

Keeping an eye on
Maidstone

ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



PUBLIC CONVENIENCES REVIEW

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2008-09

Committee Membership:

Councillor Mrs Blackmore
(Chairman)
Councillor Yates (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Butler
Councillor Chittenden

Councillor Daley
Councillor Field
Councillor Mrs Gooch
Councillor Hinder
Councillor Verrall

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Recommendations

That:

- A.** Cleaning Staff be trained to implement a deep clean of the Council's public conveniences, for example through training delivered by the British Institute of Cleaning Science and that a rolling programme of deep cleaning be carried out on the Council's public conveniences to remove unpleasant build up;
- B.** Cleaning staff complete checklists to itemise for signs of vandalism and to ensure that facilities are fully stocked and in working order;
- C.** All needle disposal points in public conveniences be clearly marked as such;
- D.** All public conveniences, Council owned and otherwise, be clearly signposted;
- E.** The Council's website be improved to show which public conveniences have disabled access and/or baby changing facilities and that contact details and a web-based form be added for customers to report problems;
- F.** Baby change facilities be incorporated into the facilities at Mote Park (Lake Side) and Cobtree Rural Park, and future refurbishments include incorporating baby change facilities for both men and women at the facilities at Brenchley Gardens and South Park;
- G.** The inappropriate fixture and fitting heights in the Council's public conveniences be remedied and relevant maintenance staff be briefed on Part M of Building Regulations regarding heights and arrangement of fittings to ensure compliance with this;
- H.** New and refurbished public conveniences avoid being RADAR locked unless necessary;
- I.** The RADAR Scheme be more widely advertised and appropriate local premises be supplied with a key to facilitate the provision to all disabled people at those public conveniences where a RADAR lock is required;
- J.** All new and refurbished public conveniences have 'family friendly' public conveniences available to both men and women;
- K.** The practice of positioning baby changing facilities behind RADAR locked doors cease;
- L.** The public conveniences in Park Wood and Shepway be closed given their low usage and cost to achieve approximate direct cost savings of £29,146 per annum;
- M.** The usage of public conveniences in Allington be monitored in 2009/10;

- N.** The relevant Parish Councils be consulted with regard to transferring day to day management of rural public conveniences facilities to Parish Councils, with a view towards part time or seasonal openings; if the Parish Council was unwilling to take over management of a particular public convenience, the public convenience be closed achieving savings of up to £94,322 per annum;
- O.** The Council pursue a community based public convenience scheme in the Town Centre utilising a variety of premises to cater for society's needs. Maidstone Borough Council should lead on this scheme by making available public conveniences at the museum and in the Gateway at an approximate cost of £50,000 dependant on uptake;
- P.** The Council undertake surveys of interest for a Community Toilet Scheme across the urban and rural areas of the Borough, including the commercial sector and community organisations that run community centres;
- Q.** S106 money be used as a means to providing more public toilets, possibly as part of a Community Toilet Scheme;
- R.** The Church Street public conveniences be closed and the Gateway public conveniences be publicised, achieving an approximate saving of £24,471 per annum;
- S.** The public conveniences at Palace Avenue and Fairmeadow be phased out following the successful implementation of a Community Toilet Scheme, achieving an approximate saving of £43,407 per annum; and
- T.** The savings made from closures be used to refurbish and improve public conveniences in Parks.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 20 May 2008, the Overview and Scrutiny Team hosted a Work Programming Workshop to generate ideas for the 2008-09 Overview and Scrutiny Work programmes. The event was attended by a large number of Councillors, senior officers and external representatives. Members considered a range of ideas with the potential for further review.

At its meeting on the 7 July 2008, the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to carry out an in-depth review of Maidstone's Public Conveniences. The relevant extract from the minutes of the meeting is as follows:

"The Committee felt that this was an important topic to address as it was an issue that had been highlighted as 'poor' by the public. 41% of Image of Maidstone survey respondents had indicated that public conveniences in Maidstone were poor. Members felt that it gave a negative image of Maidstone to both residents and visitors and considered that the main issues to address in the review were:

- Both Town and Parish public conveniences;
- Funding/Charging;
- Quantity and Quality of existing conveniences; and
- Maintenance/Cleanliness.

The Committee considered that the potential outcomes would include the refurbishment and maintenance of existing conveniences and the introduction of new ones. The Committee noted the work of the Government's Select Committee review of public conveniences and suggested that their research and report could be used to inform the review."

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The Committee agreed that, by conducting this review, it would aim to meet the following objectives and desired outcomes:

- Establish what the Council's legal requirement for public conveniences provision is and whether the service is needed;
- Establish whether the number and male/female ratio of public conveniences in the Borough of Maidstone is appropriate;
- Establish whether the opening hours and location of public conveniences are fit for purpose;
- Assess the cleanliness, safety and accessibility (disability and childcare) of public conveniences in Maidstone;
- Assess the running and maintenance costs of public conveniences and identify if alternative sources of funding and ownership are appropriate;
- Identify alternate methods of public conveniences provision, such as the Community Toilet Scheme;
- Establish whether the provision of existing advertisement and signage to public conveniences is sufficient and fit for purpose; and
- Identify steps to improve public conveniences, if required.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The Committee sought evidence from a variety of sources. Select Committee-style interviews with a number of witnesses were undertaken; these included interviews with the Property and Procurement Manager, the Environmental Services Manager, the Street Scene Manager and the Managing Director of the British Toilet Association.
- 3.2 The Committee felt it was important to assess the current state of Public Conveniences and carried out inspections of the Council's provision. Members considered the following criteria during their inspections:
- Numbers of female/male/disabled toilets;
 - Childcare facilities available to both men and women;
 - Cleanliness and state of repair;
 - Hot water;
 - Well stocked (toilet roll, soap, hand towels);
 - Opening hours;
 - Signs of vandalism; and
 - Drug paraphernalia;

The results of the inspections are attached at Appendix A.

- 3.3 The Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee's 'Image of Maidstone' Review highlighted the perceptions of the public with regard to public conveniences and this was instrumental in the Committee's decision to undertake the review. The Committee therefore considered both the views highlighted in the Image of Maidstone Review Surveys and sought further opinions by circulating press releases requesting residents' perceptions to the local press. Further opinions on Maidstone's public conveniences were obtained from Council public consultation reports, websites and research conducted by other parties.
- 3.4 Desktop research was carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer to establish best practice in public convenience provision and to seek further evidence for the review.

4. Introduction

- 4.1 The first public toilets were installed in Paris in 1824 and were introduced into the UK in the latter half of the nineteenth century; numbers grew rapidly before declining over the past 50 years. Research conducted by the British Toilet Association (BTA) indicates that public toilet provision has declined by 40% since 2000¹. This decline has not gone unnoticed and there is now increasing scrutiny around public toilet provision and campaigns for improvements.
- 4.2 According to Encams, the Environmental Campaigns charity, there are two main reasons given for the closure of public conveniences. The first is the associated costs of bringing the toilets up to the standard of the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the second is damage sustained from anti-social behaviour².
- 4.3 The provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is at the discretion of local authorities, who have power under Section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936 to provide public conveniences, but no statutory duty to do so. The decision as to whether or not to provide facilities and the extent of the provision is determined by each authority and balanced against other local service demands. Most authorities choose to provide public toilets for a variety of reasons:
- A lack of public toilets is a basic inconvenience for everybody;
 - Good toilets can be vital to sustaining a vibrant local economy;
 - Health reasons; and
 - A lack of provision contributes to dirty streets due to problems with public urination.
- 4.4 In March 2008, Communities and Local Government published 'Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets – A Strategic Guide'. This highlighted the need for good quality public convenience provision available in the right places at the right time, especially for those people with a greater reliance on away-from-home toilet facilities. The provision helps to reduce street fouling, consequently enhancing the quality of the town, and serves as an important facility for tourists.
- 4.5 Serious public health issues and safety can arise from activities associated with public toilets, poor maintenance and the consequences of not having a provision at all. Research carried out by the National Consumer Council indicated that almost all of the 2,000 people surveyed wanted their local councils to make sure public toilets reached a high standard.

¹ Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 December 2008

² However, it is important to note that the law with regard to the DDA only required new and refurbished public conveniences to be DDA compliant, and it should therefore not be used as an excuse by local authorities to close public conveniences.

- 4.6 The Committee received a statement from the Tourism Manager highlighting the importance of public conveniences:

"From a tourism perspective, Maidstone's public conveniences are very often the first and last experience of Maidstone that a visitor encounters. It can have a significant effect on the visitor's perception of Maidstone.

With over 3 million day visits per year, it is important that we have suitable facilities for the number of visitors, and with the increase in the number of free events taking place in the town, there can be a high demand for facilities on certain occasions. e.g. River Festival, St. Georges Day, Mela etc. It is essential that facilities are in convenient locations, are open, are accessible, are well signposted, and above all clean and safe. Visitors also actively visit the villages, parks and countryside, so it is not just the town centre that requires good facilities.

Visitors to the Town Hall Visitor Information Centre frequently ask for the location of the nearest toilets. However as there have been complaints about the state of the public facilities, they do tend to send them to the Royal Star Arcade."³

- 4.7 Maidstone Borough Council's 2009 - 12 Strategic Plan's priority themes include 'A place to live and enjoy' and 'a place with efficient and effective public services'; it therefore cannot indefinitely continue to provide public convenience facilities that are not to a widely accepted standard.

³ Statement to the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Tourism Manager

5. Perceptions

- 5.1 The Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee collated evidence on the perceptions of Maidstone's public conveniences following the negative responses recorded as part of the Committee's Image of Maidstone Review in 2007/08. The Committee considered these survey results, public responses to press releases, Council public consultation reports, websites and research conducted by other organisations, and identified that there was a general dissatisfaction with the standard of Maidstone's public conveniences provision.
- 5.2 The Image of Maidstone Town Centre Survey⁴ asked respondents to rate 15 aspects of Maidstone Town Centre as excellent, good, average or poor. 41% of respondents considered Maidstone's public toilets to be poor⁵. Public toilets and the market were considered the poorest offerings in Maidstone by residents of all age groups except 16-25 year old who considered public toilets and cleanliness to be the poorest. In response to what could be done to improve the town centre, 16 individuals commented on the need to improve public toilets with comments made on the number of public toilets, a lack of signage, cleanliness and problems with drugs litter. Verbatim Image of Maidstone Survey Responses are attached at Appendix B.
- 5.3 Members identified that the public felt the provision of public conveniences was a service that the Borough Council should continue to provide. They also found that the public was generally receptive to new ways of providing this service. The public expressed an acceptance of a community toilet scheme in the town centre and one resident suggested that the toilets should be chargeable. Many residents stated that they avoided Council-owned public conveniences because of the standard of conveniences available.
- 5.3.1 Residents' comments in Maidstone's 2008/09 Budget Stimulator regarding public conveniences included:

"In my experience most people use toilets in cafes, etc because the public toilets are so horrible!"

"Most public toilets are horrible and people tend to go to cafes, etc anyway."

"I feel that there is no need to provide as many public toilets in the borough. They are currently open to abuse. You currently have to be very desperate or brave to use them."

"I think it is important to sustain the quality of public toilets because some of the toilets in Maidstone aren't very nice."

"Toilets should be chargeable"

⁴ Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 2007/08

⁵ A further 41% of respondents rated Maidstone's public conveniences average

5.3.2 Comments received in response to press releases included:

"Public Toilets few and far between, why can't Maidstone copy Ashford and have some self cleaning toilets in a couple of places?"⁶

"...Charging for conveniences is simply immoral in my view and should not even be considered. I have recently had prostate surgery and know first hand how positively wicked it is to get to a convenience and not be able to use it because one is not carrying change. I shall never visit Salisbury again because of this. Rather than consider closing, you should be expanding the service either by direct building or more probably by renting of retail premises conveniences as per the latest scheme"⁷

"I regard public toilets as essential. They should be well maintained and paid for via taxation. The alternative of using toilets inside cafes/restaurants or pubs may work in a town, but not a village where there are no such alternatives"⁸

"I work as a community worker and am often in need of somewhere to go. I used the toilets at Park Wood Parade yesterday. They were reasonably clean but there is no soap or dryer in the ladies. The ladies on Penenden Heath were ok but the hand dryer was not working."⁹

"I strongly opposed the removal of staff some years ago, they were a valuable asset, stopping vandals and drug takers using the toilets, provided safety for children, elderly and mothers with babies, AND kept the toilets clean."¹⁰

5.4 Members noted that the Bell Lane public conveniences in Staplehurst had been closed in April 2001, but following representations from the Parish Council and Ward Members, and subsequent public consultation, they were re-opened.

5.5 It is therefore clear from this and from public consultation responses that there continues to be a demand for public conveniences, however the quality and delivery of much of the provision needs addressing.

⁶ Letter received from anon.

⁷ Email from resident dated 23 January 2009.

⁸ Email from resident dated 3 March 2009

⁹ Email from Councillor Mrs Robertson dated 21 January 2009

¹⁰ Email from Councillors D and P Parvin dated 20 September 2008

6. Provision in Maidstone

6.1 Maidstone Borough Council provides 24 public conveniences: eight in Council Parks, three in urban areas, seven in rural villages and six in the town centre¹¹. Members found that the facilities were predominantly old, suffered from vandalism and were in need of a deep clean.

6.2 The table below shows the number of public conveniences per head of population in a sample group of Kent Local Authorities. The average number of public convenience units per head in this sample is 6595.

Authority	Head of Population per Public Convenience facility ¹²
Maidstone	6008 ¹³
Ashford	7031
Canterbury	3700
Dover	3679
Gravesham	6979
Sevenoaks	10,391
Swale	9307
Tonbridge and Malling	7231
Tunbridge Wells	5029 ¹⁴

6.3 A comparison with other District Councils in England reveals a lesser provision, with the average head of population per toilet facility for a sample of 20 District Councils was 11,159¹⁵. The head of population per toilet facility ratio in the larger cities is even larger, for example 1 public conveniences site for every 20,000 residents in Sheffield and one public convenience facility in every 140,000 residents in Liverpool.

6.4 Best Value Review: 'A Clean and Tidy Borough'

Members noted that the British Toilet Association (BTA) had conducted a survey of Maidstone's public conveniences as part of the Council's Best Value Review, 'A Clean and Tidy Borough' and considered its results as part of this review.

6.4.1 The BTA reported that 'Maidstone Borough Council has a mature portfolio of public toilets which, while satisfying user needs, historically, are now not best suited for the changing needs of the 21st Century'. The BTA recommends 1 female cubicle per 550 female residents and 1 cubicle/urinal per 1,100 male residents. Based on a 50/50 gender split of the population, they identified a shortage of 68 female public conveniences, and an over-provision of 55 male facilities in Maidstone.

¹¹ Including one urinal unit open in the evenings and one temporary urinal unit available in peak periods

¹² Populations based on mid year 2007 population estimate released by the Office for National Statistics in August 2008 (<http://www.kent.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/24B9FB0E-3E8E-41DB-B977-6C3FDFC59C45/0/mye308kentlamypetimeseries.pdf>)

¹³ One toilet per 6554 people if temporary facilities not included.

¹⁴ Currently being reviewed to reduce the number of public conveniences to make savings of £100,000.

