



<b>Subject:</b>	Public Toilets Update
<b>Date:</b>	4 April 2017
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Mr Nigel Grimshaw, Director City & Neighbourhood Services Department
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mr Tim Walker, Head of Waste Management

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the issues surrounding public toilets and seek strategic direction in relation to the Hope Street facility.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the contents of the report, and</li><li>Approve that Waste Management informs the contractor of its intention to terminate the Hope Street, Automatic Public Convenience (APC) contract in line with the contract terms and conditions (i.e. 6 months before contract end date of July 2018).</li></ol>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that Waste Management is responsible for the management of the 14 public toilets within Belfast. The public toilet estate is comprised of 7 traditional toilets, 6 Automatic Public Toilets (APCs) which require payment of a twenty pence fee to access (20p) and 1 retractable urinal at Shaftesbury Square, which supports the night time economy. Details of these facilities are contained in the recently updated promotional leaflet which is distributed by a network of Council and partner organisations (e.g. Belfast Visitor &amp; Welcome Centre, Libraries NI (see Appendix 1) Public Toilets in Belfast (Locations &amp; Opening Times)).</p>
3.2	<p><b>Loo of the Year Awards, 2016</b></p> <p>Members may recall that the Council is assessed each year by the British Toilet Association (BTA) regarding the standard of its public toilets. The BTA is the main organisation promoting and improving standards in “<i>away from home</i>” public toilets in the UK. Its activities include raising awareness of public toilets and recognising good practice through the national “<i>Loo of the Year Awards</i>” which are sponsored by private companies and local tourist boards.</p>
3.3	<p>At the awards ceremony in December 2016, the Council gained the following recognition for its public toilet provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall National Award winner for Public Toilets</li> <li>▪ Attained “<i>Champions League</i>” – Standard of Excellence</li> <li>▪ Winetavern Street toilets – National award winner for non-attended toilets</li> <li>▪ Antrim Road APC – National Award winner for Automatic Public Toilets</li> <li>▪ Seventh position (up one position on previous year) in the Local Authority Public Toilets “<i>Premier League</i>”</li> </ul>
3.4	<p>As well as the above accolades, the Council entered 12 public toilets in the various award categories and all 12 scored platinum, the highest level possible. In addition, the public toilets in the City Hall picked up an award for the best “<i>Town Hall</i>” toilets. Further details on the Loo of the Year awards are available online at <a href="http://www.loo.co.uk/250/2016-National-Award-Winners">http://www.loo.co.uk/250/2016-National-Award-Winners</a></p>
3.5	<p><b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b></p> <p>Over recent years the main unwanted activity experienced at the Council’s public toilets, and in particular APCs, has been the increase in the prevalence of drug related material</p>

discarded or deposited in the units. This is in line with the increasing trend of drug use in society as frequently reported in the media. In November 2016, the BBC reported that the Council's "Needle Exchange Programme" witnessed an increase in visits in four years from 7,500 to just under 15,000. At the time of this news item, there were 18 needle-exchange facilities across NI and 3 additional facilities are due to be provided to support this scheme in 2017.

3.6 Following this increase in sharps finds (syringes), the Council has liaised with their contracted service providers and other public bodies on an on-going basis to take measures to counteract this behaviour. Each of the Council's APCs (except Hope Street) are fitted with sharps boxes to allow a safe disposal route for these items. This initiative was taken by the Service to safeguard the public, as well as Council and contractor staff. Further measures have been installed in these units to deter the use of illegal drugs. Most drug advisory charities give guidance to users on the disposal unit at the public toilets and this appears to be working well.

3.7 Anecdotal reports from the contractor (Healthmatic) who maintains these units and removes the drug related materials, suggests a decrease in the inappropriate disposal of sharps in the APCs. The sharps boxes are being installed in the Council's standard (non-fee paying) public toilets, with Winetavern Street already completed (See Appendix 2) and work is ongoing to install these throughout 2017/18 in the remaining assets, where feasible.

#### **Changing Places Facilities**

3.8 On 6 Feb 2013, the Health & Environmental Services Committee meeting approved a PC Provision Strategy for Belfast. One of the issues highlighted within this report was the absence of a Changing Places facility in the city.

3.9 Thousands of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities cannot use standard accessible toilets. Changing Places facilities include special equipment and support for carers by providing an "away from home" toilet for this audience – and there is a Changing Places Initiative to promote installation of these facilities in suitable venues. Provision of such facilities improves social inclusion and demonstrates a city committed to the benefit of all. It also assists care providers in terms of planning their day out with individuals who would benefit from such facilities.

3.10	<p>When developing the Girdwood Community hub, the Council's project team had the foresight to incorporate a Changing Places toilet in its design making this the first Council site to include such a facility; another unit was installed at the newly refurbished Olympia Leisure Centre. This brings the total number of Changing Places toilets in NI to 15. Further Changing Places toilets have been included in the design stage of other Council Leisure Transformation schemes, and efforts continue to locate a facility in the city centre.</p>
	<p><b>Promotion</b></p>
3.11	<p>To promote general awareness of the Council's public toilets, a number of actions have recently been undertaken. The promotional literature outlining the locations, opening hours and on-site facilities has been revised and is distributed by a network of Council and partner organisations (e.g. Belfast Visitor &amp; Welcome Centre, Libraries NI (see Appendix 1)).</p>
3.12	<p>The toilet information on the Council's web site has been reviewed and updated, along with a new, more informative and user-friendly map which no longer requires a postcode to access relevant information. This amendment is aimed specifically at improving the information for tourists.</p>
3.13	<p>On the streets, the latest signboard designs incorporate information on areas of interest, local landmarks etc and include public toilet details. This signposting of practical information is targeted particularly at out-of-town visitors (see Appendix 2).</p>
3.14	<p>The British Toilet Association (BTA) has approached the Council regarding the potential for an interactive map which would provide details of all toilets available for public use within the city not just those operated by the Council. For example, this could include those facilities present in fast-food premises, hospitality outlets, entertainment venues, retail premises. Again, it is envisaged that this would be particularly useful for tourists.</p>
	<p><b>Hope Street</b></p>
3.15	<p>The APC located at Hope Street is provided under contract by JC Decaux. The unit is an older-model APC (1988) and presents a number of challenges for the Council. The facility was installed before the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act and, as such, does not meet the standards required and included within later versions of APCs.</p>

3.16	<p>In January 2017, UTV ran a news item highlighting a find of drug paraphernalia at the Hope Street APC. Unlike all of the other APCs in the Council's toilet portfolio, due to its older design this unit is unable to accommodate a sharps box. Additionally, the automatic cleaning regime is less rigorous than the newer APC models.</p>
3.17	<p>Given the above issues, and that an alternative public toilet is located on the Dublin Road, less than 325 meters away and within line of sight, the Service recommends that the Hope Street APC should be removed. In order to do this, the Council must give the contractor 6 months' notice before the end of the contract, in July 2018.</p>
3.18	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>Should the Hope Street Unit be removed it would result in avoided costs of around £20,000 per annum. It is suggested that this sum should be re-invested in the public toilet network and in particular to offset any leasing and maintenance costs associated with a new Changing Places facility in the city centre.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.19	<p>There are no relevant Equality or Good Relations implications associated with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Public Toilets in Belfast  Appendix 2 – Disposal units in APCs &amp; Winetavern Street Standard Toilet  Appendix 3 – Promotional activities</p>