

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 16 May 2024

## Temporary Toilet Facilities (in Parks)

Executive/routine  
Wards

Routine  
5 - Inverleith,10 - Morningside,11 - City Centre,13 -  
Leith,17 - Portobello/Craigmillar

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Culture and Communities Committee:
  - 1.1.1 Notes the progress towards the provision of permanent public toilet facilities in Inverleith Park, the Meadows, and Leith Links; and
  - 1.1.2 Notes the provision of temporary public toilets in the above three parks for the summer 2024 period.

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## Temporary Toilet Facilities (in Parks)

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report sets out progress with the development of permanent public toilets in three premier parks: Inverleith Park, Leith Links, and the Meadows. While the design, construction, and installation of these facilities takes place, temporary toilets will be provided for the summer period (June to October).

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 Access to public toilets is a basic human requirement. Many people plan their journeys around access to toilets or avoid drinking or eating to avoid the need to find appropriate facilities. Others may restrict the length of time they spend outdoors or decide not to venture out at all and deprive themselves of the opportunity to spend time in our parks and openspaces. Providing greater access to toilets in the city's premier parks enables residents and visitors to spend more time outdoors, to explore what green spaces the city has to offer.
- 3.2 Many of the city's parks and openspaces are popular with residents and visitors, especially for recreation since reaping the benefits of using them during the pandemic. This has led to demand for good quality, public toilet facilities in outdoor visitor destinations (especially in our premier parks, the regional park, and beach/waterfront areas).
- 3.3 Temporary public toilets have been provided in three premier parks in Edinburgh (Inverleith, Leith Links, and the Meadows) during the summer for the last three years due to increased visitor numbers, issues of antisocial behaviour, and increased community demand.
- 3.4 To date, the provision has been temporary and seasonal. However, in February 2023, the Council approved funding of £3m for parks and greenspaces. £600,000 of this funding was allocated to replace temporary provision at these locations with more permanent, publicly accessible toilets.
- 3.5 On 29 February 2024, Committee approved a motion by Councillor Osler on Temporary Toilets in Parks which included a request for a report setting out the timelines for establishment of permanent facilities in each of Inverleith Park, Leith Links and the Meadows, and setting out other parks that could be considered for

temporary facilities if they are not required in any such locations on account of permanent facilities actually being installed.

## **4. Main report**

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- 4.1 The temporary provision of male, female, and disabled facilities during the summer period sought to address specific need, but this has highlighted the desire for improved, all-year round, more permanent provision in key locations.
- 4.2 An assessment of options for building public toilets in parks has been carried out. This considered refurbishment of existing pavilion buildings in each park as well as building from new. Due to various restrictions and the cost implications of refurbishing existing pavilions, it was determined that designing and building new toilets would be the best option.
- 4.3 Officers engaged with approved Changing Places toilet providers whilst developing a procurement specification, and a procurement exercise has now been completed with Healthmatic being appointed as the preferred supplier. The contract was awarded on 15 April 2024 for a period of nine months (to 15 January 2025).
- 4.4 While the aim was to have these in place by the summer of 2024, it is now likely that the new facilities will not be ready until later in the calendar year. As a result, temporary provision will be put in place for summer 2024 in the three premier parks.
- 4.5 Technology can be used to remotely open and lock the buildings to help with dealing with security, maintenance, and repair issues. There is also potential to future proof the building design for the installation of appropriate hardware and software to support payment and charging for use. This will be subject to further engagement with elected members should the Council wish to explore this option in the future.
- 4.6 Temporary toilets will also return to Straiton Place Park, Portobello, for the summer.
- 4.7 While every endeavour is being made to maintain the same level of temporary provision as in previous years, it may change due to the availability of units from the supplier. Further updates will be provided to affected Ward Councillors and Committee members.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 Work is continuing on the design, construction, and installation of permanent toilets for each of the three premier parks. Engagement, both internally and externally, will assess the design and help inform future maintenance and servicing requirements.
- 5.2 The construction of the units will take place off site. Current timescales are provisional and do make some allowance for delays caused by dependencies outwith the Council's control (such as the necessary permissions required so that electricity, water, and sewerage connections can be made).