¹⁵ <http://www2.erewash.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=288&MID=502#AI1778>

The BTA recommended one accessible toilet and one unisex baby change facility per 10,000 residents equating to 14 of each. In 2002 Maidstone had 18 accessible toilets, but only 6 baby change facilities. They also highlighted a need for family friendly public conveniences, able to accommodate large double prams.

6.4.2 The Clean and Tidy Borough Best Value Review highlighted that:

"In terms of cleanliness standards, the [BTA] survey found a reasonable standard of cleanliness, which was lower in toilets of higher use. It found that stainless steel fixtures and fittings needed an improved cleaning regime, and that the corners of cubicles in some instances were very dirty. Graffiti was also apparent. However, the best solution is prevention and removal at the earliest opportunity. A review of cleaning frequencies and specifications, monitoring regimes and training of cleaning staff is recommended.

In terms of maintenance, the survey noted a number of repairs were required which were being caused by a mixture of vandalism, age of the properties and inappropriate finishes and fittings. A review of the maintenance programme and defects reporting procedure is suggested.

Whilst a planned refurbishment programme is recommended, this should not be carried out until an overarching review of toilet provision had been carried out."

Many of the other recommendations for improvement referred to:

- i. Fixture and fitting provisions;
- ii. Signage and Communication;
- iii. Hygiene equipment;
- iv. Accessibility;
- v. Baby Change facilities;
- vi. Security;
- vii. Ventilation;
- viii. Design of Cubicles; and
- ix. Décor and maintenance.

6.4.3 The Best Value Review recommended the following:

- *"Review and implement improvements to toilet cleaning specification (by April 04);*
- *Improve defect reporting and maintenance regimes to toilets (by April 04); and*
- *Provide additional signage, back up paper supplies, soap, disabled facilities and lighting improvements as recommended by BTA survey. Include 'blue' lighting where appropriate. Ensure compliance with DDA (by April 05)"*

6.5 Site Inspections

Members carried out their own inspections of the Council's public convenience provision and were disappointed that the poor standard reported by the BTA in 2002 continued. The detailed results of the survey are attached at Appendix A.

6.5.1 Members' inspections identified issues with the following:

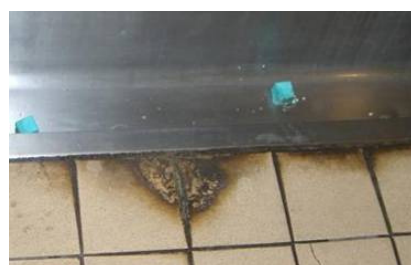
- Deep Clean;
- Damage and General Maintenance;
- Needle Boxes;
- Signage and Advertisement;
- Baby Changing Facilities; and
- Disabled Access.

6.5.2 Deep Clean

The majority of inspections revealed that the public conveniences were generally in need of a deep clean, particularly in the corners of all cubicles and men's stainless steel urinals to remove accumulated limescale and urinal salt. It was felt that a rolling programme of deep cleansing would prevent unpleasant build up (and odour) and that an improved cleaning specification would also assist in improving the appearance of facilities. Members were pleased that the cleaning specification was revised in 2008 to address day to day cleaning but felt that it could be complemented with checklists.



Fairmeadow



Marden Urinals



Lockmeadow

6.5.3 Damage and General Maintenance

The BTA had advised in 2002 that 'the frequency of inspections relates to the speed of defect reporting and that prompt replacement/repair procedures were key to the maintenance of public conveniences'. Members were therefore disappointed at the general poor condition of public conveniences and the amount of damage they had recorded as part of their inspections. Damage included broken locks and hand dryers, leaking taps and vandalism to doorways and needle boxes. They were advised that cleaners were responsible for reporting damage. Members also recorded issues with general maintenance: soap missing or empty in a number of facilities including in baby changing facilities; toilet rolls missing at a number of facilities; defunct toilet roll holders and defunct towel dispensers left on walls; and unsightly fixing holes after an item had been taken off the wall. The Committee felt that these basic repair issues

suggested a facility which was no longer maintained and as such reflected poorly on the Council. The Committee considered that cleaning staff should complete checklists to ensure general inspections were carried out. The checklist could be used to ensure facilities were stocked with soap and toilet rolls and that light bulbs and locks were working.



Lockmeadow



Marden



Mote Park

6.5.4 Needle boxes

Boxes for used needles had been installed in a number of public conveniences in response to remnants of drug paraphernalia in certain facilities. Members noted that a number of other local authorities had installed blue lighting to prevent drug users from being able to see veins to inject into. Members felt that although this may prevent drug usage in public conveniences, it may also have the undesirable effect of drug users dispersing across public areas and used needles being disposed of unsafely anywhere in a public place. This view was also supported by a drugs information and advice report regarding blue lighting¹⁶. Discarded needles can clearly be a danger to everyone, and Members therefore felt that needle disposal boxes were important in those public conveniences where problems had been identified. Members also noted that blue lights rendered the facilities unusable to people with visual impairments and those who use walking aids¹⁷.

Members' inspections revealed repeated issues with vandalism on needle boxes, with some front fascias having been forced to the point that used needles were accessible. One inspection revealed an unlocked access door to the disposed needles from the wall needle disposal points at Brenchley Gardens. Another general issue was with a lack of signage stating that these disposal points, particularly the wall units, were needle disposal points. As can be seen from the photo below, one person had thought the disposal point was a bin. Members were concerned with the amount of problems they had witnessed during their inspections, with one Councillor being informed that a broken needle bin in Whatman Park had been reported but had not been fixed. Members therefore felt that it was important that cleaning staff were vigilant in ensuring doors were locked and that they checked for signs of hazards caused by vandalism. They considered that the checklists mentioned above could be used to report

¹⁶ <http://www.encams.org/knowledge/toilets/publications/blue.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www-edc.eng.cam.ac.uk/cwuaat/06/joannebichard.pdf>

signs of vandalism and to ensure that hazards were reported. They also felt that all needle disposal points should be clearly labelled.



Brenchley Gardens



Church Street

6.5.5 Signage

Members noted the signage for cars and pedestrians to the majority of public conveniences was very poor. Although most public conveniences had clear signs above their doors, the directional signs to public conveniences were difficult to locate. A lack of signage was also reported by residents. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee had recommended that local authorities provide visible, clear signs to their public toilets, noting an example of tourist information centres having to give directions to a public convenience ten yards away¹⁸. Clara Greed, Professor of Inclusive Urban Planning, also reported that a lack of clear signage in British cities has often resulted in people walking around desperately trying to find toilets, yet in contrast, Shanghai has maps to public conveniences on rubbish bins¹⁹. Members therefore agreed that all public conveniences, council owned or otherwise, should be clearly signposted.

The Committee compared the Council's website with regard to public conveniences to other local authorities and considered that it was not sufficient; it failed to depict which public conveniences had disabled access and/or baby changing facilities. The contact details and a web-based form to report damage regarding Council-owned public conveniences were also omitted.

6.5.6 Baby Change Facilities

Members identified the following:

Town Centre	Baby Changing Facility?
Church Street	None
Lockmeadow	In locked disabled unisex cubicle
Palace Ave	None
Fairmeadow	Yes, unisex

¹⁸ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/63602.htm>

¹⁹ <http://www.encams.org/knowledge/toilets/publications/stock.pdf>

Baby Changing Facility?	
Urban	
Allington	In both mens and womens
Park Wood	None
Shepway (Cumberland Ave)	None
Rural	
Staplehurst (Library)	In unisex block
Staplehurst (Bell Lane)	None
Marden	None
Lenham	None
Headcorn	None
Yalding	None
Sutton Valence	None
Parks	
Clare Park	In locked unisex disabled unit (advertised that key is available from Park Keepers hut)
Penenden	Yes in both mens and womens
Mote Park Pavilion	Unisex facility
Mote Park Lake	None
South Park	In ladies
Whatman	In disabled unit
Cobtree	None
Brenchley	In locked ladies disabled unit

10 of Maidstone's 22 public conveniences have baby changing facilities²⁰ an increase of 4 from 2002. Members identified that out of these 10, 8 were available to both men and women. However, they considered the placement of 4 baby changing facilities behind RADAR (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation)²¹ locked disabled facilities illogical. They noted that Clare Park had advertised a key was available from the Park Keepers Hut but found this to be the exception from the rule. The facilities at Mote Park (lake side) and Cobtree Rural Park did not have baby changing facilities, and the Committee agreed that this needed to be remedied. Members also considered it important to make baby change facilities available to men and women. In Brenchley Gardens and South Park facilities for baby changing were available to women only.

6.5.7 Disabled Access

All public conveniences, except Lenham, had disabled access public conveniences. The majority of these were locked using RADAR keys from the RADAR national key scheme. Members had been initially pleased with the amount of accessible toilets, but were concerned with the high positioning of fixture and fittings. This included the positioning of toilet

²⁰Total Figure Excludes the 2 temporary urinals

²¹ See 6.5.7

roll holders, flush handles, hand dryers, types of taps, white bars on white backgrounds and sizes of cubicles, in addition to the gathering of emergency alarm cords to out of reach locations. Examples of some causes for concern can be seen in the photos below.



Marden Mens
(Toilet roll holder height)



Marden Ladies
(Flush and toilet roll)



Cobtree
(Flush height)



Mote Park -Lake
(Size and white on white)



Church Street
(bar on outside of door & high flush)



Yalding
(white on white & no back rest)



Brenchley
(Alarm cord)

Recommendation A: Cleaning Staff be trained to implement a deep clean of the Council's public conveniences, for example through training delivered by the British Institute of Cleaning Science and that a rolling programme of deep cleaning be carried out on the Council's public conveniences to remove unpleasant build up;

Recommendation B: Cleaning staff complete checklists to itemise for signs of vandalism and to ensure that facilities are fully stocked and in working order;

Recommendation C: All needle disposal points in public conveniences be clearly marked as such;

Recommendation D: All public conveniences, Council owned and otherwise, be clearly signposted;

Recommendation E: The Council's website be improved to show which public conveniences have disabled access and/or baby changing facilities and that contact details and a web-based form be added for customers to report problems; and

Recommendation F: Baby change facilities be incorporated into the facilities at Mote Park (Lake Side) and Cobtree Rural Park, and future refurbishments include incorporating baby change facilities for both men and women at the facilities at Brenchley Gardens and South Park.

7. Social Inclusion

7.1 As part of the review, Members considered whether the public conveniences provision was socially inclusive and did not discriminate against any section of the community including the disabled, ethnic minorities, elderly and socially deprived. An Equality Impact Needs Assessment form for the public conveniences review is attached at Appendix C.

7.2 Disabled Access

7.2.1 Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, includes provisions covering access to services and facilities. It requires service providers (including public authorities) to make reasonable adjustments to allow disabled people to access those services which it would otherwise be impossible or unreasonably difficult to access. However, the DDA only requires service providers to do what is "reasonable" in all the circumstances, including the cost of the adjustment and its practicability²². Therefore, no public convenience should have to close down simply because it is not "reasonable" to make adjustments to make it accessible to disabled people and it should not be used as an excuse to do so.

7.2.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 extends the DDA 1995 to give all public authorities duties to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people. The Disability Equality Duty, which came into force on 4 December 2006, requires public authorities to consider the needs of all sectors of the society they serve, and how they make sure they are delivering services and carrying out functions in a way that promotes greater equality for disabled people. In addition, the preparation of Disability Equality Schemes enables local authorities to consider what action they may have to take to improve access to toilet facilities for disabled people.

7.2.3 The British Toilet Association's survey in August 2002 showed that 18 of Maidstone's 21 public conveniences had disabled access. However, of these, only two had door handles allowing wheelchair access, and only seven had the correct rails fitted.

7.2.4 Members considered the results of the Mote Park Access Plan and found that the results regarding wheelchair access were disappointing:

"The entry to the female toilets is too narrow to allow access to wheelchairs (allowing for elbow room) and the washbasins inside are all of the same height, not providing for wheelchair users, children or people of short stature. The separate disabled toilet in this location provides better facilities, but it requires a RADAR key for entry. There appears to be no information available on this, either on or off-site. Feedback from

²² Interview with the Director of the British Toilet Association at the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 December 2008

*wheelchair users was mainly positive. They liked the fact that it was kept separate from the baby-changing facilities and also not used as a storage cupboard. The flush was high but reachable ...The grab rail on the back of the door to help close it is the same colour as the door and there is insufficient contrast for visually impaired users".*²³

7.2.5 Members considered that although the Council did not have to amend its provisions to make its offer DDA compliant (unless refurbished), it should, in accordance with the DDA, still make every effort to make public conveniences as accessible as possible. The basic issues of inappropriate heights to fixtures and fittings highlighted in 6.5.7 should be addressed. The Committee noted Part M of Building Regulations which set out the recommended height of fixtures and fittings²⁴. Members felt the relevant maintenance staff should be briefed on this to ensure compliance. In addition, cleaning staff should be reminded that emergency alarm cords should be left to hang to the floor with one red bangle at 100mm from floor height and one from 800 to 1000 mm from floor height.

7.2.6 The Committee noted the importance of the provision of adult changing facilities, noting that the BTA had only identified 40 Changing Places toilets in the UK.²⁵ The Committee was therefore particularly pleased with the Council's new disabled access facilities in the Gateway, which offered an adult changing bench, shower and hoist to assist disabled adults' toileting needs.

7.2.7 Members identified that the majority of disabled public conveniences in Maidstone were locked as part of RADAR's National Key Scheme and noted that this was also true across the country. However, Members highlighted that even RADAR did not recommend that all disabled access public conveniences be locked:

*"RADAR would like all providers of accessible toilets to keep their toilets unlocked if at all possible. The National Key Scheme is suggested for use only if the provider concerned has to keep the toilets locked to stop vandalism and misuse."*²⁶

7.2.8 The British Toilet Association also raised concern with regard to the blanket approach to utilising the National Key Scheme:

"The BTA does not support the RADAR key scheme used for the majority of disabled toilets, and, increasingly, in other types of toilets where the provider feels obliged to keep their facilities locked. It is something of an insult, not to say discriminatory, for a significant section of the population to have to possess or ask for a key in order to fulfil a basic human function. Conversely, while disabled toilets might be accessible by a

²³ www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment/parks_open_spaces/mote_park_improvement/access_plans.aspx

²⁴ http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_ADM_2004.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>

²⁶ <http://www.radar.org.uk/radarwebsite/tabid/41/default.aspx>

*RADAR key out of hours, the other eighty five percent of the population are denied access to ordinary male or female facilities once they are locked*²⁷

7.2.9 Members felt disabled public conveniences in Maidstone should not be kept locked unless there were problems with vandalism or misuse. Members recognised that a number of disabled public conveniences were outside the main blocks, which were automatically locked and recognised that the lock could not be necessarily removed in these incidences. However, it was agreed that new facilities or refurbished facilities should avoid being RADAR locked unless necessary.

7.2.10 The Committee found that only the public conveniences at Clare Park advertised that a key was available from a nearby building. Members also found that advertisement of the RADAR scheme was lacking. It was agreed that RADAR keys should be more widely advertised at those sites where they were required. The Committee also considered that local premises should be supplied with a key in cases of emergency, and that this would also enable all disabled people to use the public convenience, even if they did not have a key. The Property and Procurement Manager identified a number of potential holders of keys and the Committee agreed that these should be pursued.

