

Savings – Public Toilets	
Executive Summary	This report looks at the potential options for the Council owned public conveniences, which are a discretionary service. In light of the worsening financial position of the Council the ongoing cost of management of these facilities needs to be assessed and a plan put in place to reduce the burden on the Council, when funding is required for statutory services.
Options considered	Option 1 – Full and Winter Closure Option 2 – Close all sites. Option 3 – Transfer all sites to Town and Parish Councils Option 4 – Do nothing
Consultation(s)	Consultation has been undertaken with the property service team to determine the use of the public toilets within Council ownership.
Recommendations	Members are asked to consider the report and recommend the following to Full Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1 - full and winter closures is progressed by officers • A second review to look at further closures in 2025/26 takes place as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. /
Reasons for recommendations	The savings generated from this would amount to £46k (Full Year Effect), a combination of budget savings and cost avoidance. This does not include any potential additional savings that might be realised from the Serco contact cleaning costs. This would help to reduce the deficits shown on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the coming years,
Background papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget and MTFS 24-25 • Budget Monitoring Report

Wards affected	All
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Lucy Shires Lucy.shires@north-norfolk.gov.uk
Contact Officer	Tina Stankley Director of Resources Tina.stankley@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:	
Corporate Plan:	A Strong, Responsible, & Accountable Council.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	The proposals aim to provide savings to help improve the MTFS. We will ensure the Council maintains a financially sound position, seeking to make best use of its staff resources, effective partnership working and maximising the opportunities of external funding and income.
Council Policies & Strategies	None

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	Yes
Has the public interest test been applied	Yes.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	Provide the dates of any previous decisions relating to this matter

1. Purpose of the report

1.1. This is a report looking at potential options for the management of the Council's stock of public toilets in light of a worsening financial position as shown in the MTFS.

2. Introduction & Background

2.1. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan shows that based on the assumptions e.g. pay and contract price increases, increases in fees and charges income and grant funding levels included in the 2023-2028 there are deficits of £1.8m, £3.0m and £3.3m for the three years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 respectively.

2.2. This is obviously not a sustainable position. The deficits do not include the impact of introducing the outcome of the Fair Funding Review nor the Reform of Business Rates (which alone has been forecast to have an adverse impact of over £2m for NNDC).

2.3. A range of savings proposals were put forward from Service Managers as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process. The proposal relating to Public Toilets was not taken forward at that time as further work was required to ratify the level of achievable and sustainable savings that could be delivered.

2.4. Work has been running alongside other service reviews and the options are available with regards Public Toilets are presented below.

3. Proposals and Options

3.1. The provision of Public Toilets is a discretionary service.

3.2. Option 1 – Full and Winter Closures

3.2.1. Toilets identified to close, transfer or sell

Sites have been identified for full closure or transfer along with several proposed winter closures as follows:

Site	Reason for Decision	Close/Transfer/Sell
Stalham	This facility has low usage and there are a number of surrounding businesses that provide facilities.	Close/Sell
West Runton	Only asset the Council has in this area. No longer feasible for this to remain open. Propose transfer to car park and café owner	Transfer
Potter Heigham	Lack of Use	Close/Sell
Walsingham	Only asset the Council has in the area. Look to transfer ownership to Walsingham Estate.	Transfer
Weybourne	Unable to provide a permanent facility and the temporary facility is not feasible due to misuse.	Close
Hickling	The Wildlife trust is better situated to be able to run the facility.	Transfer

3.2.2. Toilets Proposed for Winter Closure

These toilets all see limited use during the winter months so it is felt they can be closed with little or no noticeable effect on residents and tourists.

- Ludham Bridge
- Bacton
- Womack Staithe
- West Prom, Cromer
- Beach Road, Wells
- Cadogan Road
- Cart Gap
- East Prom, Sheringham

3.2.3. The savings generated from this would amount to £46k (Full Year Effect), a combination of budget savings and cost avoidance. This does not include any potential additional savings that might be realised from the Serco contact cleaning costs. We are still awaiting a response from Serco and any changes to the contract are subject to a 3 month notice period.

3.2.4. The value of the contract cleaning costs relating to sites listed above is £122k (£42k Closure/Transfer/Sell and £80k Winter Closures) of which we will only be able to realise a proportion reliant on the response from Serco.

3.3. Option 2 – Close all sites (Discretionary Service)

3.3.1. The savings required to balance the MTFs and provide a sustainable financial position are not insignificant and thus this option is presented.

