

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	22 January 2019
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

Subject:	Public Convenience Comfort Scheme Pilot
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:

- ♦ outline a proposed pilot Public Convenience Comfort Scheme.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):

- (1) that Lanark is agreed as the pilot town for the Public Convenience Comfort Scheme and that the Lanark Business Improvement District (BID) be used to promote the scheme; and
- (2) that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee outlining the findings of the pilot.

3. Background

- 3.1. Historically, the Council operated 21 public conveniences and made an annual payment of £2,000 to the New Lanark heritage site as a contribution to the operation of their toilets.
- 3.2. During the period 2013 to 2016, the Council, through the annual efficiency programme, approved the removal of all public conveniences, the only remaining costs being in relation to the annual contribution to the New Lanark heritage facility.
- 3.3. A number of discussions were held during this period with groups expressing an interest in operating local public conveniences. As a consequence, two local community groups took on the operation and management of the former public conveniences in the towns of Larkhall and Biggar.
- 3.4. Facilities Management Services also considered the introduction of a comfort scheme as an alternative to the closure of public conveniences. However, at that time, due to the level of efficiencies required, the service was not a core function or a legislative requirement and, due to the required capital investment required to keep the buildings operational, a full closure programme was submitted and approved by the Council as part of the budget setting process for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

4. Comfort Scheme Pilot

- 4.1. A comfort scheme is where a local business, e.g. hotel, café, pub or shop, offers its toilet facilities to the public to use at no cost, regardless of whether they are a customer or not. In exchange, the business will receive an annual payment from the Council for doing so.

- 4.2 To evaluate the potential benefit and local interest in the provision of local public conveniences, Facility Management Service would propose piloting a Comfort Scheme in Lanark for a period of one year.
- 4.3 The main reason for selecting Lanark for a pilot include:-
- The town is a well-established tourist destination
 - The Council previously provided public conveniences within the town
 - The Council has been approached by a number of local groups, most recently from the Lanark Development Trust, requesting the Council reinstate the public conveniences or about how they could take on the provision of a local facility.
 - Provision of public conveniences are included in the Lanark BID objectives
 - Information is readily available on businesses most likely interested in participating , through the Lanark BID
 - Working with Lanark BID would provide a mechanism to promote and collate interest in businesses wishing to participate
 - In conjunction with the other proposals for the town contained within the Lanark BID this will contribute to vitality and footfall within the town centre
- 4.4 On the basis Lanark is accepted as the pilot, Facility Management Services would propose to liaise with the Lanark BID manager through Planning and Economic Development Services to issue a leaflet outlining the proposed Comfort Scheme. The leaflet would be issued by the BID manager during their face to face meetings with local businesses to promote the BID, the leaflet would ask interested parties to contact the Council if they were interested in participating. The benefits of this process are:-
- BID hold details of businesses that might be interested
 - By asking interested parties to contact the Council, Data Protection issues are addressed
 - Supports an objective already identified in the BID as being supported locally
 - Additional promotion through face to face discussions will supplement the promotional campaign outlined in paragraph 4.5. below.
- 4.5 In addition to the promotion of the scheme through the BID, the Council will also promote the scheme through local papers, social media and the Council web site.
- 4.6 Facility Management Services have reviewed a number of other Councils' comfort schemes, including Edinburgh City Council, Stirling Council and Highland Council, to create a scheme for South Lanarkshire. The wording documentation will be agreed with Legal Services and risk and insurance before any final paperwork is issued. However the scheme will cover the following areas:-
- Eligibility Criteria to join the scheme
 - Standards For Participating (cleaning, facilities to be provided including consumables)
 - Opening Hours
 - Financial Contribution
- 4.7 Facility Services are targeting, subject to approval of the pilot, to have a scheme in Lanark operational on 1 April 2019 and to operate for one year.

4.8 A report will be submitted to a future meeting of the Community and Enterprise Resources Committee in early 2020 to provide an update on the pilot. The evaluation will consider the following areas:-

- Providers' survey
- Users' survey
- Feedback from Lanark BID

4.9 This will inform whether the Council consider the pilot to be a success and would contribute towards a recommendation to a future Committee on whether the scheme should be continued and rolled out to further towns and areas

5. Financial Implications

5.1. The financial payment to any successful application would be £500, £750 or £1,000 per annum depending on the level of facilities provided, the opening hours and the location. Each application would be scored against criteria and the resulting score will dictate the annual payment. Appendix 1 provides details of the scoring criteria.

5.2. The financial implications will be determined by the number of locations selected but it is anticipated that the pilot would cost in the region of £10,000. This is based on the costs of promoting the scheme, making payment to the businesses and the production of business and local signage. Previously a number of facilities were funded and managed within Lanark (manned and automatic facilities) at a cost of approximately £100,000 per annum.

5.3. Funding has been identified in the current year's budget for Community and Enterprise Resources which will allow the pilot to be progressed for 1 year. Any funding requirements beyond this will require to be considered within the revenue budget.

5.4. The Service will also, where appropriate, use a minimum "walking distance" criteria if the level of interest is significant e.g. the Council should not support multiple requests if they are within a 10-15 minute walk of an existing facility or a preferred business. A preferred business would be the applicant receiving the highest score against the criteria.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. Given the pilot will be limited to one town, there will be no Employee Implications at this time.

7. Other Implications

7.1. The main risk in developing a Comfort Scheme provided by 3rd parties is in relation to reputational risk, especially if the operators do not comply with the agreed standards or there are issues with users of the facilities. The use of Facilities staff to undertake unannounced site visits and an annual evaluation of those on the scheme, should minimise this risk.

7.2 There are no sustainability issues arising from this report.

8. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 8.1 Further guidance is being sought on whether, given this is a pilot, that an EIA is required. No consultation is being considered in advance of the pilot but an exercise would be undertaken to evaluate the benefit towards the end of 2020.

Michael McGlynn

Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

27 December 2018

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Work with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities
- ◆ Support the local economy by providing the right conditions for inclusive growth

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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