

Consideration of a Petition - Petition against the Closure of public toilets in Stalham	
Executive Summary	The Council received a petition with an aim 'not to close the public toilets in Stalham until further consultation and new toilets are put in place'. Given the number of signatories and that it relates to a particular Ward within the District, this is to be considered as a Ward Petition. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive such petitions and consider what, if any steps, are necessary to take.
Options considered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note receipt of the petition and take no further action; (ii) Agree that appropriate action has already been taken, or is planned, and no further action is necessary; (iii) Request a report from the relevant officer; (iv) Require to be undertaken a detailed scrutiny review, gathering evidence, prior to making recommendations to the relevant committee; Cabinet, or Full Council (v) Refer the matter to another Committee, Cabinet or to Full Council where, in the view of the Committee, appropriate action has not been taken or planned, and it is significant enough to merit this
Consultation(s)	N/A – right to submit a petition
Recommendations	To consider the petition and recommend the appropriate step from the options set out.
Reasons for recommendations	The appropriate step as considered fitting following discussion of the petition by the committee.
Background papers	(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 09/09/2024 10:00 (north-norfolk.gov.uk) Decisions 09th-Sep-2024 10.00 Cabinet.pdf (north-norfolk.gov.uk)

Wards affected	Stalham
Cabinet member(s)	Cllr Shires
Contact Officer	Cara Jordan, Monitoring Officer cara.jordan@north-norfolk.gov.uk

Links to key documents:

Corporate Plan:	<p>Developing Our Communities: We will develop our work to support confident, engaged, resilient and inclusive communities.</p> <p>A Strong, Responsible and Accountable Council: We will ensure the Council maintains a financially sound position, seeking to make the best use of its assets and staff resources, effective partnership working and maximising the opportunities of external funding and income.</p>
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	N/A – consideration of a petition
Council Policies & Strategies	Constitution Chapter 2, paragraph 13; Petitions Scheme

Corporate Governance:	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	<p>Appendix – exempt</p> <p>Information in this appendix involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1, Part 1 of schedule 12A (as amended) to the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>This paragraph relates to:</p> <p>Para 1. Information relating to any individual</p> <p>The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:</p> <p>The documents contain a petition with information relating to the personal data of individuals, including where they live. It is considered that disclosure of this information may have a prejudicial or detrimental impact and be contrary to the data rights of those who signed the petition. The privacy rights of such individuals outweigh the public interest in disclosure.</p>
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	<p>(Public Pack)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 09/09/2024 10:00 (north-norfolk.gov.uk)</p> <p>Decisions 09th-Sep-2024 10.00 Cabinet.pdf (north-norfolk.gov.uk)</p>

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 Summary

This report advises Members of a petition received in connection with the proposed closure of the public toilets in Stalham. The petition has, as its aim, 'not to close the public toilets in Stalham until further consultation and new toilets are put in place'.

2. Introduction & Background

2.1. Background information

The Council's Cabinet considered a report on 9 September 2024 which looked 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 Medium-Term Financial Statement ['MTFS']. The Stalham toilets were identified, in that report, as having low usage and with a number of surrounding businesses that provide facilities, with a proposal to close or sell the facilities.

After consideration of the item, Cabinet resolved that full and winter closure of toilets, as detailed in the report, be progressed by officers, for the least well used and most aged sites in terms of management or maintenance, to include discussions with town and parish councils and other interested parties, regarding possible transfer of sites, where there is a particular context for doing so.

Although officers have been asked to progress the closure of the toilets identified in the report, it would appear that a decision is yet to be finalised.

2.2. The Petition

On 14 October 2024, a paper and online petition with 787 signatures from residents stating addresses or post codes from within the North Norfolk District was provided to the North Norfolk District Council, worded as follows:

"North Norfolk District Council have proposed to close our public toilets, leaving Stalham as the only town in North Norfolk not to have public toilets. This decision has been taken without any consultation with residents, businesses or elected district councillors or the Town Council.

Although NNDC has stated they plan to replace the toilets subject to funding, there has been no discussion or plans when this will happen. We would want to ensure our current toilets remain open until the new toilets are in place.

We, the undersigned, request that North Norfolk District Council, do not close the public toilets in Stalham until further consultation and new toilets are in place."

Some additional signatories may not fall to be accepted within the petition scheme where there is insufficient information to support that the signatory lives, works or studies within the North Norfolk District Council area. The petition has been accepted by the Council as a valid petition. As the petition relates to a single ward

within the North Norfolk area, and with reference to the number of signatories, this petition may be considered by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3. Proposals and Options

- 3.1. This is a petition brought by members of the public. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should consider the petition and consider whether it should take any step in response.
- 3.2. The options, as regards steps in response, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may wish to consider are:
 - (i) Note receipt of the petition and take no further action;
 - (ii) Agree that appropriate action has already been taken or is planned and no further action is necessary;
 - (iii) Request a fuller report from the relevant officer;
 - (iv) Require to be undertaken a detailed scrutiny review, gathering evidence prior to making recommendations to the relevant committee, Cabinet or Full Council.
 - (v) Refer the matter to another Committee, Cabinet or to Full Council where, in the view of the Committee, appropriate action has not been taken or planned, and it is significant enough to merit this

4. Corporate Priorities

- 4.1. Developing Our Communities: We will develop our work to support confident, engaged, resilient and inclusive communities. Ensuring that people feel well informed about local issues, have opportunities to get involved, influence local decision making, shape their area and allow us to continue to improve the services they receive.
- 4.2. A Strong, Responsible and Accountable Council: We will ensure the Council maintains a financially sound position, seeking to make the best use of its assets and staff resources, effective partnership working and maximising the opportunities of external funding and income.

5. Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1. Whilst there is no particular resource implication in the discussion of the petition, any outcome may impact upon the Council's finances and resources and any recommendations should be commensurate and considered with regard to Council resources, including actions for officers. It is noted that the management and maintenance of Council's public toilets stock was considered by Cabinet in light of a worsening financial detailed in the MTFS.

Comments from the S151 Officer:

The S151 Officer (or member of the Finance team on their behalf) will complete this section.



6. Legal Implications

None in particular.

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.

The Localism Act 2011 repealed the statutory requirement to consider petitions made to the Council, but there is a discretionary mechanism to do so set out in the Constitution and the Council's petition scheme.

7. Risks

7.1. The Committee must consider the petition. It is noted that decisions of the Council may involve a balance between a reputational risk in closing a public facility, with the need to consider the financial constraints of the organisation. Whilst there is no inherent risk in considering the petition, any outcome or recommendation will need to take into account the availability of finance and resources.

8. Net Zero Target

8.1. There are no impacts against the Council's Net Zero strategy and Climate Action Plan in consideration of the petition, but the subject matter of the petition, and any future decision to close or keep open these toilets may impact upon that target.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

9.1. Provision of public conveniences is at the discretion of a local authority, but where such are provided, consideration should be had to eliminating discrimination and promoting equality.

10. Community Safety issues

10.1. None identified.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

11.1. A list of options are detailed below as to how to respond to the petition. Having considered the petition, Members of the Committee should resolve to take any such steps, or no steps, as are considered necessary.

- (i) Note receipt of the petition and take no further action;
- (ii) Agree that appropriate action has already been taken or is planned and no further action is necessary;
- (iii) Request a fuller report from the relevant officer;
- (iv) Require to be undertaken a detailed scrutiny review, gathering evidence prior to making recommendations to the relevant committee, Cabinet or Full Council.
- (v) Refer the matter to another Committee, Cabinet or to Full Council where, in the view of the Committee, appropriate action has not been taken or planned, and it is significant enough to merit this