3.3.2. Costs are increasing year on year due to the age and state of repair of most of the facilities along with costs associated with vandalism and misuse by campervan and motorhome tourists of facilities which are not capable of taking such waste and are frequently closed as a result.

3.3.3. Savings generated from this option would be £800k, although there may be some minor residual cost associated with securing any closed premises/facilities.

3.4. Option 3 – Transfer all sites to Town and Parish Councils

3.4.1. Town and Parish Councils in the district have a keen interest in the provision of Public Toilets in North Norfolk. They readily express their expectations of NNDC.

3.4.2. With such a keen interest in the provision of this service, consideration should be given to transferring all the facilities to the relevant Town and Parish Councils. They would then have the influence and control by overseeing the operational management and availability of these facilities.

3.4.3. Towns and Parishes would be free to raise funds to pay for the facilities through precepts.

3.4.4. Savings generated from this option would be £800k.

3.4.5. NNDC might be left with some facilities should the Towns and Parishes cherry pick the best ones; however, we would still choose to close them but may be left with minor residual costs to secure until disposal.

3.5. Option 4 – Do nothing.

3.5.1. Not considered to be a viable option due to the need to find considerable savings to bridge the budget gap in the MTFS.

3.6. It is proposed that a second review to look at further closures in 2025/26 takes place as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process.

4. Corporate Priorities

4.1. This report is linked to the Corporate Plan under A Strong, Responsible and Accountable Council.

4.2. We will look to ensure the Council maintain a financially sound position, seeking to make the best use of its staff resources, effective partnership working and maximizing the opportunities of external funding and income.

4.3. We aim to provide effective and efficient delivery of the Council's public toilet portfolio. Managing our finances to ensure best value for money, continuing a service improvement programme to ensure our services are delivered efficiently, providing services that are value for money and meet the needs of our residents, ensuring that strong governance is at the heart of all we do, creating a culture that empowers and fosters an ambitious, motivated workforce and exploring opportunities to work further with stakeholders and partner organisations.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1. The actions set out in this report will help to improve the Council's financial position.
- 5.2. By looking to address the way we provide the discretionary service of public toilets we will be able to ensure the Council remains able to provide those services it is statutorily obligated to provide.
- 5.3. The Council could choose not to change the way public toilet provisions are provided but this would mean that there may not be sufficient funds to continue statutory services.
- 5.4. The Council must be able to demonstrate that it is providing its residents and businesses with the best value for money option.
- 5.5. As a Council we need to ensure that our approach to public toilets is targeted and efficient, taking a collaborative approach to ensure the best possible outcome for our residents and businesses.
- 5.6. By recommending Option 1 to Full Council, Cabinet are helping to improve the MTFS for the Council, for 25-26 and beyond.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The provision of Public Conveniences is a discretionary service and at a time when there are significant budgetary pressures rationalization of discretionary services should be a priority along with reviewing services to see if they can be provided differently. A reduction in the number of Public Conveniences will result in savings which will contribute to reducing the forecast budget deficit in future years.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1. Councils currently have no legal requirement to provide public toilets

Comments from the Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (or member of the Legal team on behalf of the MO) will complete this section. They will outline any legal advice provided.

7. Risks

- 7.1. There is a reputational risk in choosing to close toilets, but this risk would be far greater if we cannot find the savings required to reach a balanced budget for 25-26, leading the Authority to be put under a section 114 notice.

8. Net Zero Target

- 8.1. By closing or transferring public toilets from our asset register, this will help to improve the Council's net zero position and will put us closer towards reaching our Net zero target.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

- 9.1. There are some that are concerned that the closures will disproportionately impact people with health issues as well as women and the elderly.
- 9.2. Wherever possible we will try to transfer facilities to alternative providers where there is no other suitable provision in the area, to ensure that residents with health issues as well as women and the elderly are not unnecessarily disadvantaged.

10. Community Safety issues

- 10.1. None Known

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report looks at the different options for the ongoing management of the Council's Public toilet facilities.

The report looked at four different options:

- Option 1 – Full and Winter Closure
- Option 2 – Close all sites.
- Option 3 – Transfer all sites to Town and Parish Councils
- Option 4 – Do nothing.

Members are asked to consider the report and recommend the following to Full Council:

- Option 1 - full and winter closures is progressed by officers
- A second review to look at further closures in 2025/26 takes place as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process