



PORTFOLIO HOLDER: ENVIRONMENT

CABINET - 6 FEBRUARY 2002

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES – PROPOSED CLOSURES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A report was submitted to the Environment Panel on 18th October 2001 inviting Members to consider the closure of a number of public toilets in support of the Expenditure Plan 2002/03 to 2005/06
- 1.2 Two schedules of options were considered in which different facilities were put forward for consideration. From the schedules Members identified nine toilets and agreed that their closure should be explored further.

2 SCHEDULE OF TOILETS

2.1 The toilets identified for further consideration are as follows:

- 2.1.1 *Blackfield – Hampton Lane
- 2.1.2 *Holbury – Sloane Avenue
- 2.1.3 *Calshot - Car Park at Western end of the spit
- 2.1.4 *Barton Beach – Barton on Sea
- 2.1.5 *Totton - Eling Recreation Ground
- 2.1.6 Totton – Salisbury Road Recreation Ground
- 2.1.7 *Ringwood – Market Place
- 2.1.8 Lyndhurst Car Park – Old Block
- 2.1.9 Brockenhurst – Main A337

* - see paragraph 5.3 below

- # 2.2 Details of each toilet including an assessment of their open market values are included in Appendix 1.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Meetings have taken place with all town and parish councils in whose areas the above toilets are situated. The general feeling is that the toilets are well used and should not be closed.
- 3.2 Details of all the discussions are included in Appendix 1.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 In recent years negotiations have taken place with publicans at Ashurst with a view to them allowing the general public access to their toilet facilities on a formal basis thus avoiding the need for the Council to build a public toilet. The negotiations were both lengthy and unproductive.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Where values are given for the toilets at Blackfield, Holbury and Brockenhurst they are estimates based on the buildings and land at all three sites being sold at auction as a single package.
- 5.2 Demolition costs are always difficult to estimate because they depend on many variables, such as location, access and salvagability of materials but as a rough guide demolition would cost in the region of £4,000 to £5,000 per toilet.
- 5.3 A saving of £26,500 has been included in the expenditure plans and this equates to the closure of the six toilets asterisked in paragraph 2.1 above. The greater part of the saving is achieved through the redundancy of one cleaning operative.
- 5.4 If all nine toilets were closed the saving would be approximately £43,000 the greater part of which would be achieved by the loss of a cleaning team of two operatives and a vehicle.
- 5.5 However, the savings indicated in 5.3 and 5.4 above need to be balanced against redundancy costs. These would be £1,200 for one operative and £3,500 for two operatives plus £2,400 for the early termination of the lease on the vehicle.
- 5.6 A summary of other associated costs and savings are as follows:

Location	Costs demolition/making good	lease termination	Estimates of likely capital receipts on disposal
Blackfield			£15,000 *
Holbury			£12,000 *
Calshot Car Park	£5,000		
Barton Beach	£2,500	£6,000	
Eling Recreation Ground	£5,000	to be negotiated with Totton & Eling TC	
Salisbury Road Recreation Ground	£5,000	to be negotiated with Totton & Eling TC	
Ringwood Market Place	£5,000		
Lyndhurst Old Block	£5,000		
Brockenhurst A337			£15,000 *

* - possible values, subject to all three toilets being auctioned as a package.

- 5.7 The potential capital receipt of £42,000 could be fully used for reinvestment in future capital projects

5.8 An analysis of annual savings and costs if six toilets are closed is as follows:

	2002/03	2003/04
Savings	-£26,500	-£26,500
Demolition costs	£17,500	
Redundancy Costs	£1,200	
Lease terminations costs	£6,000	
Lease termination cost – Eling Recreation ground	to be agreed	
Net Saving	-£1,800	-£26,500

5.9 An analysis of annual savings and costs if nine toilets are closed is as follows:

	2002/03	2003/04
Savings	-£43,000	-£43,000
Demolition costs	£27,500	
Redundancy costs	£3,500	
Lease termination cost	£8,400	
Lease termination cost – Eling & Salisbury Road Recreation Ground	to be agreed	
Net Saving	-£3,600	-£43,000

6 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Several of the toilets attract vandalism and acts of anti social behaviour. In some cases the closure and removal of a facility may improve the quality of life for local residents.

7 EMPLOYEE SIDE COMMENTS

7.1 The Employee Side are concerned that the proposed closure of toilets throughout the District is based on usage hearsay. The Employee Side would like to see a proper usage survey carried out and any proposed closures based on the results.

7.2 Any closure of toilets that results in redundancies would be unfortunate.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Nine public conveniences are being considered for permanent closure. If six are selected the net saving in financial year 2002/2003 will be £1,800 and the saving in future financial years will be £26,500.

8.2 If all nine conveniences are closed the net saving in financial year 2002/03 will be £3,600 and the saving in future financial years will be £43,000.

8.3 Three of the toilets could be sold at auction and have a potential capital value of £42,000.

8.4 All town and parish councils that have been consulted are against the closure of any of the toilets under consideration with the exception of the one in Ringwood Market Place.

