

Public Toilets Refurbishment and Renewal Project

Cabinet	14 December 2023
Report Author	Luke Glover, Deputy Technical Services Manager
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Steve Albon, Cabinet Member for Cleansing and Coastal Services
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	Yes
Reasons for Key	An Executive Decision that involves incurring expenditure anticipated to be £250,000 or above.
Ward:	All wards

Executive Summary:

Budgets with a value of £1.25m have been identified for investment in public toilets across the district. There is potential for this budget value to increase to £1.5m subject to a further sum of £250k being approved via external funding. This investment is the start of an anticipated wider and longer term programme of public toilet improvements subject to further funding being identified.

This report proposes a schedule of repairs and capital improvements at 10 locations across the district. The proposals are informed by a survey of 27 public toilets completed by Geoff Oliver & Associates Ltd in 2023. The Council has made available an initial budget of £279k of revenue funding towards completing some of these repairs. The Council cannot undertake all repairs, at all 27 public toilets, straight away, as funding is not currently available to do this. This report identifies which works in the survey should be taken forward with the available funding.

Additionally, £571k of capital funding has been identified for new build capital works for areas where public toilets may be end of life or require a new accessible toilet. £450k of this capital funding will come from additional borrowing and £121k will be a revenue contribution to capital coming from our earmarked reserves. This report will identify which new build works should be taken forward with the available funding.

Finally, this report will factor in £650k of additional external funding. This is made up of £250k from Southern Water and £400k from the Margate Town Deal. This external funding is earmarked for specific schemes.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Cabinet approves the schedule of works this report suggests in 3.1 / 3.2 (either option 1 or option 2, dependent on the outcome of discussions with Southern Water) which will be undertaken using:
 - £400k of funding from earmarked reserves. Under option 1 £279k will be allocated for revenue repairs and £121k revenue contribution to capital. Under option 2 the whole £400k will be allocated to revenue repairs.
 - £450k of capital funding (via borrowing)
 - £400k from the Margate Town Deal funding (external grant)

- b) That Cabinet recommends to Council that a one-off supplementary General Fund revenue budget of £279k be approved for the repairs to existing facilities; to be funded from an underspend identified at the end of 2022/23 and allocated to earmarked reserves for investment in toilet facilities;
- c) That Cabinet endorses the proposed financing of the existing £749k budget for the Public Toilets refurbishment and renewal project within the 2023/24 Capital Programme, to be a mix of £450k of borrowing, a £121k contribution from earmarked reserves, with financing of the remaining £179k to be identified at a later date; with the actual financing of the capital programme being determined by the s151 officer as per officer delegations;
- d) That Cabinet recommends to Council that a supplementary General Fund capital budget of £250k be approved for the refurbishment of existing Botany Bay toilets, subject to the outcome of the discussions with Southern Water for funding to the value of £250k.
- e) That Cabinet approves a budget virement (adjustment) to be made if the discussions with Southern Water are not successful, as per option 2, with a virement of £121k from the budget for the revenue contribution to capital to be transferred to the revenue budget for repairs to existing facilities.
- f) Cabinet notes that £400k of approved capital budget is allocated for toilet facilities within the Margate Town Deal scheme in the 2023/24 Capital Programme
- g) That a further report be taken to Cabinet before the end of October 2024 which provides an update on toilet refurbishment and improvement works, including the outcome of the Southern Water financial contribution. The report shall also propose next steps to address refurbishment or improvements at the public toilets not included in this initial phase.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

Officers have identified £1.25m of available funding for the Public Toilets Refurbishment and Renewal Project. This funding can be broken down into:

- a) £400k from an underspend identified at the end of 2022/23 and allocated to earmarked reserves for investment in toilet facilities. This revenue source of funding can be used flexibly and under option 1 it is proposed that £279k will be allocated for revenue repairs and £121k as a contribution to the capital refurbishment schemes, whereas under option 2 the whole £400k is allocated for revenue repairs.
- b) £450k borrowing to facilitate capital expenditure for new build facilities. The repayment of these borrowing costs can be fully funded from the revenue budget savings that were released following the removal of business rates charges on public toilet facilities. This funding will be used to part-fund the £749k capital scheme that has been approved within the 2023/24 capital programme;
- c) £400k of funding from the Margate Town Deal for the subterranean toilets in Margate.

An additional £250k could be available from Southern Water for refurbishment of the Botany Bay toilets which would alleviate strain on the budget, this report includes recommendations with and without securement of this funding. If this funding is made available it will also be used to part finance the existing approved scheme within the capital programme.

Legal

This report is for consideration and in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel may make recommendations to be considered by Cabinet.

Risk Management

A risk register has been developed for the project. The risk register considers financial, health and safety, procurement, legal and community risks. The risk register will be maintained as a live document and will be updated as the project progresses.

Corporate

The public toilets are a key service provided by the Council for the benefit of residents of, and visitors to, key locations within the district.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Environment
- Growth

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council is responsible for maintenance of 27 public toilets.

1.2 The Council commissioned a condition survey of the public toilets in 2022. The survey identified that £1.3m of repairs were required, and that of this £1m would need to be spent within the next few years.

1.3 At the Cabinet meeting on Thursday 21 September 2023 the budget monitoring report confirmed that there was an approved capital budget of £749k for the public toilets refurbishment and renewal project, however only £400k of funding had been identified at that juncture to facilitate the project.

