

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 14 October 2021

Future Provision of Public Conveniences Update

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Transport and Environment Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the update provided on the actions agreed by Committee in April 2021;
 - 1.1.2 Notes the investment required to support the creation of new (or refurbished) facilities;
 - 1.1.3 Notes the update on the removal of temporary toilets.

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Future Provision of Public Conveniences Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the actions agreed on 22 April 2021 by Transport and Environment Committee on the immediate need for toilet facilities and future permanent provision in Edinburgh.

3. Background

- 3.1 On [6 October 2020](#), the Policy and Sustainability Committee approved the approach to developing a public convenience strategy and approved commencement of assessment of possible locations for new/or improved public convenience facilities.
- 3.2 On [22 April 2021](#), the Transport Environment Committee approved the proposed locations for the future provision of public conveniences in Edinburgh and agreed the initial focus should be on ensuring public conveniences are in premier parks.
- 3.3 Committee also agreed to refer a decision to Full Council to approve an additional £450,000 from COVID funds for temporary public toilets, meeting accessibility needs, in premier parks that required facilities and other locations where people will congregate in large numbers over the summer months. Full Council agreed the additional funding on 29 April 2021.
- 3.4 Further, Committee approved a range of actions regarding the immediate needs in relation to the temporary facilities for the summer months, signage and the public convenience at Colinton; and future provision in relation to locations, consultation and Haymarket.

4. Main report

Immediate toilet provision needs

- 4.1 The additional funding was used to install temporary toilets, with accessible facilities, at Inverleith Park, Leith Links and the Meadows at the end of June for the summer months until the end of September. In the Meadows these were located at the main events area, which is just off Middle Meadow Walk, to ensure they were placed in a central location within the park.

- 4.2 The funding was also used to put the staffing and measures in place to allow the re-opening of all the remaining public conveniences (which were closed during the pandemic) at the end of June (a summary of the measures required is included in Appendix 1). It was also used to support the re-opening of toilets in parks normally managed by Facilities Management, such as Lauriston Castle and Saughton Park. The opening hours of the toilets in high footfall areas such as the Meadows and Portobello Prom were extended to 8pm to meet the extra demand.
- 4.3 In the Pentland Hills Regional Park temporary toilets were installed at Harlaw visitor centre, Bonaly (Upper car park) and Threipmuir (car park). An accessible toilet is also available at each location. These are funded by NatureScot Green Recovery Fund until the end of October 2021. Going forward the Council has been successful in obtaining funding from VisitScotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) to install permanent toilets at these locations. Work is ongoing to ensure the correct permissions are in place for these toilets.
- 4.4 Temporary signage has been installed indicating where the temporary toilets are located. The Council's [website](#) has been updated and indicates where all the toilets (temporary and permanent) are located, opening hours and which have accessible facilities.

Colinton Public toilets

- 4.5 Committee asked officers to engage with the local community in Colinton to understand if a community asset transfer (CAT) of Colinton's public toilets could be used as a vehicle for improving provision and, meanwhile, retain the Colinton Public Convenience throughout the process of local engagement and the development of any other alternative plans as part of the ongoing public conveniences strategy.
- 4.6 Officers met with community representatives and Councillors on 4 June 2021 to discuss the Colinton public conveniences. The community representatives indicated there was no local appetite for a CAT of these facilities at this time as they were already focussing on a CAT in Spylaw Park. On this basis, a further decision will now need to be made by Committee on whether to maintain the facility (outside of the plans for future provision) or close it.
- 4.7 It was acknowledged that more people are visiting the area either on their way to the Pentlands or to go to Colinton Tunnel, which has recently been highlighted as a tourist destination by Visit Scotland. To aid the decision making, it was agreed that the usage of the toilets would be monitored for 12 months and that this data, along with qualitative data, would be considered to provide a 'holistic' view on whether Colinton toilets fall into the future provision. Meanwhile the toilets would remain open and additional signage would be installed to promote them further to visitors to Colinton Tunnel.

Permanent toilets provision

- 4.8 The City of Edinburgh District order Confirmation Act 1991 Part VI (which is an Act of Parliament) restricts development of new toilets with a concession to the footprint of existing buildings in the Meadows, Bruntsfield Links and Leith Links.