9. COMMENTS FROM ENVIRONMENT PANEL

The Environment Review Panel has considered these proposals and has made the following recommendations to the Cabinet.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) Blackfield – Hampton Lane – toilets to be closed in view of their age, condition and un-neighbourly siting.
- (ii) Holbury – Sloane Avenue – close, due to low usage and frequent vandalism.
- (iii) Calshot – Car park at western end of the Spit – close, in view of replacement programme proposals and pending consultations with beach hut owners.
- (iv) Barton Beach – retain but close Marine Drive West toilet instead, following agreement by New Milton Town Council.
- (v) Totton - Eling Recreation Ground and Salisbury Road Recreation Ground – retain subject to the outcome of discussions with Totton and Eling Town Council on their proposals to share operating costs
- (vi) Ringwood – Market Place – close.
- (vii) Lyndhurst Car Park – old block – retain, due to their continuing importance for tourist use.
- (viii) Brockenhurst – main A337 – close, in view of existence of other satisfactory toilets in village centre, which are to be rebuilt next financial year.

10.2 The Review Panel noted that the Year 1 demolition costs for 2002/03 would be £15,000 and there would also be redundancy costs in the sum of £1,200 relating to 1 cleaner post. Thus, the total savings for 2002/03 would amount to £10,300.

10.3 It was also noted that the potential capital receipt of £42,000 could be fully utilised for reinvestment in future capital projects, subject to all 3 toilet sites (Blackfield, Holbury and Brockenhurst) being auctioned as a package.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS
None

DETAILS OF TOILETS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

1 Blackfield

- 1.1 These toilets were built 44 years ago next to the Blackfield Community Centre. The Centre has since been demolished and the toilet is now on the edge of a private housing estate. It is felt that the toilets are now inappropriately sited. They suffer from petty vandalism and would need significant monies spending on them to bring them up to a satisfactory standard.
- 1.2 This is a stand-alone freehold site which, subject to the necessary consents, has potential for alternative uses e.g. commercial/storage/residential (in conjunction with adjoining property). For this reason demolition would not be recommended and the building could have a value in the region of £15,000.
- 1.3 Fawley Parish Councillors are against the closure of this toilet. They state that it is well used and ideally located close to the shops and opposite the chemist. There are many elderly and disabled people who visit the shops and need a toilet to be available. There is also a nearby school with 600 young children and mothers and their children use the toilet on their way to and from the school.

2 Holbury

- 2.1 These toilets were built 22 years ago and are situated on a freehold site at the entrance to Sloane Avenue Car Park just off the main Holbury shopping area. The Parish Councillors are against closure stating that they are well used by children particularly in the morning as they make their way to the local school. Apart from Blackfield the next nearest toilets are 4 miles away at Hythe. The closure of these toilets and those at Blackfield would mean that there would be no public toilets in the busy residential area between Hythe and Calshot.
- 2.2 The Holbury toilets also suffer from vandalism, often perpetrated by school children. Because of this they are locked at night, at an annual cost of approximately £5,000. In order to save this cost the two manual locks fitted to each door were replaced with single automatic locks at a total cost of £800. However, the automatic locks have been vandalised and manual locking has resumed.
- 2.3 There is potential for alternative commercial use. However, any disposal should have due regard to the long-term requirement for the car park. Assuming this is not in doubt the land and building could have a value in the region of £12,000

3 Calshot Car Park

- 3.1 The toilets in Calshot Car Park are 44 years old. The intention is to demolish this toilet and the one on the spit and to build a 'superloo' at a location, yet to be decided, between the two. This is programmed for the end of financial year 2003/04.

- 3.2 There has been representation from many of the 190 beach hut owners at Calshot who do not see the need for a single superloo. The removal of the toilet from the car park would cause them inconvenience, especially as many are either elderly or parents with young children. Coach drivers and motorists who use the car park also use this toilet. Both beach hut owners and Parish Councillors have strongly stated the need to retain the two toilets.
- 3.3 A suggestion from the Parish Council is to retain the existing toilet on the spit and to rebuild a standard toilet in the car park. This could save approximately £40,000 from the capital programme for 2003/04.

4 Barton Beach

- 4.1 These are temporary toilets leased from Rollalong. They were installed in 1998 on a ten-year lease. Early termination of the lease would cost approximately £6,000. There would also be a cost incurred in removing the pump and pump housing.
- 4.2 The toilets serve the beach hut owners and other beach users and are open from Easter to the end of October. In 2001 cliff slippage at Barton caused the undercliff access road to be closed thus preventing maintenance operatives from accessing the toilets. Until alternative access could be arranged the toilets remained closed for two months from Easter. During this time there were many complaints from beach hut owners and the lack of facility meant that people were relieving themselves behind beach huts.
- 4.3 Closure would be very unpopular with beach hut owners who would see facilities being reduced while site rental is being increased.
- 4.4 The nearest alternative is the toilet at the end of Barton Court Avenue. However, access to this from the beach is up a long steep slope (Fisherman's Walk) thus causing great inconvenience to the elderly and parents with young children.
- 4.5 The feelings of the Town Councillors are that the toilet is well used and an essential facility for beach users. The nearest alternative is at road level and is not convenient for the elderly and young children. There is also the safety hazard of children having to cross a busy road to reach them.
- 4.6 There is a third toilet, adjacent to the Cliff House Hotel on Marine Drive West. This toilet was built in 1963 and is of the old 'flat concrete roof' design. It suffers from social misuse and is a popular venue for homosexuals. Town Councillors feel that this would be a much more appropriate candidate for closure.