1.4 To ensure the project moved forward at pace and had appropriate project management capacity, the consultant AECOM was contracted to this project in October 2023. Their role was to conduct an exercise in conjunction with officers to determine what works shall be recommended to the Council to take forward, within the confines of the funding available.

1.5 For the schedule of works prioritisation exercise the following criteria was used:

- Visitor numbers – frequency of use for the toilet.
- Significance of area – proximity to landmark/attraction.
- Need for improvement of disabled access.
- Bathing water quality issues.
- Need for improvement of current baby changing facilities (if any).

- 1.6 For each toilet, the above determinants were ranked either low, medium or high status. This exercise then produced a list of the toilets the Council should focus on first with the funding available.

2.0 Current Situation

- 2.1 The toilets to receive revenue repairs funding are:

- St Mildred's Bay, Westgate (£18k)
- West Bay, Westgate (£36k)
- Joss Bay (£21k)
- Broadstairs Harbour (£72k)
- The Centre, Margate (£13k)
- Ramsgate Pier Yard (£39k)
- Viking Bay (chalet block) (£80k)

- 2.2 The total spend on the seven toilets above comes to £279k. It must be made clear that this is for repair of existing defects and is not a full refurbishment of the toilets (see Annex 1 - Schedule of Works). For full refurbishment to a higher specification, like the recently completed Margate Harbour Arm toilets, which cost £82k, an additional budget of circa £700k would be required on top of the currently identified budget.

- 2.3 The revenue repair costs, if approved, can be completed ready for the 2024 summer season.

- 2.4 It is recommended that a new toilet block at Stone Bay is built with the £450k capital funding. The new build will provide accessible toilet facilities at Stone Bay, to replace the currently small toilet block which is only accessible via steps. The current toilets are halfway up the cliff, and are at the end of their life. The cost of undertaking this new build is estimated to be more than £450k and so will require the reallocation of the remaining £121k of revenue repairs funding as a revenue contribution to capital.

- 2.5 In regard to Marine Terrace subterranean toilets located in Margate, the current facility is unsuitable for disabled use under the Equality Act 2010. Thus, a single new build accessible toilet needs to be built at promenade level. This work shall be funded by the Margate Town Deal funding. The Council has assigned £400k of this funding to the project. It is envisaged that the accessible toilet will not use up the whole of the funding available and that the existing subterranean toilets can also be repaired with this money.

- 2.6 Southern Water have discussed the possibility of committing £250k in funding for the refurbishment of Botany Bay toilets, the estimate for these works includes a new layout and reorganising internal partitions. Southern Water have also committed to placing seasonal Portacabin style toilets at the car park end of the bay, providing the required capacity and accessible toilets. Assuming this funding is secured, it would not be required to utilise the alternative funding for improvements to Botany Bay, allowing these monies to be used elsewhere. The options section of this report includes recommendations for with and without Southern Water funding.

3.0 Options

- 3.1 Option 1 – this option includes the funding from Southern Water and encompasses the following:

- The repairs identified in the Geoff Oliver & Associates Ltd survey to the value of £279k on public toilets in St. Mildred's Bay, West Bay, Joss Bay, Broadstairs Harbour, Margate Town Centre, Ramsgate Pier Yard and Viking Bay (Chalet).
- New build accessible facilities at Stone Bay to the value of £571k (£450k from capital

and £121k as a revenue contribution to capital).

- Refurbishment of existing Botany Bay toilets with Southern Water funding to the value of £250k.
- New build accessible toilet at the Margate subterranean toilet's location and repair of the existing toilets with £400k of Margate Town Deal funding.

3.2 Option 2 – this option excludes Southern Water funding and encompasses the following:

- The repairs identified in the Geoff Oliver & Associates Ltd survey to the value of £400k on public toilets in St. Mildred's Bay, West Bay, Joss Bay, Broadstairs Harbour, Margate The Centre, Pier Yard Ramsgate, Botany Bay and Viking Bay (Chalet). Adding in Botany Bay shall mean that £121k is not available as a revenue contribution to capital for new build toilets at Stone Bay.
- New build accessible facilities at Stone Bay to the value of £450k. The facility is likely to be smaller in size to accommodate the smaller budget available for this element of the project.
- New build accessible toilet at the Margate subterranean toilet's location and repair of the existing toilets with £400k of Margate Town Deal funding.

3.3 Due to budget constraints and cost benefit analysis, the following toilets will not be taken forward at this time: Minnis Bay, Alpha Road, Station Road, Dumpton Gap, Harold Road, College Walk, Marine Terrace (Buenos Ayres), King George VI Park, Royal Esplanade Ramsgate (Screaming Alley), Cavendish Street, Ramsgate Cemetery, Ramsgate Bathing Station, Victoria Gardens, Hopeville Avenue, Vere Road, Crofts Place. Works to these toilets have been costed, and improvement works will be subject to future funding being identified.

3.4 The repairs and maintenance identified within the Geoff Oliver & Associates Ltd report across 27 toilets is recommended to be undertaken over the next ten years. They have been priced at a value of approximately £1.3m. Where a capital scheme is taken forward at one of the toilet locations instead of revenue repair works, it will have the effect of reducing the £1.3m figure. Future phases are yet to be planned and will be subject to funding being identified. A summary of all the proposed locations for works can be found in Annex 2.

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Annex List

Annex 1 - Schedule of Works (Revenue)

Annex 2 - Summary of Proposed Locations

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell (Director of Corporate Services - Section 151)

Legal: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)