7.3 Child care

7.3.1 Members recognised the importance of having baby changing facilities for men *and* women. They felt that all new and refurbished public conveniences should have the facility available to both. As discussed in 6.5.6, 4 baby changing facilities were positioned behind RADAR locked doors thus preventing non-disabled parents from using the facility and Members therefore agreed that this practice should cease.

7.3.2 The British Toilet Association advised that:

*"While there has been a significant increase in the numbers of (pull down) wall-mounted baby changing units – often in locked disabled toilets, to provide for unisex use, there are very few dedicated baby change facilities which cater for the parents use as well. In other words, the parent or carer can change the baby's nappy but then has to access the ordinary ladies or gents to satisfy their own toileting needs. What then happens to the baby? We need dedicated family friendly facilities to satisfy the toileting needs of family groups"*²⁸

Members considered that refurbished and new public conveniences should provide baby changing facilities as part of a family friendly provision. This would enable a parent to bring a pram into the public convenience with them when they wanted to satisfy their own toileting needs.

²⁷ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>

²⁸ *ibid*

7.4 Gender

7.4.1 The Equality Act 2006 gave all public authorities general and specific duties to promote gender equality. The requirement to prepare Gender Equality Schemes gave public authorities an opportunity to consider what positive action could be taken to ensure more balanced access to public toilets for men and women.

7.4.2 Communities and Local Government's document 'Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets – A Strategic Guide' refers to the balance of provision between male and females. It notes that whilst women make up more than 50% of the population, the provision for public toilets is typically 70:30 in favour of men because cubicles take up more room than urinals. The situation in Maidstone is 61:39 in favour of men.

7.4.3 The BTA recommends a 2:1 female/male ratio (with the male facility including urinals). The BTA writes that:

"Britain's public toilets were established in an age when men walked, cycled or caught a bus to work and women stayed at home to raise the family. This resulted in many more male facilities being provided than female...Women take on average, twice as long to visit the toilet as men and the BTA recommends a ratio provision of 2 female to 1 male facility".²⁹

7.4.4 Members also noted that the temporary urinals in Maidstone only provided men with 24/7 access to public conveniences. These temporary urinals were designed to tackle the problem of street urination. Obviously the very nature of temporary urinals does not cater for the needs of women and Clara Greed, Professor of Inclusive Urban Planning suggested that they may even go against the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty:

"Providing male street urinals is not a solution for women, and is arguably against the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty, by which gender considerations need to be taken into account in respect of all aspects of local authority resource allocation, policy making, and service delivery".³⁰

7.4.5 A possible solution to this challenge may lie with Automated Public Toilets (APTs). Members considered Communities and Local Government, 'Provision of Public Toilets' report which had noted that:

"According to Clara Greed, APTs are extremely expensive to run, serving one person at a time and are not ecologically friendly – using a lot of water to clean after each use. There is also general unease among people about walking directly into a toilet cubicle from a busy street. The BTA highlights this feeling of unease: 'Many people, particularly the elderly, are frightened of using one of the automatic types of public toilet, fearing

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ ibid

*they may get locked in, or spray washed or exposed by an automatic door opening*³¹.

Clara Greed states in another report that:

*"Many members of the general public are deeply afraid of using APTs, some suffering temporary paruresis (inability 'to go') if they steel themselves to use them as they are afraid the doors will fly open, or they will be trapped inside. On the older models there may be no room to take children, shopping, baggage inside and the lack of adequate seating makes it difficult for women to comfortably use these sorts of toilets"*³².

Members therefore considered APTs as a potentially expensive solution to Maidstone's public convenience offer, also noting that it may not actually serve those residents it was aimed at. Members considered the findings of Communities and Local Government's 'Improving Public Access to Toilets' report, noting that they had been informed by Richmond Borough Council that APTs had cost them around £8 per visit and were subsequently replaced with the Community Toilet Scheme³³.

7.4.6 The Committee considered that public convenience provision through a Community Toilet Scheme may also provide a solution to the issue of 24 hour access to both genders; details of a community toilet scheme are discussed in more detail in Section 9, 'Options'. Members noted that the Communities and Local Government Select Committee had found that the scheme may not be favourable to the elderly or women as local businesses involved tended to be pubs and they might be less happy entering a pub, particularly on their own and in the evening, than men were. Members therefore agreed it was important that should a scheme be adopted, a variety of premises be pursued.

7.4.7 Notwithstanding this, Members felt that the reason there was a demand for public conveniences in the evening was as a result of the night time economy. Members considered that those people partaking in the night time economy were generally using the pubs, restaurants, theatre and clubs, all of which had their own toilet provision. Members therefore did not consider that an additional female and male night time provision was necessary, but felt that the Community Toilet Scheme should be further explored.

7.5 Elderly

7.5.1 The fastest growing age group is those aged 80 and over, making up about 5% of the population. More than half of the 3-3.5 million incontinence sufferers are over 65 and the elderly can be reluctant to leave their home or venture far without the knowledge that there are

³¹ *ibid*

³² <http://www.encams.org/knowledge/toilets/publications/stock.pdf>

³³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/doc/1069236.doc>

public toilets available³⁴. Help the Aged noted that older people are more likely to suffer from conditions such as incontinence, urgency and prostate problems as they age.

7.5.2 A Senior Citizen Association explained that:

*"Together with sight, hearing, memory and joint difficulties the unfortunate truth is that with increasing age the 'plumbing' and ancillary services also diminish in effectiveness and reliability and therefore place an urgent priority on availability of public toilets. It is very true that for many elderly individuals such simple every day occurrences such as a shopping trip or a day out or a journey of any kind will require a sound knowledge of the likely public toilet provision."*³⁵

7.5.3 Maidstone's strategic plan comments that "there is a need to ensure services are tailored to meet the needs of increasing numbers of older people to ensure that they lead healthy, active and independent lives". Members therefore felt it was important to consider the impact of public convenience closures on the elderly, and agreed that a public convenience provision should exist in Maidstone.

7.6 Ethnic Minorities

Members did not identify any issues with regard to ethnic groups and requirements for separate male/female facilities.

Recommendation G: The inappropriate fixture and fitting heights in the Council's public conveniences be remedied and relevant maintenance staff be briefed on Part M of Building Regulations regarding heights and arrangement of fittings to ensure compliance with this;

Recommendation H: New and refurbished public conveniences should avoid being RADAR locked unless necessary;

Recommendation I: The RADAR Scheme be more widely advertised and appropriate local premises be supplied with a key to facilitate the provision to all disabled people at those public conveniences where a RADAR lock is required;

Recommendation J: All new and refurbished public conveniences have 'family friendly' public conveniences available to both men and women;

Recommendation K: The practice of positioning baby changing facilities behind RADAR locked doors cease;

³⁴ <http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en->

[gb/Campaigns/Neighbourhoods/PublicToilets/neighbourhoods_publictoilets_whatwewant.htm](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb/Campaigns/Neighbourhoods/PublicToilets/neighbourhoods_publictoilets_whatwewant.htm)

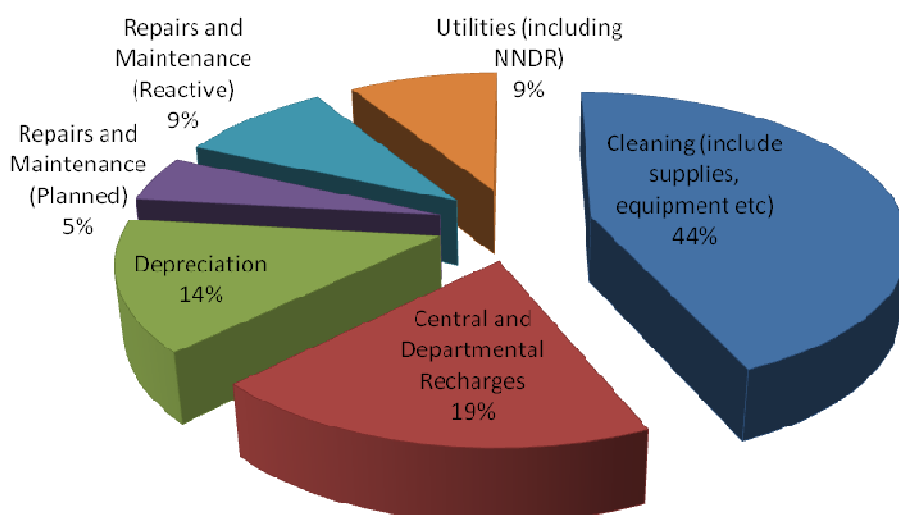
³⁵ *ibid*

8. Cost and Usage

8.1 Cost

8.1.1 The annual expenditure on public conveniences for the period 2008/09 was £596,007, the most expensive of the Council's discretionary services. Included in that sum were the following costs:

Cleaning (including supplies, equipment etc)	£266,219
Central and Departmental Recharges	£111,969
Depreciation	£81,992
Repairs and Maintenance (planned)	£29,173
Repairs and Maintenance (Reactive)	£54,130
Utilities (including NNDR ³⁶)	£54,524



8.1.2 The estimated budget for 2009/10 is £540,120. Included in that sum are the following costs:

Cleaning (include supplies, equipment etc)	£251,040
Central and Departmental Recharges	£121,520
Depreciation	£81,990
Repairs and Maintenance (planned)	£10,000
Repairs and Maintenance (Reactive)	£29,500
Utilities (including NNDR)	£46,070

Cleaning costs have been reduced in the Budget Strategy savings, however, it has not been identified how these will be achieved and it is anticipated that this review will identify possible savings. Budgets for reactive repairs and maintenance may also need to be revised depending on the level of building/fixture failure and vandalism during the course of the year.

³⁶ National Non-Domestic Rates

8.1.3 A breakdown of direct and total costs of public conveniences is attached at Appendix D. The potential annual savings that could be achieved through closure of public conveniences are shown below:

<u>Approximate Annual Public Conveniences Costs³⁷</u>	
Town Centre	
Church Street	£24,471
Lockmeadow	£18,050
Palace Ave	£19,989
Fairmeadow	£23,418
Butterfly unit / temp urinals	£5,519
Urban	
Allington	£15,262
Park Wood	£14,711
Shepway (Cumberland Ave)	£14,435
Rural	
Staplehurst (Library)	£13,558
Staplehurst (Bell Lane)	£14,477
Marden	£14,095
Lenham	£15,640
Headcorn	£14,364
Yalding	£18,414
Sutton Valence	£12,887
Parks	
Clare Park	£14,432
Penenden	£14,485
Mote Park (Lake and Pavilion)	£28,576
South Park	£13,563
Whatman	£21,788
Cobtree	£8,372
Brenchley	£17,164

These figures show approximate direct costs of each public convenience. The Committee was informed that only direct costs could be saved from closing public conveniences as central recharges would be absorbed elsewhere in the Authority.

8.2 Members acknowledged that it was difficult to estimate total savings from closing any number of public conveniences. If cleaning costs were part of a larger schedule, it was unlikely substantial savings could be achieved from closing only a limited number of public conveniences, as the remaining service would have to be maintained. Therefore it was likely

³⁷ Central charges (including MBS central charges) and depreciation costs are not included in these figures

that only the building and maintenance costs would be saved. However, this also depended on who owned the building and what would happen if it was closed, for example the building being sold or demolished – the latter incurring one-off extra costs³⁸.

- 8.3 Members considered the estimated costs of the public conveniences provision at other local authorities. An additional breakdown of the costs from Tonbridge and Malling, Ashford, Tunbridge Wells, Gravesham and Canterbury Councils is attached at Appendix E.

Local Authority	Number of public Toilets managed by LA	Cost Estimate	Approx. Cost per unit
Maidstone	22	£596,007 (08/09)	£27,091
		£540,120 (09/10)	£24,551
Ashford	16	£315,168 (09/10)	£19,698
Canterbury	40	£802,600 (09/10)	£20,065
Dover	29	£257,000 (09/10)	£8,862
		£281,000 (08/09)	£9,690
Gravesham	11 ³⁹	£223,490 (08/09)	£20,317
Sevenoaks	11	£169,786 (08/09)	£15,435
		£144,697 (09/10)	£13,154
Swale	14	£466,750	£33,339
Tonbridge and Malling	16	£314,150 (08/09)	£19,634
		£323,850 (09/10)	£20,241
Tunbridge Wells	21	£378,450 (08/09)	£18,021

As can be seen from the above, Maidstone and Swale have the two highest costs per public convenience unit, whilst Dover, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells spend the least per unit.

8.4 Usage

- 8.4.1 Toilet usage surveys were carried out by the Street Scene team in the Summer and Autumn of 2008. The rural and urban figures were captured over two days in October and November, including one day at the weekend. The town centre usage data was captured over a three day period in June and July, including weekend usage⁴⁰. The toilets within the parks were not included in the exercise because the provision of facilities

³⁸ Information received from Peter Curtis, Accountant

³⁹ In addition to these, 2 are open in the Summer Season only

⁴⁰ Section 8.5 comments of the Committee's disappointment regarding the execution of the footfall surveys

was considered a basic requirement. The average daily footfall survey results are shown in the table below and a breakdown of the results is attached at Appendix F.

	<u>Average Daily Usage</u>
<u>Town Centre</u>	
Church Street	355
Palace Avenue	240
Fairmeadow	165
<u>Urban</u>	
Allington Mid Kent Shopping Centre	51
Shepway	34
Park Wood	32
<u>Rural</u>	
Staplehurst Parade	13
Staplehurst Bell Lane	31
Lenham	36
Marden	40
Headcorn	30
Yalding	26
Sutton Valence	7

8.4.2 The footfall survey revealed that the average daily use of public conveniences in rural locations was significantly less than that in the town, with average daily use of rural public conveniences at 22.7 compared to 203.7 in the town. Urban public conveniences were also poorly used, with the average daily use at 39. The public conveniences at Sutton Valence and at Staplehurst parade were the two units used the least, recording an average of 7 and 13 uses per day respectively. Members considered the location of public conveniences in comparison to their average footfall results. Members recognised that the demand for public conveniences was less in urban and rural areas as there was a significantly lower footfall generally in the area. They also considered that the people using the amenities near the public convenience provision in rural and urban areas were more likely to live in close proximity and consequently would go home to use their own toilet facility.

8.4.3 The table below shows the average annual usage (based on the survey results above) and the approximate total cost per use⁴¹. The average cost of each public convenience visit amounted to £2.32, with average costs of £3.39 at rural conveniences, £1.73 at urban conveniences and 42 pence

⁴¹ Including central charging costs and depreciation costs.

at town centre conveniences. The public conveniences at Sutton Valence and at Staplehurst Parade were costing the public purse £7.73 and £4.71 per visit respectively; however the more well used public conveniences in the town cost between 29 and 66 pence per visit.

