

COMT

6 JULY 2010

CABINET

22 JULY 2010

**PUBLIC CONVENIENCES RESPONSE TO PETITION  
(Report by Director of Environmental and Community Services)**

**1. Introduction**

1.1 The council owned and maintained 9 public convenience sites within the district, plus those at the visitor centres at Hinchingbrooke Country Park and Paxton Pits. The 9 are:

St Ives	– Bus station and West Street
Huntingdon	– Bus Station and Riverside Park
Ramsey	- New Road
St Neots	- Tebbutts Road, Riverside and South Street
Godmanchester	- Cambridge Street

1.2 The council also contributes £1,500 towards the maintenance of the conveniences in Benedicts Court, Huntingdon, which remains open.

1.3 As part of the budget adjustment measures designed to deal with the Council's deficit a whole range of proposals were considered through the Council's formal processes including Overview and Scrutiny one of these proposals was to reduce the spend on owning and maintaining public conveniences. In due course the budget approved for this current year reflected the position reached following discussions with town councils.

**2. Position to date**

2.1 As of the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010, the position with the public conveniences is:

- St Ives Bus Station – continuing to be maintained by the district council, pending discussion about the future operation of the bus station and also further discussion with the St Ives Town Council.
- St Ives West St – closed and not being considered by St Ives Town Council
- Huntingdon Bus station – continuing to be maintained by the district council, pending discussion of a self financing scheme for the regeneration of this site. Huntingdon Town Council have declined to take over this facility.
- Huntingdon Riverside Park – now closed, with Huntingdon Town Council not interested in running it but 1 unit being offered to Purvis Marine for their use, including customers, as they have no facilities. Also being opened for functions in the park, at the cost to the user.
- Ramsey New Road – closed on 28<sup>th</sup> January when it was demolished as part of the Cinema redevelopment. Temporary toilet being run by Ramsey Town Council who intend to take on the new toilets in the library development, when complete.
- St Neots Tebbutts Rd - being maintained by the district council, but should be transferred to St Neots Town Council shortly when legal formalities completed.

- St Neots Riverside - being maintained by the district council, but should be transferred to St Neots Town Council when legal formalities completed.
- St Neots South Street – closed on 1<sup>st</sup> April and the site is being prepared for redevelopment
- Godmanchester Cambridge St – closed as of 1<sup>st</sup> April, as Godmanchester Town Council did not want to take on the responsibility. The freehold of the public conveniences was offered to the Town Council at nil cost as the building is effectively part of the same building as the Town Council owns, this was also declined at the time. However, discussions have reopened with a view to the transfer of the facility to the Town Council on a similar basis to that negotiated in respect of St Neots.

### **3.0 Receipt of Petitions**

3.1 At the Council meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> April 2010, a petition was presented on behalf of the Shopmobility group in Huntingdon. The petition read as follows:

'Huntingdon District Council has decided that they can no longer afford to run the public toilets in Ramsey, St Ives, St Neots, Huntingdon or Godmanchester. These will close as of 31<sup>st</sup> March except the ones in the bus stations in Huntingdon and St Ives which remain open for a further six months. Unless the town councils are willing to fund the running of these facilities, then they will be lost to the public.

'Shopmobility has decided that access to toilets is a basic requirement for many of the public and a closure of these would cause distress to many. We are going to submit this petition with an accompanying letter to Huntingdon District and Town Council to encourage them to reconsider their actions.

3.2 The Council Minutes read as follows:

The Chairman invited Mr R Emmette to present a petition on behalf of 221 signatories regarding their concern at the proposed closure of public conveniences in Ramsey, St. Ives, St. Neots, Huntingdon and Godmanchester.

On behalf of the petitioners, Mr Emmette suggested that it was unreasonable to expect residents and visitors to the District to use facilities in local restaurants and shops, that use of the Riverside Park and the number of visitors to the District would decrease and that he was hopeful that the town councils would be able to assume responsibility for the facilities.

Following questions from Members, it was RESOLVED that the petition be referred for consideration to the Cabinet.

3.3 A second petition was presented to the Council meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 from the Godmanchester Community Association with the support of the Godmanchester Town Council. The petition read as follows:

'We the undersigned deplore Huntingdonshire District Council's decision to cease payment for the running and maintenance of the public toilets in Godmanchester. We urge Huntingdonshire District Council to reverse its decision as a matter of urgency and reinstate this necessary facility to the benefit of both residents and visitors to Godmanchester.'

- 3.4 At the meeting of the Council held on 23 June 2010 Councillor David Brown presented a petition containing approximately 1,108 signatures submitted by Godmanchester Town Council that stated that "we the undersigned deplore Huntingdonshire District Council's decision to cease payment for the running and maintenance of the public toilets in Godmanchester and urge the District Council to reverse its decision as a matter of urgency and reinstate this necessary facility to the benefit of both residents of and visitors to Godmanchester".

It was similarly RESOLVED that the petition be referred to Cabinet.

- 3.5 A third petition of 380 signatures was submitted in respect of the toilets at Ramsey. The petition reads as follows:

"Public toilets in Ramsey are vital for our shoppers, markets, visitors, tourism and the economic well being of Ramsey. We wish to express our outrage that Huntingdonshire District Council have decided to withdraw the funding of public toilets in Ramsey and across Huntingdonshire. We request that as the funding decision has now been forced on to the Ramsey Town Council that they do provide the funding to allow the opening of the new toilet facilities and we also request that temporary public toilet facilities are provided during the construction project".

This petition was received too late to be considered at the Council meeting on 23 June 2010. However, it is understood that the originators are content for the petition to be referred to Cabinet in the same way as the other two petitions and this intent was highlighted by the Chairman at the Council meeting.

#### **4.0 Consideration of Petition**

- 4.1 The first petition was slightly incorrect as at the time there were four sites open and not two as described.
- 4.2 The Council's budget in the current year has been reduced to reflect the decision of the Council set out in paragraph 2.1 above. There is funding to run the two sites at the bus stations although discussions will still be held with St Ives Town Council to take on the one in their town. Huntingdon Bus station redevelopment is being reconsidered at present and the future of this site will be considered as part of that process. Discussions are continuing with St Neots and Godmanchester Town Councils regarding them taking on the sites in their towns.

## **5.0. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Cabinet are recommended to –

(a) note

(i) the current position with regard to the transfer and closure of public conveniences; and

(ii) the current budgetary position;

(b) consider the three petitions.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Environmental Management files

Cabinet reports

**Contact  
Officer:**

**Malcolm Sharp, Director of  
Environmental and Community Services**