



# B O S T O N

## B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

REPORT TO:	BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE
DATE:	29 NOVEMBER 2017
SUBJECT:	PUBLIC TOILETS UPDATE
REPORT AUTHOR:	PRINCIPAL OFFICER, BEREAVEMENT & CLEANING
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

### **SUMMARY**

To update Members of BTAC on public toilets provision in Boston town.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the report be noted by Members.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

As part of its work programme the Committee asked that a report be presented to fully inform them of the operation, costs and issues relating to the public toilets and the Community Toilet Scheme.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

Members' Update

## REPORT

- 1.0 The Council operates three public toilet sites, all located within the town centre; Lincoln Lane, Central Park, Wide Bargate (Cattle Market).
- 2.0 These 3 facilities were refurbished four years ago at a cost of £86,000 as the facilities; in particular those at Wide Bargate were extremely tired and unwelcoming. Payment mechanisms were installed on the entry doors and a fee of 20p was instituted. Charging has had two benefits. The first has been the creation of an income stream of around £23,000 pa and the second has been the reduction in antisocial behaviour, in particular vandalism and drug-related behaviour, however, these problems have not been *totally* eradicated.
- 3.0 The provision at each of the BBC sites is as follows:

	Ladies	Gents	Disabled Persons	Baby changing
Central Park	6 cubicles	2 cubicles 3 urinals	2 external access	1 in Gents 1 in Ladies
Wide Bargate	5 cubicles	2 cubicles 4 urinals	2 external access	1 in Ladies
Lincoln Lane	4 cubicles	1 cubicle 1 trough urinal	1 external access	1 in Ladies

- 4.0 The work of the Prosperous Boston Task & Finish Group identified, through feedback, a need for increased public toilets provision in the town. A positive outcome of this has been the introduction of a Community Toilets Scheme (CTS) during 2016, where businesses within the town allow the public to use their toilets (without necessarily patronising the business), and the Council provides support to them in the form of signage and/or additional cleaning. The potential benefit for the business is increased footfall.
- 5.0 The public toilets provision, now funded by BTAC and augmented by the availability of 3 additional sites through the CTS, has doubled to 6 sites.

The 3 sites belonging to the CTS are: Oldrids, St. Botolph's Church and ASDA.

The council provides a cleaning service to St. Botolph's, whereas Oldrids and ASDA continue to service their own facilities but have signage indicating their availability. The availability and location of all 6 facilities is published on the Council's website.

## OPENING HOURS and STAFFING

- 6.0 The three BBC facilities are open from 8 am until 6pm, 7 days per week all year round, except Wednesdays and Saturdays when they open at 7 am for the Market. Central Park toilets remain open until 8pm from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September as people are using the Park into the evening.

Asda and Oldrids are open during their normal opening times which is 7 days per week and St. Botolph's toilets are open 8 till 4.30 7 days

Extended hours operate during special events such as May Fair, events in the Park etc. Toilets are closed on Christmas Day, but usually the Park toilets open on Boxing Day and New Year Day.

- 7.0 The facilities are cleaned and serviced by 2 fulltime staff (37 hours p.w.) and 1 part-time (27 hours p.w.) using a small van travelling from site to site throughout the day. This provides 101 man hours per week spread over the 7 day opening period which varies from a minimum of 72 hours to a maximum of 86 depending on the time of year. This enables 2 staff to be on duty Wednesdays and Saturdays, whilst they are alone on other days except at times of cash collection. During periods of annual leave or sickness team members cover the vacant hours to maintain at least 1 member of staff on duty.
- 8.0 At its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2016, BTAC Members agreed to a financial commitment of £180k to ensure the ongoing operation of the three main sites. With staffing savings of £45k delivered through the transformation programme this gave the potential to invest some of these savings and launch the Community Toilet scheme with effect from December 2016.
- 9.0 Although now wholly funded by BTAC, the public toilets are serviced by the Council and sit within the Environmental Operations department, with line supervision based at the Crematorium.

## **OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

- 10.0 The level of formal complaints is low. There were no formal complaints about the toilets in 16/17 and 2 in 17/18 so far. Here are the details:

*F021-17-18:* Complaint about the toilets at Lincoln Lane – The toilets were inspected and no evidence was found to show that there was an issue.

*F056-17-18:* Complaint about the toilets at Lincoln Lane – There were some issues with the door mechanism and flooding which had already been put right before the complaint was received.

Some complaints come direct to officers rather than through the formal route, but are often mostly a request for service, where someone has encountered a mess which has occurred between the Attendants' visits or failures with the coin entry mechanisms.

- 11.0 Members recently conducted a tour of the facilities as part of a general tour of the town centre and a number of problems were observed including broken locks and plumbing issues. Such issues are common (as detailed below) and minor repairs are routinely attended to by the Toilet attendants. More complex repairs are resolved as quickly as is practical through the Council's Property Services team using their nominated contractor. The reporting and follow-up system has been strengthened and there are currently fewer issues – however problems occur almost daily.
- 12.0 All of the facilities suffer petty vandalism in the form of smashed toilet seats, toilet roll holders, soap dispensers, cubicle locks and plumbing fittings. There is also theft of toilet rolls and soap - particularly from Disabled facilities. These matters are accommodated within existing Materials and Repairs & Maintenance budgets.

- 13.0 Entry doors are frequently broken due to attempted forced entry and in such cases income is lost whilst repairs are organised as the entry door will be chocked open to maintain access for the public. Coin mechanisms are troublesome due to their frequency of use and the specialist parts take quite a while to obtain.
- 14.0 Attendants often find entry doors have been wedged open by users to allow others free entry, particularly during high volume usage such as May Fair, Bike Night etc.
- 15.0 Entry into the Disabled Persons' facilities is by use of a RADAR key which can be obtained from the Council upon proof of eligibility. This allows key holders to access the facilities 24 hours a day. However, these keys are available on the internet or by being cut to pattern and it is estimated that there are about 2 million in circulation nationally. Therefore it is impossible for the Council to control access, and the disabled facilities are often used by rough sleepers overnight and sometimes during the day. This causes problems with cleanliness and items such as cans, bottles, food, clothing and bedding are often left.
- 16.0 There is still some evidence of drug use, although this seems to have reduced since the 20p entry charge was introduced. Attendants safely dispose of needles and other paraphernalia. Drug users tend to use the Disabled persons' toilets.
- 17.0 Incidents of drug use, *major* vandalism and anti-social behaviour are reported through the Community Safety team.

## **FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

(see Appendix 1)

- 18.0 Annual income for 2016 / 2017 from the three BBC facilities was £23,000, through the levying of a 20p entrance charge. This equates to about 115,000 users per year. Usage rises in the Summer and dips in the Winter with a peak of about 3,000 visits per week across all facilities.  
The income split between the facilities was as follows:

Central Park	36.4%
Lincoln Lane	31.1%
Wide Bargate	32.5%

Based on income figures to end of October income is on course to be down by C.£2,000 against the previous year. This could be due to downtime of paying mechanisms or increased usage of the (free) CTS toilets.

- 19.0 The Main items of expenditure are on:

- Staff wages
- Cleaning materials, equipment and clothing
- Repairs and maintenance of the facilities.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Detailed in section 16 of the report

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT**

A report on this item has been previously considered by a Council body (BTAC 9.11.2016)