Town Centre	Ave. Annual Usage	Cost Per Use
Church Street	129,575	£0.29
Lockmeadow	Not Known	N/A
Palace Ave	87,600	£0.32
Fairmeadow	60,225	£0.66
Butterfly unit / temp p.c's	Not Known	N/A
Urban		
Allington	18,615	£1.37
Park Wood	11,680	£2.11
Shepway	12,410	£1.72
Rural		
Staplehurst (Parade)	4,745	£4.71
Staplehurst (Bell Lane)	11,315	£2.28
Marden	14,600	£1.67
Lenham	13,140	£2.00
Headcorn	10,950	£2.17
Yalding	9,490	£3.16
Sutton Valence	2,555	£7.73

- 8.5 The Committee questioned the justification of continuing the public convenience provision in light of their low usage and the high cost per use indicated by the footfall survey results. Members had been initially disappointed that the footfall surveys had not been undertaken in the same season for town, rural and urban public conveniences. However they felt that the results gave an indication of the level of use throughout the year, albeit potentially higher in the summer season. They also recognised that use may increase if the quality of the provision improved through refurbishment. Members felt that it was difficult to justify the public convenience provision in areas of such apparent low demand. Members noted that the provision was the most expensive of the Council's discretionary services and considered it important that all discretionary services were done well or not at all. The fact that they had identified many problems in the public conveniences on offer and that this was the Council's most expensive discretionary service reaffirmed their view that it was difficult to continue justifying a poorly used provision.
- 8.6 Urban public conveniences were costing between £1.37 and £2.11 per use, an average of £1.73. As mentioned above, Members considered such

costs excessive given the percentage of residents actually using them. The Street Scene Team advised the Committee that:

*"The facilities at Allington Mid Kent Shopping Centre are considered to be of a good standard and the location is considered appropriate for the needs of the local and wider community. Both Park Wood Shopping Parade and Shepway Northumberland Road facilities need improvement if they are to remain open"*⁴².

The Committee agreed that the public conveniences in Park Wood and Shepway should be closed given their cost and low usage. Members felt that the customers using these public conveniences were likely to live in close proximity to the facilities and considered that these were therefore not needed⁴³. Members noted that the public conveniences in Allington had only recently been refurbished and therefore agreed that their usage should be monitored over two periods in 2009/10.

- 8.7 Based on the average footfall recorded by the Street Scene team, the public conveniences in rural areas were costing the Council between £1.67 and £7.73 per use, an average of £3.39 per use. Members felt that such a figure was excessive and that it was unjustifiable to ask residents to continue funding inferior public conveniences at such a high cost, particularly given the small proportion of residents who actually benefited from the service. Members also noted that very few people would actually be willing to pay the true cost per use of these public conveniences. Rural public toilet facilities may be used in conjunction with recreation grounds and village events and therefore Members considered them important. Notwithstanding this, it remains the case that levels of use in rural toilets are very low compared to others, and that in many cases local residents, who are after all are "at home" in their local area, are not the principal users. Members nevertheless acknowledged that their usage may be higher at certain times of the year and therefore agreed that Parish Councils should be consulted with regard to investigating part time or seasonal opening of public conveniences.

- 8.8 The Street Scene Team presented a report on public conveniences to the Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2009 which revealed that:

"With the exception of Sutton Valence and Staplehurst Parade the remaining rural toilets are in need of internal modernisation.

All Parish Councils were consulted and all were adamant that their Public Toilets were a necessity. Nationally the trend is for Parish Councils to take some responsibility for the facilities in their Parishes, while all parishes consulted have expressed their reluctance to accept any responsibility when faced with the possibility of closure they all noted that further consideration would be given should this option become a reality. Consideration should be given to improving the Parish Public Toilets

⁴² Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 27 January 2009.

⁴³ *ibid*

subject to the Parish Councils agreeing to take responsibility for the day to day management of the facilities or closing them.

Ward Members were asked to provide comments on the facilities in their wards. A ward member for Staplehurst commented on the level of vandalism and anti social gathering of youths and noted his support for a transfer to the Parish Council. A ward Member for Marden and Yalding commented that he shared the views of the committee and Parish Council⁴⁴.

Recommendation L: The public conveniences in Park Wood and Shepway be closed given their low usage and cost to achieve approximate direct cost savings of £29,146 per annum; and

Recommendation M: The usage of public conveniences in Allington be monitored in 2009/10.

⁴⁴ ibid

9. Options

- 9.1 Although the pattern of the Council's public conveniences provision has remained as determined from a number of decades ago, there has been a significant evolution in the availability of other provision, in particular aimed at customers of new and updated commercial facilities. The increase in venues for eating and drinking, both by day and by night over the past decade, has also increased opportunity. It is appropriate to consider whether these trends have diminished the need for public conveniences in the traditional sense. Members considered a variety of options that could be undertaken to respond to the need of running a clean, hygienic and cost effective provision, or indeed whether a provision was actually required.
- 9.2 The Committee considered the public convenience provision in the urban and rural areas earlier in the report, identifying a need to close all rural facilities as the offer stood and to monitor the usage of Allington public conveniences, whilst closing the two remaining urban facilities. This was largely due to the excessive costs associated with these provisions, which Members felt were unjustifiable. Members agreed early on in the review that the provision of public conveniences in parks was important and should continue, however they agreed that a rolling programme of refurbishment should be undertaken.
- 9.3 Cease the Public Convenience provision
- 9.3.1 The provision of public conveniences is discretionary and could therefore be removed if the Council wished. This would achieve a saving in excess of £400,000 per annum. The Committee however considered the provision important as it was a requirement of a basic human function. As discussed earlier in the report, removal of the provision could negatively impact on large sections of society and could result in public health issues as a result of public urination. Members also felt that removal of the provision would have a detrimental impact on the Council's reputation and would fail to achieve the Council's mission of improving Maidstone to be an excellent place to in which to live, work and relax. Members therefore agreed that the service should not be removed.
- 9.4 Maintain Status Quo
- 9.4.1 The Committee noted that the cost and usage of town centre public conveniences would imply that the provision in the town centre should not be reviewed; however the Committee's inspections of town centre public conveniences revealed that they were in need of refurbishment and a deep clean. Members highlighted that the current provision in the town centre was reflecting negatively on the Council and therefore felt that the existing provision should be reviewed to determine whether the public convenience offer should remain unchanged. Members considered the report of the Street Scene Manager (extracts in italics below), the comments of Maidstone Town Centre Management's Street Scene Sub

Group and the outcomes of their own inspections in considering what the status quo was and whether it should be sustained:

9.4.2 Church Street

"The building is held under a leasing arrangement which is due to expire in 2012. The facilities include a disabled toilet but no baby change unit. There has been no capital investment during the last six years. The toilets are opened and closed manually and cleaned a maximum of four times each day by the Town Centre team. This facility has a history of anti social behaviour and vandalism however the recent pro active approach taken by the police has had a positive impact. These facilities will be affected by the possible redevelopment of the site in 2012".

Maidstone Town Centre Management's Street Scene Sub Group also noted the opportunity for redevelopment of the King Street multi-storey car park in 2012 and said that further investment in the Church Street facilities was unwise, but suggested that new top quality public conveniences should be included in any redevelopment proposals⁴⁵. Members agreed that given the need to refurbish the Church Street facilities and the fact the future of the building was in question, the facilities should be closed. They noted that the facilities in the Gateway and in the Chequers Centre provided alternative facilities in this part of the Town Centre and that these be offered as an alternative.

9.4.3 Palace Avenue

"These toilet facilities were first installed around 1970 when the old bus depot vacated the site and the car park was formed. The current facility is of temporary design and subject to a temporary certificate issued by planning. The current three year certificate was issued in August 2008. The building is unattractive and purely functional, it has a unisex disabled toilet but no baby change facilities. The toilets are cleaned a maximum of four times each day by the town centre team, and opened and closed manually"

The Maidstone Town Centre Management's Street Scene Sub Group felt that these facilities were 'essential and required to be of good quality'. Members noted not only the poor quality of the temporary facilities but also the impending construction of the All Saints Link Road. Members recognised a provision was required in this area, but felt that the temporary units should either be refurbished or replaced by an alternative method of provision.

9.4.4 Fairmeadow

"Built in 1960. There is a separate baby change facility and a disabled unit. Following investment to complete works to the floor and partial wall re tiling in 2007 at a cost of £8340. It is now considered to be in fair condition. The toilets are cleaned a maximum of four times each day by the town centre team, and opened and closed manually. There is one sign

⁴⁵ Email from Pat Brown on 22 September stating the decisions made by the Street Scene Sub Group of Maidstone Town Centre Management on 19 September 2008

directing visitors to the toilets on the river bank. This facility has a history of anti social behaviour and vandalism however the recent pro active approach taken by the police has had a positive impact. This site is being considered for possible re-development as part of the High Street public realm initiative."

The Maidstone Town Centre Management's Street Scene Sub Group again felt that these facilities were 'essential and required to be of good quality'. Members noted that these facilities were due to be considered as part of the High Street public realm project and therefore it would not be appropriate to refurbish these facilities until the plans for the project were decided. Again, Members recognised that a provision was required in this area but considered alternative means of doing so given their need for refurbishment, such as automated public toilets, a community toilet schemes or transfer of management.

9.4.5 Lockmeadow

"Part of the market hall. There has been no capital investment in the last six years. It has baby change facilities in the disabled toilet. Internally these facilities are in poor condition in particular the floor surface requires attention to enable proper cleaning standards to be achieved. Opening hours are determined by the Market Manager and coincide with market activities and the café opening hours"

The Maidstone Town Centre Management's Street Scene Sub Group felt that urgent and significant improvements to these toilets should be undertaken and that ideally responsibility should be transferred back to the Borough Council from the Market. Members agreed that it was important that a provision for the market should continue, but considered alternative means of doing so, such as automated public toilets, a community toilet schemes or transfer of management. Members noted that the facilities opening hours correlated with the market and considered that this would entail a potentially higher cost per use than other town centre provisions. Members agreed that if the market closed, the provision here should also be closed.

9.4.6 Temporary Urinals

"There are no facilities provided for women; the concept was introduced in 2002 following a report on street cleansing and toilet provision for those using Maidstone Town Centre in the evenings [by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee]. A problem of urination in a number of locations [was identified], including the alleyways connecting Bank Street and Middle Row... Suitable locations were identified in consultation with the Police ... one of the urinals has [since] changed in design to a permanent 'Butterfly' unit, with the other being retained as a portable urinal. Reaction from the public has been good with very few complaints being received by the Council."

Members felt that this provision should continue as there was shown to be a need. Members noted the permanent urinals had cost £76,000 to install and were currently cleaned by Maidstone Borough Services. Members

agreed that the Butterfly urinal provision should continue. The temporary urinals near the town hall cost £1362 per year and were cleaned by the company who owned them. Members also felt that this provision should continue to prevent incidences of public urination. As previously mentioned in 7.4.6 a possible cause for concern was that women were not provided a 24 hour facility by the Council and Members therefore felt there was a need to consider possible methods to ensure a provision for both men and women. Members felt that a Community Toilet Scheme or Automatic Public Toilets would provide a 24 hour provision to both genders and discuss them as options at 9.6 and 9.7.

9.5 Transfer of management

9.5.1 Members considered transfer of management with regard to parishes and felt that this approach may be worthwhile for seasonal or part time opening. It was felt that cleaning and basic maintenance could be carried out by cleaning companies local to the public convenience, thus saving vehicle costs and carbon emissions. They considered that if Parish Councils were unwilling to manage the public convenience facility on a day-to-day basis, the provision should be closed.

9.5.2 Members also considered this approach for urban and town centre public conveniences but noted it was difficult to identify who would be willing to take over management in these areas. They also felt that even if transfer was an option, the facilities would have to be refurbished at a substantial cost. Members noted it was unlikely any organisation would come forward, noting that it was improbable this provision could be successfully managed to achieve profit.

9.6 Automatic Public Toilets

9.6.1 The Committee discussed Automatic Public Toilets (APTs) at 7.4.5 and found that whilst they would enable 24 hour provision to both men and women, some sections of society would avoid using them. The cost of acquiring an APT as a straightforward purchase is in the region of £100,000 together with a significant licence fee of approximately £15,000 per annum. This is not considered to be an attractive way of adding to or replacing the Council's provision. In addition to this, Members noted that the Community Toilet Scheme was introduced to replace APTs in the London Borough of Richmond where APTs were found to be costing on average £8 per visit.

9.7 Community Toilet Scheme

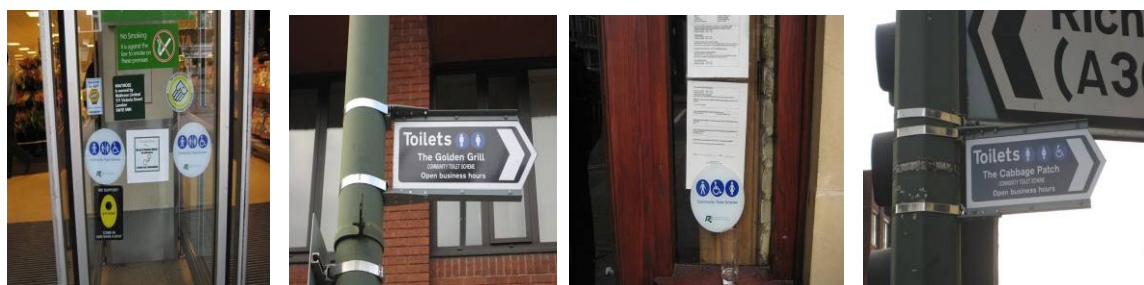
9.7.1 Community based schemes have been introduced by various Local Authorities, the most well known being Richmond's Community Toilet Scheme. The schemes differ in detail, but the general principle is that local authorities work in partnership with local businesses to provide access to clean, safe, hygienic, easily accessible and well stocked toilets and may provide payment to participating local businesses. Community Toilet Schemes typically encourage private sector operators to make

available their facilities to all members of the public – not simply their customers – through an annual cash payment from the council or a contribution acknowledging that they are providing a front line service through some business rate relief.

9.7.2 Promotional benefits to their business could be the placing of directional finger signs, naming their business in the adjacent area. However, Members felt it important to note that the more successful a scheme became, the more prolific directional signs become, potentially impacting on the local street scene environment.

9.7.3 The Street Scene Team provided the following information to the Committee regarding Community Toilet Schemes:

"The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames were the first to introduce this initiative in June 2005⁴⁶, they have entered into partnerships with local retail outlets, businesses, restaurants and public houses that provide toilets for their customers. The agreement is such that these businesses open their facilities to non customers to use during their normal opening hours without charge. The businesses keep the facilities clean and carry out essential maintenance. The Local Authority in return makes a payment of £600pa (+VAT) as a contribution towards the cleaning and maintenance costs. Signs are displayed nearby and on the windows of the premises to advise residents and visitors that the facilities are available for non customers. Officers have visited Richmond, talked to participants of this scheme and it works well both for the Authority, the businesses and for the users. Examples of the signage can be seen below. This scheme is promoted on the Local Authority web site.



The Brighton and Hove City Council operate a similar scheme branded as "You're Welcome", businesses open their facilities to non customers but unlike the Richmond scheme they can make a charge. The Local Authority does not make any contribution towards the cleaning and maintenance costs. The scheme is promoted on the Local Authorities web site where they make it clear that they do not accept any responsibility for the condition of the facilities and any complaints should be directed to the

⁴⁶ This claim originally asserted in the Communities and Local Government Strategic Guide has subsequently been challenged by a number of local authorities, with the Highland Comfort Scheme having been in place for 15 years (<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>).

provider. There is some information provided on Visitor Information Boards around the Town but no signs in windows. Officers have visited Brighton and talked to participants of the scheme with disappointing results. In three separate outlets that were advertised as being in the scheme the staff was not aware of the arrangements, in fact, in one outlet it was made clear that the facilities were not available to non customers.

