

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 26 JULY 2016**

Title of report	<b>COALVILLE PUBLIC TOILETS</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial No b) Community No
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Purpose of report	To propose that the council trial Sunday opening of the Coalville Market public toilets
Reason for Decision	In response to the presentation of an Ordinary petition as per Council Constitution
Council Priorities	Coalville Project Value For Money Homes and Communities
Implications:	
Financial/Staff	That a budget of £2,000 be set aside to cover the anticipated costs of a 5 month trial opening
Link to relevant CAT	Supports the Coalville Project
Risk Management	A risk assessment has been undertaken for the provision of public toilets
Equalities Impact Screening	None discernable
Human Rights	None discernable
Transformational Government	Not applicable

Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	Coalville Special Expense Working Party
Background papers	<a href="#">Full Council Petition 17 May 2016</a> <a href="#">Minutes of the Coalville Special Expense Working Party 7 July 2016</a>
Recommendations	<p><b>THAT CABINET ;</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>AGREE TO A TRIAL PERIOD OF SUNDAY OPENING FOR COALVILLE MARKET TOILETS AS OUTLINED WITHIN THE REPORT</b></li> <li>- <b>AGREE TO SET ASIDE A BUDGET OF £2,000 WITH £1,000 FROM IN YEAR GENERAL FUND UNDERSPENDS MATCHED BY £1,000 FROM COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSE RESERVES</b></li> <li>- <b>AGREE TO DELEGATE ANY CHANGES TO THE DURATION OF THE TRIAL PERIOD AND/OR OPERATIONAL MATTERS TO THE DIRECTOR OF SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b></li> </ul>

## 1.0 THE PETITION

- 1.1 Members will recall that Dorothy Lacey MBE presented a petition to Council on 17 May 2016 in accordance with the Council's petition scheme. The petition asked the Council to "We the undersigned call upon the council to open the Coalville Market toilets on Sundays".
- 1.2 Council resolved that the subject of the petition be placed on the agenda for the next convenient meeting of the Cabinet

## 2.0 COALVILLE TOILETS

- 2.1 The Council has operated two public toilet facilities in the past in Coalville, one located next to Coalville Market and one in Memorial Square. The Memorial Square toilets were an unattended toilet facility which was open on Sundays up until their closure as at 31 March 2010. This closure was agreed by Council through its Budget and Financial Report on 25

February 2010 which agreed to close all of its unattended toilets across the District and included toilets in Whitwick, Measham, Ibstock, Hugglescote, Kegworth, Castle Donington and Coalville. Since closure the Council has received only a handful of formal comments regarding the lack of Coalville public toilets on Sundays and perhaps on average one per year.

- 2.2 The Coalville Market tended toilets have not been open on Sundays for approximately 20 years. A service review of the Coalville and Ashby public toilets was undertaken by the Council in 2014. The review evaluated customer usage in the Ashby town centre tended toilets on Sundays and due to minimal usage it was deemed Sunday opening was not a good use of public resources and they were closed from 4 September 2014. On this basis it was considered not to propose any Sunday opening times for Coalville which if fully staffed (10am to 4pm) would cost in the region of £5,000 per annum.
- 2.3 The Council do continue to support the opening of the public toilets on Sundays when special events are held in the immediate vicinity as indeed the Council do for Ashby Town Centre and their event programme.

### **3.0 BENEFITS OF OPENING THE TOILETS ON A SUNDAY**

- 3.1 The community benefit of opening the public toilets are as follows;
- increased confidence for shoppers to visit the town centre knowing there is public toilet provision
  - increased confidence to visit the town centre on a day when car parking is free
  - supports the Coalville project by demonstrating to town centre businesses that the Council will undertake positive initiatives within its control

### **4.0 TRIAL PERIOD PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 In order to test demand and viability for the market toilets it is proposed the toilets will be opened on Sundays between the hours of 10am and 4pm (the main shopping times).
- 4.2 The Councils Parks Wardens would undertake the opening/closing as part of their warden duties in Coalville and this would be at a minimal cost to the council. Opening and closing with no immediately available staffing presence has the following risks ;
- potential for damage and vandalism
  - potential for Anti Social Behaviour
  - no assistance for any issues with coin/door locks
  - no cleaning presence for any accidents/mess
- 4.3 In order to mitigate the aforementioned risks the following are proposed;
- A further risk assessment is undertaken and any identified actions undertaken
  - The Councils Out of Hours contact number is advertised internally and externally for customers to report any issues

- The Councils Grounds Wardens will be used as a first point of call for issues raised by customers (a further back up arrangement will be established through engagement with a local security company)
- CCTV signage is displayed internally and externally within the toilets stating toilets are covered by the Councils external CCTV cameras
- Toilets are closed/locked on the day if any damage/vandalism arises
- If demand is significant and it is viewed that an attendant presence would be beneficial to the service provision this could be arranged through utilising existing or recruiting additional staff for the trial period. The cost per hour at double time on a Sunday for two hours would be between £40 and £50 per week.