5 Totton – Eling Recreation Ground

- 5.1 The toilet is situated on a leasehold site (99 years from 1976) held from Totton & Eling Town Council (T&ETC). Technically it would be possible to assign the lease, to a third party, with consent of the landlord, However, in order to close the toilet it would be more appropriate to negotiate a surrender of the lease on the best terms achievable.

6 Totton – Salisbury Road Recreation Ground

- 6.1 This site has no inherent value. It has been held, since 1939, under an agreement with T&ETC which permits the "construction and maintenance" of a public convenience. The view of our Legal Department is that the agreement constitutes a lease but does not impose an obligation on NFDC to maintain a public convenience in perpetuity. There is no mention of payment from NFDC to T&ETC, which could be construed as constituting a rent and the document is silent as regards determination. The agreement could, therefore, be terminated on reasonable notice, unilaterally by NFDC at any time should it so wish. However, a negotiated approach would be more prudent.
- 6.2 The Town Council is strongly opposed to the closure of both toilets. It questioned the criteria used to select the toilets and stressed the need for monitoring usage before deciding which ones to close.
- 6.3 Both toilets are well used. The one at Salisbury Road is close to a school and is well used by children and parents. The one on Eling Recreation Ground is well used when events such as fairs are held at the ground and also it is on a busy route between a residential area and shops in Rumbridge Street. Both recreation grounds have paddling pools, which increases the need for toilet facilities.
- 6.4 Town Councillors expressed surprise at the small level of saving to be achieved by closing six toilets. Whilst not being willing to take over full responsibility for the toilets Councillors did state that they would be interested in an arrangement where costs could be shared by the Town Council in order to keep these toilets open. However, budgets have now been set for 2002/03 therefore such an arrangement could not start until 2003/04.
- 6.5 Totton & Eling Town Council disagree with NFDC's opinions regarding the lease arrangements and would be unlikely to be willing to negotiate early termination.

7 Ringwood Market Place

- 7.1 The toilet is built on a leasehold site (999 years from 1956) leased from Hampshire County Council, with no vehicular access; so would have a limited market for disposal. It could be of possible interest to adjoining business. A lease assignment would be possible with consent of the lessor. The costs are likely to outweigh the benefits of disposal on open market. If the decision is made to close this toilet the best option would be a negotiated lease surrender on the best terms achievable.
- 7.2 The toilet is currently only open on market day (Wednesday) and the Market Manager has expressed an interest in taking over responsibility for them. This is an option that could be pursued.
- 7.3 Town Councillors have been consulted and have no objection to the toilets being permanently closed.

8 Lyndhurst Car Park – Old Block

- 8.1 The "Old Block", built in 1956, occupies part of the car park which is held on lease from the Forestry Commission with only 6 years remaining. Consent of the Commission would be required for any change of use and sub-letting and whilst this could be negotiated, in

view of the limited unexpired term of the lease, the property would not easily find a market and has nominal value only. The better option would be to demolish the building and convert the area to additional car park spaces.

- 8.2 Currently the old block is open 24 hours per day whilst the other newer toilet in the car park is closed at night. When the new block was first opened it remained open for 24 hours and the old block was closed at night. Feedback from users, particularly women, showed that they felt uneasy when walking to the centre of the car park at night to use the loo. They prefer using the old block at night because it is adjacent to the exit to the car park.
- 8.3 The views of the Parish Councillors are that both toilets are well used. Many coaches visit Lyndhurst throughout the year and examples were given of 12 coaches arriving within a short space of time during one morning in late November. The Village offers good facilities for visitors with a free car park, two toilets and many shops Councillors do not want to see these facilities eroded.
- 8.4 Parish Councillors made the point that cleaning costs would not necessarily be reduced by closing the old block since a cleaner would still need to visit the new block, which is only a few yards away. The Parish Councillors were unanimously against the proposed closure of this toilet.

9 Brockenhurst – Main A337

- 9.1 This toilet was built in 1957 on a freehold standalone site. There is potential for alternative uses e.g. commercial/retail which would give the site a value in the region of £15,000
- 9.2 The other toilets in Brockenhurst are situated in the car park in Brookley Road and are scheduled to be rebuilt during the winter of next financial year.
- 9.3 The feeling of the Parish Councillors and local traders is that the toilets on the A337 are well used particularly during the summer season and they would not wish to see them permanently closed. They suggested that costs could be reduced by winter closing only.
- 9.4 Although there are several public houses in the area it was stated that none have outside toilets and publicans do not like members of the public using their toilets without making a purchase.
- 9.5 However, it was felt that if the toilets are permanently closed signage should be improved in order to direct travellers to the toilet in the car park and to the shops in Brookley Road.