A third style of Community scheme is operated by Aberdeen City Council, the facilities are run by Community Councils and Community Associations on behalf of the Council. A grant is paid to these organisations to cover cleaning materials and consumables. The grant is paid pro-rata for the period the unit is open to a maximum of £1000p.a. for a unit that is open all year round, cleaning is carried out by volunteers. Aberdeenshire Council report that the scheme is working very well, the communities involved take a pride in the facility and as a result of this ownership there is a marked downturn in the incidents of vandalism⁴⁷.

- 9.7.4 Communities and Local Government published its strategic guide, 'Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets', on 6 March 2008. This guide highlighted the approaches of other Local Councils and led to guidance on Community Toilet Schemes⁴⁸. This guidance is intended for local authorities and partnerships wishing to explore the feasibility of setting up a Community Toilet Scheme and provides a step by step guide on how to set up a similar scheme, including a template of key legal and financial terms and conditions. Members felt that it was important that the Council learnt from other Local Authorities' experiences and agreed that this document should be used if a Community Toilet Scheme was adopted in Maidstone.
- 9.7.5 The scheme in Richmond is actively managed by the Council to ensure that it encompasses a good geographical spread of facilities, as well as high standards of toilet provision and maintenance, access to toilets at all times of the day, provision of accessible facilities for disabled people and baby changing⁴⁹. The cost of an officer to fulfil these tasks would therefore have to be considered as part of setting up a community scheme.
- 9.7.6 A wide range of businesses and organisations participate in Community Schemes across the country including pubs, restaurants, cafes, community centres, retail stores, council offices and supermarkets. The Street Scene Team provisionally contacted establishments in Maidstone's Town Centre to identify if there would be an initial interest in such a scheme. The results of initial enquiries are attached at Appendix F. This shows that there clearly is enough interest that the Council could pursue this approach in the town centre. Members noted the position of the

⁴⁷ Report of the Street Scene Team to the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2009

⁴⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/doc/1069236.doc>

⁴⁹ *ibid*

Museum and the Gateway and felt that these would serve as suitable provisions for the Council to lead on a Maidstone Community Toilet Scheme.

- 9.7.7 A Community Toilet Scheme in Maidstone would achieve more clean and safe public toilet at a smaller cost to the Council and consequently to the tax payer. The Mayor of London encouraged every London Borough to sign up to the scheme, stating that the scheme is a 'common sense and cost effective solution to the lack of public toilets in London'⁵⁰. The Communities and Local Government Select Committee were advised by Baroness Andrews, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Communities and Local Government, that incidents of anti-social behaviour in toilets part of the scheme were significantly lower than those previously experienced by public toilets in the borough⁵¹.
- 9.7.8 Possible problems with a Community Toilet Scheme include the fact that facilities will only be open for as long as the businesses themselves are open. However, taking the possible number and range of outlets into account, the scheme would potentially offer much longer opening hours than provided by traditional public toilets. Another issue is the fact that businesses may refuse admission to members of the public in exceptional circumstances⁵². Members considered that a possible solution to this issue was the publicly available facilities in the shopping centres at Fremlin Walk and the Chequers Centre. Members noted that Richmond Council had left five traditional conveniences open to complement their scheme as a means of ensuring no-one would be rejected from all their provisions, however they are currently reviewing this due to the cost required to refurbish them and the fact that the right to refuse admission has not been utilised. Another objection to the scheme is that some elderly people, women, children, ethnic or religious minorities may not feel comfortable entering a pub. This was discussed in more depth at 7.4.6 and 7.4.7; this suggested that a variety of premises would be available in the day time to serve the needs of all communities and Members felt that those people out in the evening were typically there *using* the pubs, theatre and restaurants anyway.
- 9.7.9 The Committee agreed that the Community Toilet Scheme was a cost effective solution to providing more clean and safe public conveniences in the town centre than the Council was currently providing. The Committee therefore recommended that this scheme be pursued.
- 9.7.10 Members also considered the proposition of a Community Toilet Scheme in Maidstone's rural and urban areas, even in those areas currently without a public convenience. Clearly, usage data would support the argument that premises offering the provision outside of the town centre should receive less money than those in the town centre. The Committee felt that

⁵⁰ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>

⁵¹ *ibid*

⁵² Presuming a similar agreement is drawn up as in Richmond.

community halls could also be used as a public convenience provision in rural areas and contacted the Highland Council which was already providing a rural scheme. The Committee was informed how the Council introduced a community scheme within rural areas:

"My Council are not concerned so much with usage or lack of usage, but rather see them as a facility which is available to itinerant workers and as a service provision for visitors to this area. Given the distances between villages and towns in some areas toilets are almost seen as an essential facility.

As you can appreciate maintaining these toilets in a clean and serviceable condition is a challenge. It was agreed some years ago that where one of our facilities required extensive refurbishment to bring it up to a satisfactory standard, we would encourage local businesses (hotels, restaurants garages) to make their own toilets available to the public. The owners of these businesses would be recompensed for this provision and we would demolish our own sub standard facility. This has worked in various parts of the Highlands, and a number have been entered in the Loo of the Year Awards.

Although this scheme, known as Highland Comfort, was initially targeted at the commercial sector, we have attracted interest from community organisations who run village halls and now we have a number of halls opening their toilets to the public and again receiving compensation. In both cases the additional income appears welcome to offset costs in these trying times.

We enter into an agreement with the proprietor or hall committee to ensure that a certain standard is maintained and carry out periodic inspections. There have been no problems so far. It does give us a headache if the business later decides he does not want to participate in the scheme and our toilet has been demolished, however we have often delayed taking such action until the business is confident with the scheme⁵³.

Members therefore agreed that the Council should identify and contact potential businesses in Maidstone's rural and urban areas to determine whether such a scheme was possible in all urban and parished areas. Members agreed that the money given to fund such a scheme should be less than in the town centre as the usage is significantly less. Should such a scheme be successful in rural and urban areas, the Council should demolish public conveniences in these areas.

⁵³ Email from Highland Council dated 29 January 2009

9.8 Alternative Funding

- 9.8.1 Local Authorities are allowed to charge for toilet provision under the Public Health Act 1936. The amended Sex Discrimination Act Regulations 2008 removed the long-standing anomaly that meant authorities could charge for toilets that included cubicles, but not for those that contained urinals only. However, Members felt that charging would only be feasible in town centre toilets as the usage of rural and urban was too small and that the charging machine would only need to break down once for the cost of it to outweigh the income. Members also noted that very few people would actually be willing to pay the true cost per use of these public conveniences.
- 9.8.2 Members considered the feasibility of charging for town centre public conveniences but recognised that other public toilets were available in the town centre and that the standard of the Council's provision was poor in comparison. Members also recognised that use of these conveniences would fall if charging was undertaken. As discussed in Section 7, as people age they, for various reasons, need to use toilets more often and therefore charging would potentially impact most on the elderly. The Committee felt it was important to offer a free provision to ensure vulnerable residents did not avoid going out as they potentially could not afford to spare the change for the service. Members therefore agreed that a Community Toilet Scheme should be created in the Town Centre.
- 9.8.3 Members noted that Birmingham City and South Somerset Councils had used planning law under the Section 106 Town and Country Planning Provision to ensure new private sector developments provided public toilets. Members considered that this was something the Council should consider, so that the town, urban and rural areas had provisions made available to the public as part of large developments, offered as part of the Community Toilet Scheme.

9.9 Disposal of Closed Toilets

- 9.9.1 The Committee agreed it was important that public conveniences were not closed down where there were no alternatives available. As discussed earlier in the report, Members felt that people using amenities in rural and urban areas were likely to be living nearby anyway, and therefore this would be the alternative provision. The Committee agreed that a Community Toilet Scheme in all rural and urban areas should be explored, but that this was not required prior to disposal of urban and parished toilets due to low usage figures and high costs. The Committee did, however, agree that a Community Toilet Scheme should be pursued and be successfully up and running before toilets were closed in the town centre. Members noted that no suitable alternatives to the Lockmeadow provision had been identified and that this should therefore remain open unless the market closed.
- 9.9.2 Members identified several options available to the Council regarding the disposal of the public conveniences recommended for permanent closure.

Demolition

The cost of demolishing public conveniences and making good would vary considerably. Demolition costs could vary from £12,000 to £17,500⁵⁴.

Permanent Closure

The Council could simply just close the toilets, the main disadvantage of this option is that they may be subject to vandalism, and furthermore, they will continue to attract capital costs, i.e. depreciation charges, and possibly non-domestic rate costs.

Transfer of Assets

The Council could enter into negotiations with Parish Councils to transfer public convenience assets, where applicable, and with it all cost liability regarding services, repairs and cleansing. With regard to the public conveniences in rural areas, this option was the most favourable to the Committee, as toilet demolition would not be required, and Parish Councils would be responsible for cleansing, maintenance and service charges. Furthermore, this option would seem to be more favourable to the public as the facility would remain in use. However, where transfer to a Parish Council or other organisation is proposed it would be necessary to "make good" the facility at approximate cost⁵⁵ of:

Bell Lane -	£35,000
Marden -	£35,000
Lenham -	£35,000
Yalding -	£40,000

The Committee therefore felt that this option should be offered in rural areas but without the requirement to refurbish the facilities as it continued to be hard to justify spending such amounts given their low usage.

Recommendation N: The relevant Parish Councils be consulted with regard to transferring day to day management of rural public conveniences facilities to Parish Councils, with a view towards part time or seasonal openings; if the Parish Council was unwilling to take over management of a particular public convenience, the public convenience be closed achieving savings of up to £94,322 per annum;

⁵⁴ Based on Erewash District Council estimates -

<http://www2.erewash.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=288&MID=502#AI1778>

⁵⁵ Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting on 27 January 2009

Recommendation O: The Council pursue a community based public convenience scheme in the Town Centre utilising a variety of premises to cater for society's needs. Maidstone Borough Council should lead on this scheme by making available public conveniences at the museum and in the Gateway at an approximate cost of £50,000 per annum depending on uptake;

Recommendation P: The Council undertake surveys of interest for a Community Toilet Scheme across the urban and rural areas of the Borough, including the commercial sector and community organisations that run community centres;

Recommendation Q: S106 money be used as a means to providing more public toilets, possibly as part of a Community Toilet Scheme;

Recommendation R: The Church Street public conveniences be closed and the Gateway public conveniences be publicised achieving an approximate saving of £24,471;

Recommendation S: The public conveniences at Palace Avenue and Fairmeadow be phased out following the successful implementation of a Community Toilet Scheme achieving an approximate saving of £43,407; and

Recommendation U: The savings made from closures be used to refurbish and improve public conveniences in parks.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The Committee sought to identify whether or not there was a need for public conveniences in Maidstone. In doing so, Members considered the perceptions of residents and identified social groups that relied on a public convenience provision, such as the elderly and disabled. Members also identified the importance of the provision for tourists.
- 10.2 The perceptions of residents revealed an inadequate provision, with many members of the public declaring they avoided public toilets, but asserted that a provision of some sort should be provided. Such reports of an inadequate service seemed inconsistent with the fact the public convenience service was the most expensive of the Council's discretionary services, costing £596,007 in 2008/09.
- 10.3 The Committee undertook inspections of the Council's public toilets to identify the quality of the Council's current provision and what improvements were required. Members were initially pleased at the large number of 'disabled' public conveniences, but were soon disappointed by the heights of the fittings in what should have been accessible toilets. The inspections revealed disabled public conveniences with standing head height toilet roll dispensers and flushes, together with small cubicles. The Committee noted that the Council was not required to meet all of the Building Regulation requirements unless facilities were new or refurbished. However, the DDA did require the Council to do what was reasonable, and Members felt that fixtures at a reachable level from the toilet seat would be considered as such. The Committee therefore recommended that this be addressed.
- 10.4 Inspections also revealed a reliance on RADAR's National Key Scheme for disabled facilities, something RADAR themselves did not suggest. Instead only those that were subject to antisocial activity should be locked in order to ensure a continued provision. Another issue with RADAR locked toilets was the illogical positioning of baby change facilities behind these locked doors, allowing only those people with RADAR keys access to the facilities.
- 10.5 A requirement for extensive refurbishment across most of the Council's public conveniences was identified in addition to a general requirement for a rolling programme of deep cleansing. Members noted the importance of the provision to tourists and residents and disliked the negative reflection poor provision had on the Council. The Committee quickly identified that the provision in parks was essential but recommended improvements be made to disabled facilities and baby changing provisions.
- 10.6 Members noted the cost of the provision and compared this to the usage figures supplied by the Street Scene Team. This revealed high costs of

£7.73 per use at one public convenience. Rural public conveniences costs ranged from £1.67 to £7.73 per use, recording an average of £3.39 per use. Urban public conveniences also yielded high costs per use, costing £1.37, £1.73 and £2.11. Members felt such costs were unjustifiable to the tax payer, particularly given such apparent low usage. The Committee identified the Allington facilities had recently been refurbished and as such it was agreed these should remain open but their usage monitored. However, Members agreed that cost effective alternative solutions to the provision in rural and urban areas was, as a whole, required. The Committee felt rural public conveniences may be more well used in the summer and agreed Parish Councils should be contacted with regard to managing these provisions on a part time or seasonal opening basis. The Committee asserted that no public convenience should be closed if an alternative was not available. However Members considered that the people using the amenities in urban and rural areas were likely to be living in close proximity and could go home to use the toilet if required. Members felt that this fact may explain why the usage in rural and urban areas was low. Given this, Members recommended the closure of Shepway and Park Wood toilets, and agreed if Parish Councils were unwilling to take over the management of toilets in their current state in rural areas, these too should be closed. The Committee recognised public objection to this proposal was likely, but the costs of between £1.67 to £7.73 per use were clearly hard to rationalise.

- 10.7 The Committee finally considered the Town Centre public convenience provision; whilst usage here was significantly higher than in the urban and rural areas, the uncertainty in their futures remained. Therefore, although extensive refurbishment was required in these facilities, it was unwise to do so. The Committee considered alternative methods to continue provision and found a Community Toilet Scheme the most suitable. The Committee also considered that a Community Toilet Scheme should be explored in urban and parished areas. A Community Toilet Scheme ensured day and night access for both men and women and provided toilets there were safe and clean in central convenient locations.

Evidence Log

Witness Sessions

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 23 September 2009:

Environmental Services Manager, Malcolm Wells; and
Street Scene Manager, David Hitchings.

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 24 October 2009:
Property and Procurement Manager, David Tibbit.

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 22 December 2009:
Director of British Toilet Association, Mike Bone.

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 27 January 2009:
Street Scene Manager, David Hitchings.