- 4.9 In the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links there are already public conveniences in the west on Bruntsfield Links and at the east side next to the large play area. Since the toilets at Middle Meadow Walk were closed there is now a gap in the middle of the park. The temporary toilets have been placed at the main events area in the Meadows but this is not a suitable location in the long term as no concession could be added to them due to The City of Edinburgh District order Confirmation Act 1991 Part VI.
- 4.10 It is considered that the best location would be within the cricket pavilion which is currently leased to Edinburgh Leisure. The Council is currently in the process of terminating this arrangement and looking at options for its future use. Ensuring public toilets are included at the location will be a condition of any future use of the building.
- 4.11 A CAT request was submitted in April for the cricket pavilion and discussions are underway with the community group on possible options.
- 4.12 Leith Links is one of the sites where the Parks and Greenspaces Team are producing a master plan as part of the Thriving Green Spaces Project. The team will be working closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Community Council and residents. The future provision of toilets at Leith Links will be considered as part of this master planning work. In addition, Earth in Common, (formally known as Leith Community Crops in Pots) are seeking funding to develop a new café on the Croft and have indicated they would be interested in being part of the Community Toilet Scheme in due course.
- 4.13 In April 2021 Committee approved the requirement for toilets in Premier parks rather than Local Nature Reserves. Placing toilets in other football parks or Local Nature Reserves does not align to the agreed way forward. However, it is recognised that there are currently toilets at Hermitage of Braid, which have been closed for repairs. Once the repairs have been completed then the toilets will be re-opened and maintained until they reach the end of their life.
- 4.14 As well as the work being undertaken at Leith Links and the Meadows, exploration of commercial and community partnerships are also being considered at Inverleith, which is also subject to a master planning by the Thriving Greenspaces project. There are also community interest proposals developing opportunities at Portobello Promenade and Cramond.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Through the Thriving Green Spaces Project, masterplans will be developed for Inverleith Park and Leith Links. The importance of public toilets in these parks is recognised and appropriate locations, model of operation and funding will be considered as part of the masterplan work. Officers will continue to work with the local community interested in the cricket pavilion in the Meadows.
- 5.2 Officers will continue to review the Scottish Government guidance for public conveniences and will assess the impact of any changes on the existing arrangements for public conveniences in the city.

- 5.3 The additional funding for the temporary toilets has allowed the temporary toilets at the Meadows, Inverleith and Leith Links to be provided until the end of October 2021. They will then be removed.
- 5.4 The funding from the NatureScot Green Recovery Fund for the temporary toilets at the Pentlands ends at the of October. They will be removed at this time.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The creation of any new (or refurbished) toilet facilities will require capital funding. It is estimated that around £250,000 would be sufficient to create a toilet facility, although the exact costs will depend the location, scale and whether there is an existing building which can be used. A similar sum may be required for refurbished buildings depending on the scale of changed required. A bid for capital funding will be made through the Council's budget setting process in February 2022.
- 6.2 Where there is local interest in a Community Asset Transfer a condition of ensuring public toilets provided with be included in the agreement.
- 6.3 Where new toilet blocks are created in parks, it is proposed to include concessions within the facility and two models of maintenance could be considered to address on-going revenue costs – either the concessionaire could be service tenants who are responsible for the maintenance of the toilets; or the lease costs could off-set the running costs of the toilet facility.
- 6.4 Where toilets within Council buildings/hubs are used, the additional revenue costs will be marginal as they will already be being maintained by Facilities Management. Any such revenue costs would be considered as part of the business case for each building.
- 6.5 The temporary toilets at Leith Links, Inverleith Park and Meadows have been subject to high levels of vandalism since they were installed, costing around £10k in repairs to date. Further costs when these are decommissioned are expected but unknown at this time.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 An interim integrated impact assessment has been undertaken. This has identified the key topics/subject areas that need to be consulted on when new toilets are being considered and the facilities at each location determined. A consultation will be undertaken in line with Scottish Government guidelines at every new/refurbished toilet facility.
- 7.2 The Master planning at Leith Links and Inverleith will allow the local community and stakeholders to input into any future designs, including the installation of public conveniences.
- 7.3 Many of the Council's public conveniences are not compliant with the current DDA requirements. Any refurbished or new facilities should all be compliant with the current DDA requirements and there is an opportunity to include Changing Places at these locations to ensure that they are accessible for all.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Edinburgh's [Public Parks and Gardens Strategy 2006](#).

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Measures Required for Safe Operation of Public Conveniences through COVID-19 pandemic

Appendix 1: Measures required to reopen public conveniences during the COVID-19 pandemic

There are currently measures and costs associated with reopening public conveniences including:

- Adequate staffing to maintain public health;
- Legionella flushing (as the facilities have not been used for so long);
- Assessment on how many people can be in each facility at one time whilst maintaining the 2m distancing. This is displayed at the entrance of each toilet;
- Installation of public health signage;
- Deep cleaning of facilities; and
- Minor remedial repairs to enable the facility to reopen (e.g. installation of hand sanitiser dispensers, hand towel boxes, replacing toilet seats); and
- Internal adjustments (e.g. closing cubicles if more than one to maintain physical distancing).