

## CALSHOT PUBLIC CONVENIENCE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At their meeting on 12 December 2005, Council received a petition from Mr H L Holmes with regard to the Spit End toilets at Calshot.
- 1.2 The petition, signed by over 1,500 beach hut owners and beach users, demands the on-going use of the Spit End toilets at Calshot which are due to close in March 2006.
- 1.3 The petition asked the Council to reconsider the decision to close the toilets and to take the necessary steps to allow the facilities to remain open.
- 1.4 In accordance with Standing Orders, the petition stands deferred to the Cabinet for consideration.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council provides and maintains a range of public conveniences across the District serving town centres, such as Totton and Lymington, and local amenity sites, such as Calshot Spit and Milford - on - Sea. The facilities range from newly constructed, award winning conveniences, through to deteriorating examples of old municipal architecture.
- 2.2 The Council has in place an agreed Public Convenience Replacement Programme as a result of a detailed review of conveniences in the District. At Calshot Spit the Council has decided to replace the two old, sub-standard conveniences with one new modern facility, incorporating up to date disabled facilities and provision for baby-change in both ladies and gents.
- 2.3 In April 2005 a Project Board was established to oversee and monitor the provision of the new facility. The Board is chaired by the Environment Portfolio Holder, Cllr. Michael Thierry, and includes a local Ward Member as well as officer representation.
- 2.4 A planning application had been submitted to construct the new public conveniences at the Spit End car park, together with a refreshment kiosk option, which would have been separately funded on the basis of a sustainable business case.
- 2.5 As part of the formal consultation process the Environment Agency informed the Council that there was no consent to discharge to the septic tank on the site. The Agency referred the Council to their Pollution Prevention Guidance PPG04 (Disposal of sewage where no mains drainage is available)
- 2.6 Officers met with the Environment Agency, carried out percolation tests on site and considered options for using a septic tank system to serve the proposed Spit End conveniences. Their conclusion was that the existing septic tank system was no longer capable of meeting Environment Agency standards and due to the constraints of the site, it would not be possible to construct a new septic tank system to meet Environment Agency criteria.

- 2.7 The options for the Spit End site were to construct a self-contained mini sewage treatment works, or to construct a new sewer for the length of the Spit and connect it to the public sewer at the Hill Head car park, adjacent to the existing public convenience. Both options would cost an estimated additional £60,000 to £80,000, and would have required on-going maintenance at Council expense.
- 2.8 Having considered the issues and options the Project Board decided to apply for planning consent to construct the new facilities on the site of the public convenience in the first Hill Head car park, this site having immediate access to the existing public sewer.
- 2.9 Construction of the new conveniences began on schedule in September 2005 and the project is due for completion in March 2006.

### **3. ISSUES**

- 3.1 The existing toilets at Spit End car park discharges to an old septic tank, which does not have Discharge Consent. Their continued usage is environmentally unsound and renders the Council liable for action from the Environment Agency.
- 3.2 The existing septic tank system cannot be modified to meet discharge consent requirements and due to site constraints it is not possible to construct a septic tank system that will.
- 3.3 Whilst the Calshot Spit area is justifiably regarded as an important asset for the community, in terms of public convenience provision the facilities are relatively very low usage and very seasonal.
- 3.4 The Council's position has always been to replace the two sub-standard toilets at Calshot Spit with one modern facility. Had the Spit End facility been constructed, the Hill Head toilets would have been decommissioned.
- 3.5 The construction of the new facilities at the Hill Head car park gives immediate access to the public sewer, avoids the need to construct and maintain expensive additional infrastructure and represents an environmentally sound option.
- 3.6 Both during and after the decision process, meetings have been held with the Beach Hut Owners Focus Group and representatives of the petitioners to explain the Council's position.
- 3.7 The New Forest National Park was contacted to ascertain whether they would be prepared to consider funding a second public convenience. Whilst indicating that they were not in a position to offer grant-aid or fund projects at present, they did indicate that it may be something, which could be re-visited at a future date.
- 3.8 In addition, discussions are taking place with Calshot Activities Centre to explore options of shared facilities, although the Centre pointed out that beach hut owners would be very welcome to join as members and enjoy the full range of facilities.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The decision to site the new public conveniences at the Hill Head car park was taken following careful consideration of all relevant environmental, operational and financial issues.
- 4.2 Whilst mindful of the additional travelling distance for a proportion of beach hut owners and users of Spit End car park, the siting of the new facilities at the Hill Head location will, for the first time, provide Calshot Spit with modern, hygienic toilets, incorporating new baby change facilities and also good provision for disabled users.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The accepted tender price for construction of a new toilet building at Hill Head Car Park is £189,685. This is within the agreed budget allocation of £190,000.

#### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Vandalism and incidents of antisocial behaviour are from time to time associated with the Council's public conveniences. The construction of modern facilities, which incorporate carefully, considered design criteria assists with minimising problems.

#### **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The area of the Spit, which the facilities are built to serve, is currently subject to discharge from an outdated septic tank system. The construction of the new facilities at the Hill Head car park enables direct access to the public sewer, which represents a significant environmental benefit.

#### **8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS**

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder supports the recommendation contained in this report.

#### **9. RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the report and confirms their previous decision to construct and maintain one public convenience at Calshot Spit, situated at Hill Head car park.

#### **For Further Information Please Contact:**

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#### **Background Papers:**

Env. Review Panel