Websites

<http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/community-and-living/your-local-community/public-and-community-toilets/>

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/doc/1069236.doc>

<http://www-edc.eng.cam.ac.uk/cwuaat/06/joannebichard.pdf>

<http://www.encams.org/knowledge/toilets/publications/blue.pdf>

<http://www.encams.org/knowledge/toilets/publications/stock.pdf>

<http://www2.erewash.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=288&MID=502#AI1778>

<http://www.greattovisitgreattoshop.com/>

http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/en-gb/Campaigns/Neighbourhoods/PublicToilets/neighbourhoods_publictoilets_whatwewant.htm

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/24B9FB0E-3E8E-41DB-B977-6C3FDFC59C45/0/mye308kentlamypetimeseries.pdf>

www.maidstone.gov.uk/environment/parks_open_spaces/mote_park_improvement/access_plans.aspx

http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/BR_PDF_ADM_2004.pdf

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/63602.htm>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>

<http://www.radar.org.uk/radarwebsite/tabid/41/default.aspx>

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/transport_and_streets/road_and_pathway_maintenance/public_conveniences/community_toilet_scheme.htm

<http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/maintenance/public-toilets/community-toilet-scheme>

<http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>

<http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/index/transport/road-highway/public-conveniences/community-toilet-scheme.htm>

Written Evidence

Letter received from anon.

Email from resident dated 22 January 2009.

Email from resident dated 23 January 2009.

Email from resident dated 3 March 2009

Email from Councillors D and P Parvin dated 20 September 2008

Email from Councillor Mrs Robertson dated 21 January 2009

Emails from Ashford Borough Council dated 7 and 8 May 2009

Emails from Canterbury City Council dated 8 May 2009

Emails from Dover District Councils dated 12 May 2009

Emails from Gravesham Borough Council dated 8 May 2009

Email from Highland Council dated 29 January 2009

Emails from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council dated 7 May 2009

Email from Pat Brown on 22 September stating the decisions made by the Street Scene Sub Group of Maidstone Town Centre Management on 19 September 2008

Emails from Peter Curtis, Maidstone Borough Council Accountant dated 27 April 2009

Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Image of Maidstone Report

Statement to the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Tourism Manager dated 27 January 2009

Committee Inspection Results

Public Convenience:	Allington – MidKent Shopping Centre	Comments
Number of Male toilets	2 urinals 1 Cabinet	
Number of Female toilets	3 cabinets	
Number of Disabled Toilets	Unable to access – no radar key	
Child care facilities?	yes	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	yes	
Rate the cleanliness	excellent	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	Apparently – but no roster or schedule visible	
Soap available?	Yes – in the automatic washing bowls	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes in both toilets	
Hot water from taps?	Yes – taps work automatically when hands placed beneath them	
Lights working?	Yes, automatically come on when door is opened	
Locks working?	yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Not clearly enough	
Opening hours:	08.30 – 18.00	
Vandalism?	Males main toilet door closure ripped off	This was the only sign of any deliberate damage
Drug paraphernalia? (-If a used needles box is present please CAREFULLY check for signs of vandalism)	None	

Any further comments	<p>These toilets are in an extremely good condition – having been recently extensively decorated and refurbished with modern equipment and facilities. Unfortunately I could not gain access to the disabled toilet through no radar key available to me. There is a 'disabled' shop adjacent to the toilets but there is no key available in store. I understand that these keys are purchased and not for casual use. The only sour note was the obviously deliberately smashed automatic door closer in the male toilets. The main doors are shut and the toilets do look as though they are locked and have to be pushed particularly hard to open. The signage on the doors and adjacent to the toilets is good but the area is not particularly well signed and could do with a more visible sign from the car parks.</p>
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Public Convenience:	Brenchley Gardens	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	2 Urinals one toilet	No toilet roll in cubicle
Number of Female toilets	3	Seat missing from one cubicle
Number of Disabled Toilets	2 (one in each of main toilets but accessible only by disabled key holders)	
Child care facilities?	Yes in disabled for ladies not in men.	N.b. Disabled toilet only accessible by RADAR key.
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	No	
Rate the cleanliness	Average – edges need more attention	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)		
Soap available?	Yes	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes in main toilets	Ladies disabled toilets did not have paper towel dispenser and had a pile of paper towels out of reach from chair height.
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Most of them - 1 light not working and one flicking in ladies cubicle	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Few signs around (one near museum one near train station)	
Opening hours:	7-7.30	
Vandalism?	No signs	
Drug paraphernalia?	None	Used needle bin in ladies – but sign is missing so not obvious – no general bin so could be mistaken Used needle bin in mens – door was left open (reported by group).
Any further comments	<p>Check if taps and flush DDA compliant (flush mounted high in disabled toilets) – there was disabled bar at the back of the toilet (stopping seat from going up, and looked uncomfortable?) and none to the side in ladies disabled.</p> <p>CCTV did not seem to be facing toilet block although near by.</p> <p>Queried whether there was a plan to refurbish with the museum?</p>	

Public Convenience:	Church Street	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	2 toilets 7 urinals	
Number of Female toilets	6	
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 Ladies and 1 Male	The lock doesn't work in the male disabled toilet.
Child care facilities?	No	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	No	
Rate the cleanliness	Corners need cleaning Soap dispenser in disabled dirty – see photograph.	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)		
Soap available?	Yes	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	It is still quite dark in the ladies toilet.
Locks working?	Yes other than the male disabled toilet.	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Yes for the Ladies', but not for the men's.	
Opening hours:		No Sign
Vandalism?	Ladies - Needle Box damaged. Vandalism on doors.	
Drug paraphernalia?	Ladies - Yes – signs of vandalism.	There was no needle box in the men's toilet.
Any further comments	Men's toilet were reasonably clean although was in need of redecoration and some repairs required to the tiles and the floor access hatch. No disabled alarm system in the men's toilet. Ladies disabled had a high chain there was no alarm and no light above the toilet.	

Public Convenience:	Clare Park	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1 with loo seat!	Toilet roll holder functional but damaged.
Number of Female toilets	2 with loo seats!	
Number of Disabled Toilets	?	Radar key required.
Child care facilities?	In with disabled I believe.	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	Yes if they have a radar key.	
Rate the cleanliness	Good.	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	All looks as though regularly cleaned – no signs showing details.	
Soap available?	All in one in both women's and men's in full working order.	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	All in one in both women's and men's in full working order.	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Fairly obvious where they are,	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Yes	
Opening hours:	7am – 9pm	
Vandalism?	Only to needle boxes	
Drug paraphernalia?	Needle boxed in both the men's and women's , padlocked and functional but both vandalised.	
Any further comments	Automatic unlocking at 7am and locking at 9pm. Clare Park has a large information board and a map of the park clearly showing where the toilets are. The board does say that a radar key is available (for the disabled and baby changing) from the park keeper's hut.	

Public Convenience:	Cobtree Rural Park	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1 wall urinal. 2 toilets.	Paper roll holders (old) still in place. On tap part working.
Number of Female toilets	3 toilets.	Disused roll holders in two units.
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 unit separately placed.	Pull chain for flushing was too high for users with restricted reach.
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	Not applicable	
Rate the cleanliness	Good	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	No poster	Police notices around the toilet areas.
Soap available?	2 dispenses in the male toilet. 1 dispenser in the male toilet areas.	1 dispenser was missing from the women's toilet.
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	1 unit in men's toilet. 1 Unit in female toilet.	
Hot water from taps?	Units had hot and colder water taps but no hot water was available.	
Lights working?	Yes	Both women's and men's toilets were dark.
Locks working?	One missing on a toilet door (female)	
Clearly Signposted at site?	One side of building	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	None	
Opening hours:	9 – 5 notice inside building	
Vandalism?	None	
Drug paraphernalia?	None	
Any further comments	Mirror in the female toilet was losing its mirrored surface.	

Public Convenience:	Fairmeadow	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	3 toilets 6 urinal spaces	
Number of Female toilets	6	
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 -unisex	Taps DDA compliant?
Child care facilities?	Yes	No soap in dispenser, no bin, light not working – not accessible to a double buggy
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	Yes	
Rate the cleanliness	Average	Needs a deep clean on floor and walls
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)		
Soap available?	Yes except in child care facilities	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Eventually	
Lights working?	One light not working in toilets	Light not working in child care room
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Signposted in subway	
Opening hours:	Sign up (7-9 until November then till 5 until April)	
Vandalism?	None – a little on gents entry sign	
Drug paraphernalia?	none	Needle box just in ladies – box broken with needles in (reported during tour)
Any further comments	<p>Toilet roll dispenser stiff. 2 dispensers missing (just rolls on toilet cistern) Needs a deep clean (walls and floors) and redecoration. No general bin in either.</p> <p>Church Street only public conveniences open on Christmas day.</p>	

Public Convenience:	Lockmeadow	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	8	
Number of Female toilets	10	All have seats – one cubicle has a loose hinge
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 for men and women	
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	n/a	
Rate the cleanliness	poor	Needs a deep clean (including walls), but is functional. The floor edges need cleaning.
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	2-3 times a day –no sign	
Soap available?	Yes	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	(one tap dripping in ladies)
Lights working?	One light broken in ladies cubicle	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	No	Signs on actual toilet block but not obvious
Clearly signposted near facilities?	No	
Opening hours:	Same as market – not displayed	
Vandalism?	None visible	
Drug paraphernalia?	None visible	
Any further comments	<p>Members queried what water tank was used and whether it was checked for Legionella.</p> <p>Decorations looked jaded – particularly floors – needs redecorating</p> <p>While all areas functional regularly maintained mixed taps broken and missing tiles</p> <p>Gents floor needs re-screeding/re-covering</p> <p>Sanitary bins emptied once a month by external contractor</p> <p>When actually open? – same as market and café Café – Mon, Wed, Thurs 8 -3 Tues, Sat 6-3 Sun 9-3</p>	

Public Convenience:	Marden	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	4 Urinal spaces, 1 toilet – with disabled access, available to all	
Number of Female toilets	2 (1 with disabled access but available to all)	
Number of Disabled Toilets	2 toilets	
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	N/A	
Rate the cleanliness	Average	It was clean in the ladies, but men's block had a bad smell and needed a clean.
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	Once a day – no sign	
Soap available?	Yes	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	yes	Hand dryer working in both but the remains of a broken paper towel dispenser and toilet roll dispenser was left on the wall in the ladies
Hot water from taps?	No hot water	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	No	Locks faulty in ladies and mens
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	Braille on signs
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Yes	
Opening hours:	7am – 9 pm	Automatic locking
Vandalism?	Some	(This had already been reported and there was signs of grafitti having been cleaned off)
Drug paraphernalia?	none	
Any further comments	<p>Entrance Door frame shows sign of damage and broken mirror in the disabled ladies cubicles.</p> <p>Both needed a lick of paint to refresh them and remove stains on the walls – Mens needed a deep clean to remove stains on the floor.</p> <p>The initial door to the both toilets was heavy – is this DDA compliant?</p> <p>There was a bar behind the disabled ladies toilets – is this a requirement as looks uncomfortable if sitting on toilet...</p> <p>Toilet roll dispenser was particularly high in disabled toilets – DDA compliant?</p> <p>Members were informed that the response crew responded to smaller jobs and used their initiative to fix problems. Larger jobs were the responsibility of property services.</p>	

Public Convenience:	Mote Park 1 (by main café)	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	3 new urinals 3 new toilets	1 toilet has a fault resulting in continuous loss of water.
Number of Female toilets	5 new toilets	1 out of use.
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 Separate – with radar.	Lock recently damaged and repaired.
Child care facilities?	1 separate	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	Yes	
Rate the cleanliness	Very good	Attendant available
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	Posters torn down too often.	
Soap available?	Integrated in 4 units (male) Integrated in 5 units (female)	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	No	
Opening hours:	Although closure should be at 7pm they were closed at 6pm to stop vandalism.	
Vandalism?	None	
Drug paraphernalia?	Units built in the wall. No vandalism.	
Any further comments	All toilets have sensors fitted to flushing points. A very modern toilet facility Posters are removed (vandals) Toilet have radar key. Toilet sign at entrance have Braille markings.	

Public Convenience:	Mote Park 2 (Lakeside by boating area).	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1 steel urinal 2 toilets	
Number of Female toilets	2 toilets	One out of order (blocked) One has defunct toilet roll holder on the wall.
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 unit in female toilet.	
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	None	
Rate the cleanliness	Floor freshly washed	Walls clean.
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	No notice	
Soap available?	Dispensers available in men and women's units	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Available in men's and women's.	Working.
Hot water from taps?	Yes in men's, not working in the women's.	
Lights working?	Doors badly damaged.	Operator stated that this was due to excess graffiti.
Locks working?	On walls to entrance.	
Clearly Signposted at site?	None in this part of the park.	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	On walls to entrance	
Opening hours:	Auto locking 7am – 9pm	Operator closes early to prevent excess vandalism.
Vandalism?	Doors in men's toilet.	Door to cleaner cupboard damaged.
Drug paraphernalia?	None in either toilet.	
Any further comments		

Public Convenience:	Palace Avenue	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1 toilet 2 urinals	Missing seats on all toilets
Number of Female toilets	2	Leaking/a lot of water under one of the toilets in ladies
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 unisex – no seat	(-need to check alarm systems are working in disabled loos)
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	N/A	
Rate the cleanliness	Average	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)		
Soap available?	Yes	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	1 sign from road	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	As above	Toilets marked on car park maps
Opening hours:	7am -8.30pm (not indicated)	
Vandalism?	Scratched on to walls of ladies toilets	
Drug paraphernalia?	None	Needle box damaged in male toilets
Any further comments	<p>Floor needs cleaning Extractor fan needs cleaning Braille on signs.</p> <p>Ladies floor lino cracked and needs replacing</p> <p>Group informed that ordered new signs will have contact telephone number and opening times.</p>	

Public Convenience:	Park Wood Parade	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1 toilet 1 urinal	
Number of Female toilets	2	
Number of Disabled Toilets	1	Key required
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	N/A	
Rate the cleanliness	Very clean	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	No indication.	
Soap available?	No	Bracket on the wall.
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	No	
Hot water from taps?	No	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	No	
Opening hours:		
Vandalism?	No	
Drug paraphernalia?	No	
Any further comments	The facilities were very basic but well maintained.	

Public Convenience:	Penenden Heath	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1 Urinal 2 toilets	Clean with paper.
Number of Female toilets	2	Clean with paper.
Number of Disabled Toilets	1	No access could be had.
Child care facilities?	Yes (see below)	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	1 small room for child care facilities in both the men's and women's toilets.	
Rate the cleanliness	10/10	Fresh green paint in both looked good.
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	No poster but looked well cleaned.	
Soap available?	None in the gents or the ladies.	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes but not working in the ladies.	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	Only signs are at the toilet facilities.
Clearly signposted near facilities?	No – none could be seen.	
Opening hours:	7 am – 9pm.	
Vandalism?	None evident.	
Drug paraphernalia?	Needle box - presume this is the box in the gents – no signs but fitted with a padlock.	
Any further comments	No smoking signs evident.	

