this report, and detailed in Annex C, are summarized in the table below –

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Revenue impact of capital	-£10k	-£18k	-£9k	-£1k	-£12k
Cleaning contingency		£20k	£20k	£20k	£20k
Option A – retain APCs	£24k	£8k	£62	£15	
Option B – terminate APCs	£24k	-£9k			

7.4 A revised MTP bid will provide for the reduction and rephrasing of the capital expenditure and the possible additional cost of cleaning. The extra costs identified in 2005/06 for the APCs, either Option A, or B, can be met from existing revenue budgets.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Cabinet at their meeting on 17 March 2005 agreed that public conveniences should be provided in the towns at a set standard.

8.2 Some of the existing buildings can be modified to reach the required basic standard for about £38k for each site. Others have community safety problems which mean that they require an enhanced standard costing between £88k and £205K. These works can be phased over a number of years to accommodate potential impact of redevelopment on some sites.

8.3 The review has confirmed that it is impractical to make the required improvements to the St Neots South Street conveniences at their present location. Furthermore the setting is considered inappropriate in the context of adjacent redevelopment and the demolition of the site is recommended. An alternative site, therefore, needs to be found as it is felt that public conveniences near the Market Square are required.

8.4 The St Neots Town Council retains an interest in taking over the public conveniences in the town. However, to achieve consistent standards, it is considered that the district council should retain control of all the public conveniences and have a single cleaning/maintenance contract for the whole area.

- 8.5 Although it will result in the reduction of public convenience capacity in the town of Huntingdon, the retention of APCs to the end of their current contracts imposes an unreasonable cost on the Council. In the circumstances termination at the earliest date compatible with the contract is desirable i.e. after 12 months notice.
- 8.6 The financial implications of these proposals are compared to the existing revenue budget in the Annex C and summarized at paragraph 7.3 above. The appropriate release of funds request is attached at Annex D for the refurbishment programme proposed in 2006/07. It assumes approval of the MTP bid required to reschedule the capital expenditure and provides the contingency for possible increases in cleaning costs.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- Approves the programme of improvements at paragraph 4.4 and their financial implications as detailed in Annex C;
 - Agrees to the replacement of the South Street conveniences on an alternative site;
 - Authorise the Head of Environment & Transport to seek tenders for the building and cleaning/maintenance works contracts
 - Authorise the Head of Environment & Transport to serve 12 months notice on JC Decaux for the removal of the four remaining APCs; and
 - Approve the release of funds requested at Annex D to facilitate design work and the preparation of contracts for the first phase of improvements for 2006.

Background papers:

Environment and Transport files

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ANNEX A

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEMBERS' ADVISORY GROUP FOR PUBLIC CONVENIENCES APPROVED BY CABINET AT THEIR MEETING ON 17 MARCH 2005.

1. that the District Council's commitment to the provision of public conveniences in Town Centres be continued.
2. that the outcome of their review of provision in the towns be endorsed
3. 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
4. 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
5. 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.]

ANNEX B

EVALUATION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

SITE	PRESENT PROBLEMS	OPTION TO MEET BASIC STANDARDS	OPTION TO MEET ENHANCED STANDARD
Ramsey, New Road	No baby changing facilities Disabled facilities below standard Anti-social behaviour reported	Redecorate exterior Create baby changing room Improve disabled facilities Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration COST £38,000	The toilets may be demolished as part of the cinema development and new toilets would be built into the new buildings
Huntingdon, Bus Station	Old fixtures and fitting	Redecorate exterior Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration COST £38,000	Since the bus station area may be improved, in future years, major changes are not proposed to the toilets at this time.
Huntingdon, Riverside Park	Anti-social behaviour reported High vandalism No baby changing facilities	Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration NOTE: this cannot give baby changing facilities and will not reduce vandalism or anti-social behaviour in present arrangement. Option not recommended COST £38,000	Convert to provide 4 unisex cubicles with disabled unit and baby changing unit. One unit to have 24 hour access. Access to be charged to reduce abuse COST £132,000
Godmanchester	No baby changing facilities Disabled facilities below standard	Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration NOTE: this cannot give compliant disabled facilities or baby changing facilities Option not recommended COST £38,000	Convert to provide 2 unisex cubicles with disabled unit and baby changing unit. One unit to have 24 hour access. Access to be charged to reduce abuse COST £88,000