4.4 It is proposed to trial the Sunday opening from w/c 29 August 2016 to w/e 29 January 2017 (approximately 5 months).

4.5 Usage figures will be collated weekly in order to understand demand and to inform a final Sunday opening decision through the 2017/18 budget process, it should be noted usage figures will only be used up until the point of appropriate Cabinet and budget reporting timelines.

## **5.0 CONSIDERATION BY THE COALVILLE SPECIAL EXPENSES WORKING PARTY**

5.1 This matter was considered by the Coalville Special Expenses Working Party on 7 July 2016 with the following extracts from the minutes;

### Coalville Market Toilets

*A petition was recently presented to Full Council asking for the public toilets next to the Council's Market Hall to be opened on Sundays. Cabinet will consider this proposal at its next meeting on 26 July. The working party were asked if they wished to consider supporting or contributing to the cost of opening the market toilets on Sundays. The Head of Community Services confirmed that if it was to be agreed it could be trialled for a number of months with the opening and closing undertaken by the Park wardens. In order to minimise costs there would be no cleaning or supervision during these opening hours which would leave them open to potential abuse but this could be reviewed weekly in light of operational experience.*

*In response to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Community Services reported that there were a mixture of Council funded and Parish funded toilets around the District. It was confirmed that comments from the working party would be fed back to Cabinet when they considered the report.*

*Councillor M Specht did not support the proposal as the toilets were already open six days per week. He commented that Whitwick Parish Council had converted their public toilets into an office block due to lack of use. The Chairman reminded Members that they were being asked whether they wanted to make a contribution to the opening costs for Sundays.*

*Councillor N Clarke commented that he did not believe that Cabinet would agree to the proposal. He suggested that the working party match the amount of funding that Cabinet decide to allocate.*

*Councillor J Legrys explained that he had assisted the residents with the petition and it was predominantly pensioners that did their shopping on a Sunday. He felt that the toilets should be open on Sundays but he was unsure as to how they should be funded, he stated that he would go along with the consensus of the working party.*

*Councillor P Purver supported the proposal in principle. In response to a question the Leisure Services Team Manager confirmed that the toilets at Whitwick Park were open on Sundays and had experienced problems with vandalism.*

*Councillor J Cotterill did not support the proposal.*

*In response to a question from Councillor D Everitt, the Head of Community Services explained the costs involved. The cost for the Park Wardens to open the toilets at 10am and close them at 4.00pm would cost £10 per Sunday. If in the future it was to be staffed and cleaned, there would be a substantial increase in costs. There is a 10p charge for using the toilets, which goes back into the General Fund and this would also be a mechanism for monitoring the amount of use. He commented that there was no way of checking safety of the users so there would need to be a sign displaying the Council's out of hours telephone number in case of an emergency. He believed that the only way to test the demand would be to have a trial opening and the suggestion was do this between September and January.*

*The Chairman expressed concerns that the only way of raising an alarm in the case of an emergency was the out of hours number and if there was no mobile phone available then people were at risk. Councillor D Everitt felt that this should not be a consideration because an incident could occur any day of the week when the toilets were open.*

*Councillor M Specht raised concerns regarding vandalism as it could go unnoticed for quite some time if the toilets were not monitored. He also asked how long it would take to get major damages fixed. The Head of Community Services explained that the toilets would be locked each night so any issues would be picked up at that point. The Leisure Services Team Manager explained that major damages would take approximately 24 to 48 hours and the toilets would need to be closed during that time.*

*Councillor R Adams moved the earlier suggestion of matching any contributions allocated by Cabinet at their meeting on 26 July. It was seconded by Councillor D Everitt. Members agreed.*

*The Chairman wanted it to be made clear to Cabinet that the working party supported the local businesses in Coalville and opening the toilets on Sundays could encourage more trade but they did have safety concerns regarding people needing assistance.*

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The weekly cost without a staffing presence will be approximately £10 for Grounds Wardens to undertake the opening/closing duties plus a limited cost of utilities, this does not include any provision for any vandalism/damage incurred. The costs will in part be offset by the 10p cost of using the toilets. The cost of 2 hours staffing at double time, if required will be between £40 and £50 per week. Based on 22 weeks this equates to an

approximate cost of £1,300 for staffing. It is proposed to set aside a further sum of £700 for any unforeseen costs such as damage.

- 6.2 It is therefore recommended that a budget of £2,000 be set aside to cover the potential costs of the trial period. These costs include potential provision for a limited staffing presence if required and a sum to cover for any maintenance costs. Based upon recommendations from the Coalville Special Expense Working Party it is recommended to fund this equally from in year General Fund underspends and from the Coalville Special Expenses reserves.

## **7.0 COMMUNICATIONS**

- 7.1 If Cabinet are minded to support the recommendations the following would be undertaken;
- Confirmation of proposal and trial period to author of petition Dorothy Lacey MBE
  - Signage on and around the market toilets
  - Letters to town centre businesses
  - Press and social media activity