Public Convenience:	Shepway	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1	
Number of Female toilets	1	
Number of Disabled Toilets		The female toilet is a combined male toilet.
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?		
Rate the cleanliness	Looks very good.	Clean throughout.
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	No poster.	
Soap available?	Yes in the men's. No in the ladies/disabled.	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes.	
Hot water from taps?	None in either facility.	
Lights working?	Yes.	
Locks working?	Yes in the ladies. The lock in the men's were in need of repair and not working.	
Clearly Signposted at site?	No signs at all outside.	Inside in the entrance there are signs fir ladies/men/disabled.
Clearly signposted near facilities?	None visible.	
Opening hours:	Not shown.	
Vandalism?	See below.	
Drug paraphernalia?	None apparent – no needles box.	
Any further comments	<p>No toilet paper in either facility. Wall clean but pock marked with holes where items have been fixed to the walls and then removed (probably vandalism). Domestic violence notice in ladies / disabled. No smoking sign clearly visible in the entrance.</p>	

Public Convenience:	South Park	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	1	
Number of Female toilets	1	
Number of Disabled Toilets	1	
Child care facilities?	Yes	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	Only ladies	
Rate the cleanliness	Very Good	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	?	
Soap available?	Yes	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	Sign on toilet in Braille
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Yes	
Opening hours:	7am to 9pm	
Vandalism?	None	
Drug paraphernalia?	None	-used needle bin in disabled ladies toilets only
Any further comments	<p>Infra red flush on toilets and new style sinks with water, soap and hand dryer. Has been recently refurbished.</p> <p>(Requested cost of refurbishment- response £33,000)</p>	

Public Convenience:	Whatman Park	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	Double metal wall urinal. 2 toilets, 3 basins.	
Number of Female toilets	4 toilets, 4 basins.	
Number of Disabled Toilets	1	No radar key.
Child care facilities?	In disabled toilet.	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?		
Rate the cleanliness	All freshly cleaned.	
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)	Cleaned once a day. No poster.	
Soap available?	No	
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Yes	
Hot water from taps?	Yes	
Lights working?	Yes	
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	Yes	
Opening hours:	8am – 4pm winter 8am – 8pm summer	No notices.
Vandalism?	All needle bins	
Drug paraphernalia?	Tin Bin	All are broken.
Any further comments	Waste bin in room of women's toilet. Operator looks after Millennium Park and toilet. Broken drug needle bins reported – no action. Open everyday. Critical priority – fit wall drug needle bins in all toilets as money become available.	

Public Convenience:	Yalding	
		Comments
Number of Male toilets	4 Urinals	No accessible general toilets
Number of Female toilets	2 and 1 disabled for general use	
Number of Disabled Toilets	1 in Men's toilets NOT for general use 1 in ladies for general use	
Child care facilities?	None	
Child Care facilities accessible to Men and Women?	N/A	
Rate the cleanliness	Very good	Unpleasant smell in mens block
Regularly cleaned? (Is a poster up displaying cleaning times?)		
Soap available?	No soap in mens disabled toilet or ladies generally	Been reported, so will be put in within a week
Hand dryer working/facilities available?	Towel dispenser stocked	
Hot water from taps?	No – Cold only	No power available
Lights working?	None	As above. Although left open until 9pm officially
Locks working?	Yes	
Clearly Signposted at site?	Yes	
Clearly signposted near facilities?	From one direction (from pub)	
Opening hours:	Signposted as 7 to 9	triallying being left open 24 hours a day
Vandalism?	None	
Drug paraphernalia?	none	No needle disposal boxes
Any further comments	<p>A chain is missing from the ladies toilet</p> <p>Strong smell of chlorine type cleaning product in ladies – not men.</p> <p>One door sticking on one of the ladies cubicles – reported on day by Lionel.</p>	

Verbatim Image of Maidstone Town Centre Survey Responses regarding public conveniences

Further Comments	What could be done to improve the town centre
	Need more Public Toilets
Public Toilets, specifically in Maidstone train station aren't maintained or hygienic	Additional Toilets in the centre.
They [toilets] used to be a very high standard but unfortunately no more.	Less traffic
	Try to stop junkies using the public toilets to make it safer for children
	More public toilets
Need more public toilets	
There are very few public toilets and poorly signed.	
There aren't many public toilets.	Put signs to toilets.
Toilets are not as clean as should be.	Clean them more often
Not sure of any public toilets in the town centre. Brenchley Gardens has never been a particularly welcome place so we would not choose to visits the toilets there	
	More public toilets.
Toilets always smell and look broken etc	Sort the toilets out.
Rubbish Stalls and dirty toilets in Market. Not many public toilets in town.	
Public Toilets - not enough - not clean - hot water etc.	
Lack of public toilets.	
Will not use public toilets due to condition	
Toilets- Dirty Needles from Drug Users	

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Reviewing the aims of the scrutiny review and how will it be undertaken			
Key questions	Aim of question / supplementary questions	Notes	Actions Required
Taking the six strands of equalities is there anything in the review that could discriminate or disadvantage any of these groups?	<p>To look at each individual type of group to highlight if there are any issues with the policy or function being reviewed or the review itself that adversely affect any of the groups specifically</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Gender,</p> <p>Race</p> <p>Sexual orientation</p> <p>Faith</p> <p>Disability</p>	<p>Age: potentially the elderly and young children if public conveniences are closed</p> <p>Gender: possible lack of family toilets, potentially bigger impact on women;</p> <p>Evening economy and toilet availability for women;</p> <p>The male/female ratio of public conveniences</p> <p>Baby changing facilities located in ladies only</p> <p>Race: N/A</p> <p>Sexual Orientation: N/A</p> <p>Faith: A potential implication of mixed sex toilets if recommended;</p> <p>A potential impact of community toilet scheme and using licensed premises</p> <p>Disability:</p> <p>Closing toilets because they are not DDA compliant toilets or not updating toilets to be DDA compliant</p> <p>Whether public conveniences are available in close</p>	<p>Ensure each strand is considered as part of the reports evidence</p> <p>The review will be advertised widely to try to ensure that all six strands of equalities have the opportunity to be engaged.</p>

		proximity to shops/bars	
Consideration of available data, research and information and consultation			
Key questions	Aim of question / supplementary questions	Notes	Actions Required
What do you already know about who uses and delivers this service or area for review? Who do we need to consult with as part of the review, what consultation has already been undertaken that we could use?	<p>What do you know about the equality groups and the make-up of the people using the service or in the area? Qualitative and quantitative information</p> <p>Think of the wider 'community' including people who possibly do not currently use the service but could or should.</p>	<p>Data is limited regarding specific user groups. However, the service is available to visitors and residents of the borough. Desktop research required including age concern research and Parish Council responses</p> <p>Please see usage data in report from Street Scene to determine numbers.</p>	Liaise with officers to ensure previous work undertaken by the Council is used to identify user groups.
What additional information is needed to ensure that all equality groups' needs are taken into account?	Identifying where there are gaps in the information required to make an assessment.	<p>Advertise the review widely using press releases</p> <p>Councillor interaction with constituents</p>	Liaise with officers and partners to ensure data is as full and accurate as possible.
How are you going to go about getting the extra information that is required, what method/form of consultation can be used?	<p>Residents Panel, known groups etc that can be used and how you are going to do it. Will be dependent on what means of consultation an authority already has.</p> <p>Focus Groups, surveys (face to face, postal, website)</p> <p>Do barriers exist to effective consultation with any group?</p>	See methodology outlined in report – it includes press release, desktop research and letters to organisations	Liaise with council officers to ensure the best approaches to different groups of users are used.

	Resources to encourage full participation by marginalised groups		
Assessment of impact, looking at key findings of the review and what equality issues have been identified and recommendations made			
Key questions	Aim of question / supplementary questions	Notes	Actions Required
Have you identified any differential impact and does this adversely affect any groups in the community?	Look at what the effects are of the policy/function on other groups. From these findings identify if there are adverse affects on any groups.	This will be identified as part of the conclusions of the review	
If there is an adverse impact can it be avoided, can we make changes, can we lessen it etc? Recommendations made for change	Led by the mentees – what are the reasons for the negative impact? What could realistically be changed to negate the adverse impact? Can anything actually be done?	As above	
If there is nothing you can do, can the reasons be fairly justified?	Full justification from the mentees – must be their decision on the justification – ‘powerful’ questions to be used.	As above	
How will the monitoring information be published?	SCRAIP	In conclusion and key actions monitored using SCRAIP	
Publication of results of the impact assessment			
	Published alongside the other EINAs and referred to in the strategy.		

PUBLIC CONVENIENCE COSTS (ACTUAL 2008-2009)

Supplied by Peter Curtis in May 09.

	RATES 2008/09	ELEC	WATER	SEWERAGE	HYGIENE SERVICES	EQUIPMENT ETC	R+M	INSURANCE	CENTRAL CHARGES	DEPRECIATION	CLEANING COSTS	TOTAL COSTS	TOTAL COSTS LESS CENTRAL CHARGES / DEPRECIATION	MBS Employee Costs	CLEANING Controlled Running Costs	COST SPLIT Central Charges
					4335	6096	83303	1130	110839		253224.4			69.34	12.69	17.97
Town Centre P.C's (4)																
Church Street	1733	1768	1291	1629	206	597	3967	51	5038	5053	16127	37460	27369	11182	2046	2898
Lockmeadow	inc in market ?				206	597	3967	51	5038	8945	16127	34932	20948	11182	2046	2898
Palace Ave	inc in car pk ?	1360	228	350	206	597	3967	51	5038	0	16127	27925	22887	11182	2046	2898
Fairmeadow	2287	1080	972	1028	206	597	3967	51	5038	8095	16127	39449	26316	11182	2046	2898
Butterfly unit / temp p.c's	?	?	17	13		1337		51	5038	7127	5000	18583	6418	3467	635	899
Urban P.C's (3)																
Allington	965	767	137	505	206	290	3967	51	5038	3386	10207	25520	17096	7077	1295	1834
Parkwood	623	649	252	300	206	290	3967	51	5038	3015	10207	24599	16546	7077	1295	1834
Shepway (Cumberland Ave)	554	711	110	173	206	290	3967	51	5038	0	10207	21307	16269	7077	1295	1834
Rural P.C's (7)																
Staplehurst 1 (Library)	KCC	410	130	130	206	290	3967	51	5038	1903	10207	22334	15392	7077	1295	1834
Staplehurst 2 (Bell Lane)	860	436	114	179	206	290	3967	51	5038	4497	10207	25846	16311	7077	1295	1834
Marden	KCC	637	239	332	206	290	3967	51	5038	3386	10207	24353	15929	7077	1295	1834
Lenham	1156	366	325	905	206	290	3967	51	5038	3761	10207	26273	17474	7077	1295	1834
Headcorn	508	339	184	446	206	290	3967	51	5038	2552	10207	23789	16198	7077	1295	1834
Yalding	? no supply		756	4770	206	290	3967	51	5038	4678	10207	29964	20248	7077	1295	1834
Sutton Valence	attached to Parish building - paid by Parish?				206	290	3967	51	5038	0	10207	19759	14721	7077	1295	1834
Parks P.C's (8)																
Clare Pk	inc in Parks ?	791	296	457	206	290	3967	51	5038	3756	10207	25060	16266	7077	1295	1834
Peneden	inc in Parks ?	682	416	500	206	290	3967	51	5038	3942	10207	25300	16319	7077	1295	1834
Mote Pk	inc in Parks ?	664	1400	738	413	581	7934	103	10076	10847	20413	53168	32244	14154	2590	3668
Sth Park	inc in Parks ?	310	166	200	206	290	3967	51	5038	1440	10207	21876	15397	7077	1295	1834
Whatman	inc in Parks ?		5582	3319	206	290	3967	51	5038	0	10207	28661	23622	7077	1295	1834
Cobtree	inc in Cobtree ?									0	10207	10207	10207	7077	1295	1834
Brenchley	2460	1165	377	274	206	290	3967	51	5038	5609	10207	29645	18998	7077	1295	1834
	11147	12135	12994	16249	4335	8660	83303	1130	110839	81992	253224	596007	403176	175586	32134	45504

596006.6

Notes:

Costs shown include all C20 (Public Conveniences) and C65 (lockmeadow Market) recharges

R+M cost details not held per P.C. - 08/9 costs therefore apportioned pro-rata

Insurances and Central Charges apportioned pro-rata

Cleaning costs are made up from MBS charges, any savings would only be achievable on the proportion relating to MBS employee and controlled running costs

Local Authorities Costs

Ashford Borough Council

"Total figure, including utilities and central charges, for Public Conveniences (excluding automated PCs) for 08/09 was £278,750.

Total figure for Automated Public Conveniences was £36,418.

Public convenience cleansing and general maintenance contract is £198,500"

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council

"Building Repairs Expenditure £19,150

Electricity £16,700

Rates £20,900

Water Charges (Metered) £10,500

Sewerage & Environmental Services £10,200 Premises Insurance £2,450 Contract (cleansing and opening / shutting) Payments £84,300

These costs do not include council salaries, central support or 'capital financing costs'."

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

2008/09 BUDGET	Maintenance	Electricity	Business Rates	Water & Sewerage Rates	Buildings Insurance	Cleaning Contract	Total	Indirect Costs	Total
Support Services								43,700	43,700
Depreciation								68,510	68,510
								112,210	112,210
Total	78,000	7,000	14,430	13,000	2,280	151,530	266,240	112,210	378,450

Gravesham Borough Council

"For 08/09 the total probable budget was £223,490. This covers 11 toilet sites and 5 members of staff to clean them". It also include central charges and depreciation

Canterbury City Council

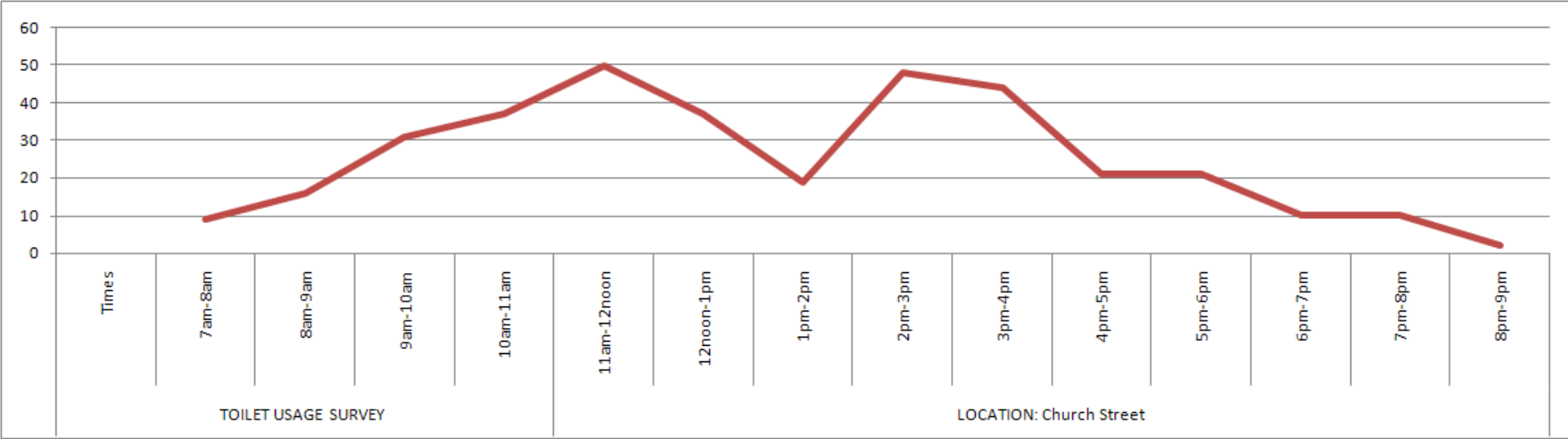
Narrative	Budget 2009/10
<u>PUBLIC CONVENIENCES</u>	£
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Employee Costs	
Wages (Contribution to Parish Council)	4,100
	4,100
Premises Costs	
Building Maintenance (Property Services responsibility)	11,500
Improvements & Adaptations (Service Manager responsibility)	6,200
Electricity	19,300
Non Domestic Rates	37,700
Sewerage Charges	44,500
Water	20,000
Property & Contents Fire Insurance	4,300
	143,500
Supplies and Services	
Materials	400
Promotions	1,100
	1,500
Environmental Services Contract	
Building Maintenance Extras	99,600
Building Maintenance Planned Toilets	6,900
Public Convenience Cleansing	294,300
	400,800
Expenditure Total	549,900
<u>INCOME</u>	
Costs Recovered	-4,000
Income Total	-4,000
<u>NET EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>545,900</u>
Support Service Costs	
Financial Services - Community & Environment	1,250
Head of Environment & Street Scene	9,020
Environment & Street Scene Admin	12,750
Street Scene	76,360
Control Room Recharges	3,400
Contact Centre	16,250
Core Working Initiatives	6,810
Building Maintenance & Service	1,010
Estates Admin	10
Estates	280
Structures	360
	127,500
Capital Financing Costs	
Depreciation	129,200
	129,200
TOTAL CHARGE	802,600