SITE	PRESENT PROBLEMS	OPTION TO MEET BASIC STANDARDS	OPTION TO MEET ENHANCED STANDARD
St Ives, Bus Station	No baby changing facilities Disabled facilities are below standard Old fixtures and fitting	Redecorate exterior Create baby changing room Improve disabled facilities Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration COST £38,000	The long term future for the bus station and toilets is unknown as the area may be redeveloped. Therefore the higher standards are not an aim at present.
St Ives, West Street	No baby changing facilities Old fixtures and fitting	Redecorate exterior Create baby changing room Improve disabled facilities Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration However these are very large facilities and will not give a high standard even when complete. Layout encourages anti-social behaviour. Option not recommended COST £38,000	Demolish existing building and replace with purpose made building to provide 3 cubicles including baby changing and disabled access. All cubicles to be semi-automatic. One unit to have 24 hour access. Access to be charged to reduce abuse COST £116,000
St Neots, Riverside	No baby changing facilities Old fixtures and fitting Bad design and layout		As this is a busy location serving the town and the park, 6 new cubicles should be provided in the existing building with disabled and baby changing facilities. All cubicles to be semi-automatic. One unit to have 24 hour access. Access to be charged to reduce abuse COST £205,000

SITE	PRESENT PROBLEMS	OPTION TO MEET BASIC STANDARDS	OPTION TO MEET ENHANCED STANDARD
St Neots, Tebbuts Rd	No baby changing facilities Old fixtures and fitting Disabled facilities are below standard	Redecorate exterior Create baby changing room Improve disabled facilities Install new fixtures and fittings Internal redecoration COST £38,000	Not necessary at this time.
St Neots, South Street	No baby changing facilities Disabled facilities below standard Old fixtures and fitting Building out of character with surroundings Could be sold as development plot	Due to its layout, it is very difficult to improve without major reconstruction.	Demolish existing premises and either rely on the 2 alternative sites in the town or replace on another site with new block. This might be able to be located on Priory Lane car park or in the Priory car park. This could then serve the Market Square and the north east area of the town. REPLACE WITH NEW BLOCK –NET COST £86k

ANNEX C FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Public Conveniences and APCs - Proposed Revision To The MTP						
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Public Conveniences						
Existing Capital Programme		400	350	0	0	500
Revenue effect		10	29	38	38	51
Proposed programme		0	447	256	76	0
Revenue effect		0	11	29	37	39
Extra cleaning costs			20	20	20	20
Total revenue impact		0	31	49	57	59
Change to MTP		-10	2	11	19	8
Automatic Public Conveniences						
Revenue Base	153	153	153	153	153	153
Approved MTP	56	-121	-99	-153	-153	-153
Carry forward	-80	80				
Total	129	112	54	0	0	0
Proposed						
Proposed programme Option A						
Retain 4 APCs	129	136	62	62	15	0
Change to MTP	0	24	8	62	15	0
Proposed programme Option B						
Terminate all APCs	129	136	45	0	0	0
Change to MTP	0	24	-9	0	0	0

ANNEX D RELEASE OF FUNDS

03/302A New Public Conveniences

Chris Allen – Project and Assets Manager

Financial Impact

	Net Revenue Impact						Net Capital							
	2003/ 2004 £000	2004/ 2005 £000	2005/ 2006 £000	2006/ 2007 £000	2007/ 2008 £000	2008/ 2009 £000	2009/ 2010 £000	2003/ 2004 £000	2004/ 2005 £000	2005/ 2006 £000	2006/ 2007 £000	2007/ 2008 £000	2008/ 2009 £000	2009/ 2010 £000
Approved Budget			10	29	38	38	51			400	350			500
Amended Budget				11	29	37	39				447	256	76	
Increased cleaning costs				20	20	20	20							
Already released														
Amount for which release now requested				31	42	42	42				447			

Justification for Release

Scheme is to improve the appearance and safety of the Public Conveniences. The work includes providing compliant disabled facilities, baby changing facilities, increasing safety and reducing vandalism.

Approval is required so that the design can be started on the contracts sought.

In order to maintain the public conveniences at a high standard of cleanliness and repair, extra revenues is required to meet the costs. This is required from 2006 so that the contract for the works can be negotiated now and let for 2006.