- 5.3 Liaison with planning and building standards over planning permission and building warrants will also be undertaken at the appropriate time.
- 5.4 The work will lay the foundations for the standards of provision, maintenance, and cleanliness of future public toilet facilities in other parks and openspaces.
- 5.5 Temporary toilets will be installed beginning in May 2024, for operation from June until end of October (as in previous years). Hours of operation will be 10am to 8pm daily. Signage will also be installed at each site.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 A capital budget of £600,000 has been earmarked for the design, construction, and installation of semi-permanent toilets in Inverleith Park, Leith Links, and the Meadows. The exact cost of the toilets will not be known under the final designs have been developed.
- 6.2 A revenue budget of £100,000 has been allocated for the provision of temporary toilets for the summer period.
- 6.3 While the concept of charging for the use of public toilets is not new, the matter would require separate future consideration by Committee. It should be noted that there are no immediate plans to charge for the use of these facilities, but it is acknowledged that any income generated could be used to support the maintenance and upkeep of them, as well as supplement expansion of the provision to other parks and openspaces.
- 6.4 There will be ongoing revenue budget requirements for sundries, cleaning, and repairs to the toilet facilities.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 The Council wants everyone, regardless of their ability, to enjoy access to the city's parks and openspace facilities. For some people with disabilities, the lack of a fully accessible toilet makes this difficult.
- 7.2 The Council aims to maximise the availability of toilet facilities to all and support the privacy and dignity of all patrons irrespective of gender, age, or ability. This can include separate male and female toilets or individual all-gender facilities.
- 7.3 Similarly, a Changing Places toilet will be incorporated, if possible, as this would support people who have limited mobility and cannot use standard accessible toilets due to needing additional equipment to help them use the facilities or require access to a safe space for changing. Standard accessible toilets (or 'disabled toilets') tend not to provide adequate equipment (such as changing benches or hoists) and most are too small to accommodate more than one person.

7.4 Throughout the project, officers have had discussions with specific groups to understand their key issues. In addition to disability groups, officers have engaged with:

- We Run Edinburgh – women-led running group;
- Edinburgh’s Women’s Aid;
- Amina Muslim Women Centre;
- Mecopp, a charity working with ethnic minority carers;
- Scottish Trans; and
- LGBT Health.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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8.1 As a public body, the Council has statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity. The Council

*“must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of emissions reduction targets”*

(Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019), and

*“in exercising any functions, to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as it is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions”*

(Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004)

8.2 The City of Edinburgh Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and committed to work towards a target of net zero emissions by 2030 for both city and corporate emissions and embedded this as a core priority of the Council Business Plan 2023-27. The Council also declared a Nature Emergency in 2023.

### **Environmental Impacts**

8.3 In order to meet the building warrant requirements, consideration will be given to the environmental and sustainability impacts of the buildings. From reducing energy use, minimising waste and water use, these modern facilities aim to showcase modern, efficient public toilet facilities.

8.4 Some attention will be given to landscape design around the toilets and ensuring routes are accessible. Designs will look to incorporate green roofs, photovoltaic panels, and rainwater capture (to use as grey water) as part of the design of the toilets, where feasible.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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9.1 The friends’ groups, community councils, and other community interest groups have long been advocating the provision of public toilets in the three premier parks.

- 9.2 Further analysis of the risk, compliance, and community impacts will be carried out as these, and other public toilets, are considered for areas of high demand. Provision of public toilets also features in the 20-minute neighbourhood project.
- 9.3 Since the beginning of the project, Council officers have engaged with local and national services (such as PAMIS (Promoting a more inclusive society) and Police Scotland), ward councillors, Friends of parks groups, community council members, and other service areas. Early discussions highlighted the importance of operation and safety; cleaning and maintenance; eco-friendly and sustainability; accessibility and inclusivity; and community and cultural integration.
- 9.4 All parties are hugely supportive of the new public toilets and wish to continue on as a consultee working group during the design phase. As a result of this, officers aim to create a replicable model that can serve for the future development, delivery, and maintenance of public toilets in Edinburgh.
- 9.5 Following commencement of the contract, the Contract Manager will work with Healthmatic Limited to finalise the community benefits to be delivered as part of the contract.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 None.

## **11. Appendices**

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