TOILET FOOTFALL SURVEY

Location	Date	Count	Date	Count	Totals	Average Daily Usage	Comments
Fairmeadow	Various dates between 7/7/2008 to 29/7/2008					165	weekdays & weekends
Palace Avenue	Various dates between 8/7/2008 to 26/7/2008					240	weekdays & weekends
Church Street	Various dates between 30/6/2008 to 28/7/2008					355	weekdays & weekends
Allington Mid Kent Centre	31/10/2008 to 2/11/08 inclusive & 7/11/2008 to 9/11/08 inclusive					51	weekdays & weekends
Shepway	24/10/2008 to 26/10/08 inclusive					34	weekdays & weekends
Park Wood	10/10/2008 to 12/10/08 inclusive & 17/10/2008 to 19/10/08 inclusive					32	weekdays & weekends
	Date	Week Day	Date	Weekend	Total	Average	
Staplehurst Parade	23/10/08	7	15/11/08	19	26	13	weekdays & weekends
Staplehurst Bell Lane	24/10/08	36	16/11/08	26	62	31	weekdays & weekends
Lenham	20/10/08	30	18/10/08	41	71	36	weekdays & weekends
Marden	28/10/08	34	15/11/08	46	80	40	weekdays & weekends
Headcorn	22/10/08	27	01/11/08	32	59	30	weekdays & weekends
Yalding	29/10/08	5	19/10/08	46	51	26	weekdays & weekends
Sutton Valence	21/10/08	4	16/11/08	9	13	7	weekdays & weekends

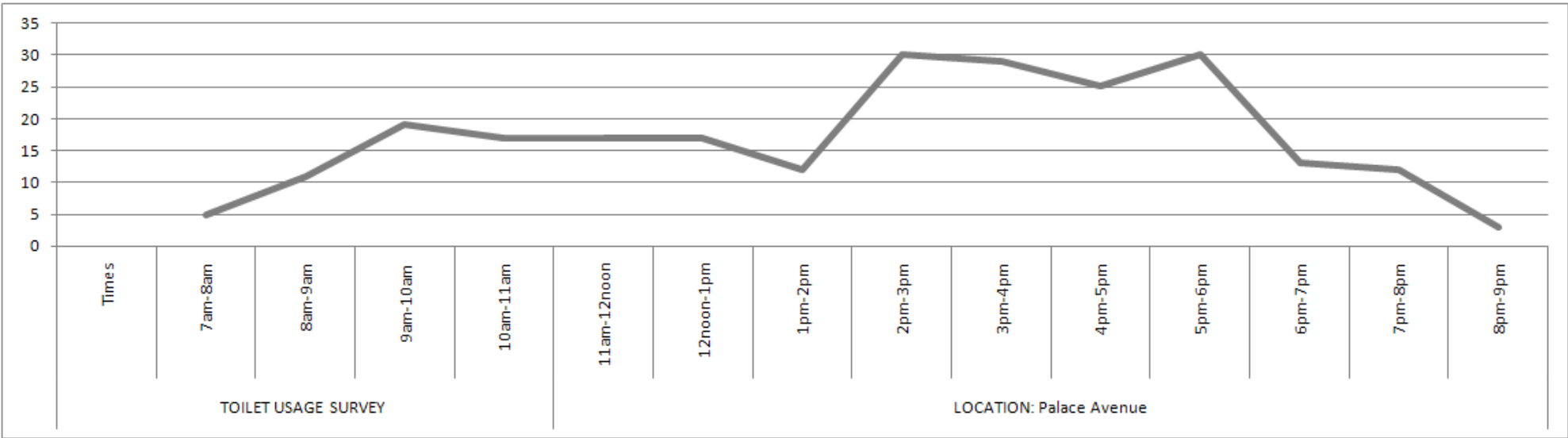
TOILET USAGE SURVEY					LOCATION: Church Street									
Times	7am-8am	8am-9am	9am-10am	10am-11am	11am-12noon	12noon-1pm	1pm-2pm	2pm-3pm	3pm-4pm	4pm-5pm	5pm-6pm	6pm-7pm	7pm-8pm	8pm-9pm
30th June	8	20	35	35	61	36	15							
2nd July	12	7	34	30	42	32	19							
5th July	6	16	37	47	55	45	22							
21st July								53	36	38	14	12	12	6
23rd July								38	35	15	16	10	7	0
25th July								52	60	10	32	8	11	0
28th July	8	19	17	36	40	36	21						0	0
Totals	34	62	123	148	198	149	77	143	131	63	62	30	30	6
Average	9	16	31	37	50	37	19	48	44	21	21	10	10	2

Average Hourly Usage



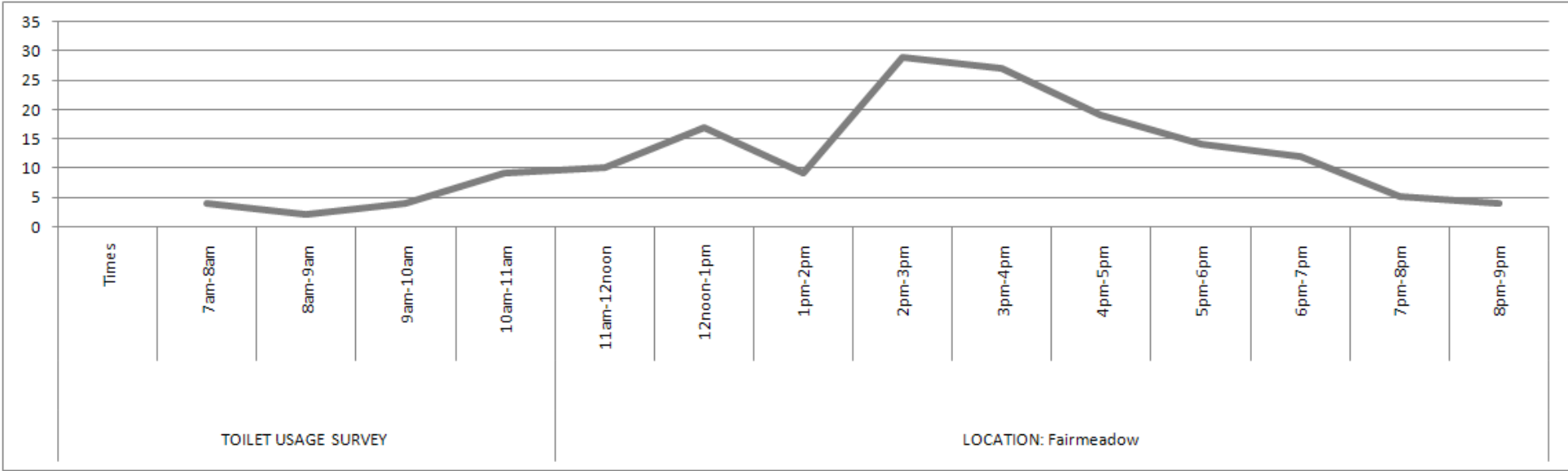
TOILET USAGE SURVEY					LOCATION: Palace Avenue									
Times	7am-8am	8am-9am	9am-10am	10am-11am	11am-12noon	12noon-1pm	1pm-2pm	2pm-3pm	3pm-4pm	4pm-5pm	5pm-6pm	6pm-7pm	7pm-8pm	8pm-9pm
8th July	5	14	18	18	13	11	13							
10th July	5	10	15	12	17	12	10							
12th July	4	10	25	22	22	29	13							
19th July								40	19	21	18	11	15	0
22nd July								27	22	9	11	3	0	0
24th July								37	19	9	10	2	0	0
26th July								15	55	60	80	35	31	11
Totals	14	34	58	52	52	52	36	119	115	99	119	51	46	11
Average	5	11	19	17	17	17	12	30	29	25	30	13	12	3

Average Hourly Usage

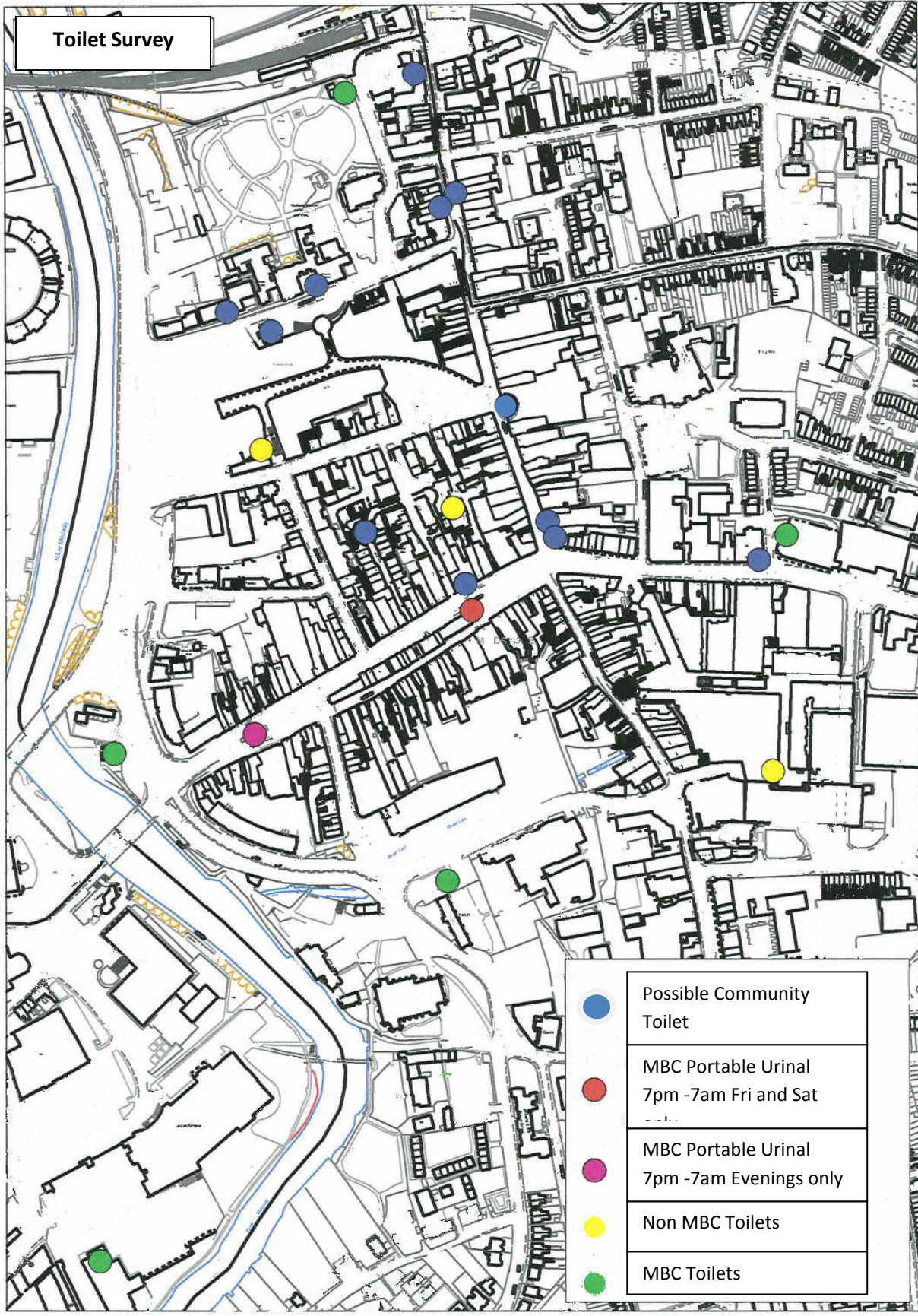


TOILET USAGE SURVEY					LOCATION: Fairmeadow									
Times	7am-8am	8am-9am	9am-10am	10am-11am	11am-12noon	12noon-1pm	1pm-2pm	2pm-3pm	3pm-4pm	4pm-5pm	5pm-6pm	6pm-7pm	7pm-8pm	8pm-9pm
7th July	3	2	1	3	7	15	0							
9th July	1	1	5	8	2	4	2							
11th July	3	5	3	11	11	12	5							
12th July	10	1	7	12	19	36	27							
14th July								39	34	17	9	15	2	7
16th July								12	22	17	15	14	13	6
29th July								37	24	24	17	8	0	0
Totals	17	9	16	34	39	67	34	88	80	58	41	37	15	13
Average	4	2	4	9	10	17	9	29	27	19	14	12	5	4

Average Hourly Usage



Mapping of Facilities



A summary of businesses in and around the town who would be interested in taking part in a community scheme.

Street	Company Name	Business Type	Opening Times	Standard	Disabled	Baby Changing	Comments
St Faiths Street	Maidstone Museum	Public Interest	10-5 Mon to Sat	Good	No	Yes	Due for refit in 2010
Havoc Square	Royal Albion	Public House	11am to 11pm	Good	Yes	No	Not part of a chain
St Faiths Street	KCC Library	Public Library	9am to 6pm	Good	Yes	Yes	
Week Street	Society Rooms	Public House	9am to 12 Midnight	Very Good	Yes	Yes	
Week Street	McDonalds	Restaurant	7am to 11pm	Very Good	Yes	Yes	
Week Street	Starburger	Restaurant	7am to 6pm	Good	Yes	No	Very small cubicles
Week Street	Marks and Spencer	Retail	8am to 5pm	Excellent	Yes	Yes	Hourly checks
Week Street	Burger King	Restaurant	9am to 10pm	Good	No	No	Up stairs
Week Street	Mothercare	Retail	8am to 5pm	N/A	No	Yes	Baby changing only
Earl Street	Fremlins Walk	Retail Centre	7.30am to 11.30pm	Excellent	Yes	Yes	Already open to public
Market Buildings	Royal Star	Shopping Centre	8am to 5pm	Very good	Yes	Yes	Already open to the public
High Street	Muggletons	Public House	9am to 12 Midnight	Good	Yes	Yes	
Gabriels Hill	Road House	Coffee House	9am to 6pm	Good	No	Yes	
High Street	Ethnic	Public House	8am to 2am	Good	Yes	Yes	Privately owned
King Street	Zebra	Public House	11am to 11pm	Good	Yes	No	Privately owned