



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18TH JUNE 2019

A LOCAL TOILETS STRATEGY FOR RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CLLR RHYS LEWIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES, WELL-BEING AND CULTURAL SERVICES

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval of the Local Toilets Strategy for Rhondda Cynon Taf 2019 and its publication.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the Local Toilets Strategy 2019.
2.2 Approve the publication of the Local Toilets Strategy 2019.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To comply with the statutory requirement to develop and publish a Local Toilets Strategy, as required by Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Act places a duty on each Local Authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy for its area, with specific responsibility to:
- Assess the community's need for toilets, including changing facilities for babies and changing places facilities for people with disabilities;
 - Provide details of how to meet the identified need;
 - Produce a local toilets strategy; and

- Review the strategy, update and publicise revisions.
- 4.2 The duty to prepare a local toilets strategy does not require Local Authorities to provide and maintain public toilets directly. The Local Authority must take a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed by their local population.
 - 4.3 The Council has in recent years invested over £350,000 in maintaining the current provision. The Council does not charge for use of our public toilets.
 - 4.4 The strategy aims to review the quality and quantity of local toilets throughout the County Borough and to provide or facilitate the provision of clean, safe, accessible and sustainable toilets for residents and visitors to the area at locations where the need for such facilities has been identified.
 - 4.5 A strategy has been prepared that incorporates feedback following a public consultation as part of the Assessment of Need that was undertaken for four weeks, beginning in October 2018. The strategy also incorporates feedback following a statutory 12 weeks public consultation on the draft strategy which began in February 2019.
 - 4.6 The strategy sets out options that will be considered over the next two years to enhance and maximise the use of existing facilities and to promote additional, appropriate and accessible facilities.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Access to toilet facilities is important to everyone but can become even more important as people become older. Improved access to toilet facilities can give older people greater confidence to leave their home and maintain independence and dignity in later life.
- 5.2 People who have young children and babies will have an increased need to use toilet and changing facilities.
- 5.3 Access to toilet facilities is important to everyone but can become even more important to people with a disability or health condition. In mapping publicly accessible toilet provision we have identified what disabled facilities are available at each location.
- 5.4 The strategy aims to improve the quantity and quality of toilet provision for all. Some facilities will be gender neutral/accessible toilets.
- 5.5 During the Assessment of Need consultation, respondents were asked whether their response to the survey had been influenced (positively or negatively) by the range of protected characteristics as specified in the

Equality Act 2010. The issues raised included gender identity, gender reassignment, problems relating to a range of disabilities and health issues, use of facilities by parents with children, issues regarding disabled toilet facilities not being of adequate size for wheelchairs to enter, requirement of hoists for disabled individuals, etc.

- 5.6 During the 12 week public consultation on the draft Local Toilets Strategy, respondents were also asked if they felt that their response to the survey had been influenced (positively or negatively) by the range of protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010. Respondents did not indicate any matters.

6. CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT

- 6.1 Engagement with other Local Authority services, community groups and the public was undertaken to understand what is currently available and how any gaps can be mitigated.
- 6.2 A public consultation was undertaken for four weeks between 17 October and 14 November 2018 to assess the needs of residents and people working or visiting the County Borough. Engagement mechanisms included:
- Online via the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council website, social media;
 - Email alerts and correspondence;
 - Face to face discussions at various community venues;
 - Paper questionnaires requested by groups and residents.
- 6.3 A range of organisations were engaged with by sending the questionnaires directly to them for response, including Rhondda Cynon Taf Access Group, RNIB, Wales Council for the Deaf, Cwm Taf Community Health Council, 50+ Forums and Rhondda Cynon Taf Older Persons Advisory Group, RCT Citizens Panel, Tourism, Third Sector Organisations, Carers Support Project, etc.
- 6.4 A total of 97 respondents completed the questionnaire and have been included in the analysis of needs. These have been used to influence the content of the strategy.
- 6.5 A statutory 12 week public consultation was then undertaken between 4 February and 29 April 2019 on the draft Local Toilets Strategy. Engagement mechanisms and organisations engaged with were replicated as per the Assessment of Need public consultation. Engagement also took place with the Community Liaison Committee and a draft strategy was scrutinised by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee. A meeting was also held with 'A Place to Pee' group who campaign for improving public toilet provision in Pontypridd.

- 6.6 A total of 60 respondents completed the questionnaire and Appendix 4 of the strategy contains the detailed comments from the consultation. Some of the key findings are as follows.
- 6.7 **72% of respondents feel that the strategy provides clear information to help understand why the actions proposed in the strategy are necessary.** Comments made related to only one set of free public toilets in Pontypridd which is deemed inadequate, opinion that public conveniences should be provided by the County Borough council and not local businesses and others, concerns that people more likely to need facilities are not able to access online information.
- 6.8 **83% of respondents agree with the actions under Objective 1 to enhance and maximise the use of existing facilities, with 17% partially agreeing.** Comments referred to current facilities are either closed or close early; query regarding why local businesses/private sector should cover the cost of providing toilets; concern regarding disabled toilets not being suitable for dual purpose of baby changing facilities; request for improved opening times of toilets in Pontypridd town centre and better physical signage to existing public toilets in Pontypridd town centre.
- 6.9 **90% of respondents agree with the actions under Objective 2 to promote additional, appropriate and accessible facilities, with 10% partially agreeing.** Respondents expressed concerns that toilets open at night could be used by drug users and be unsafe and vandalised, availability of facilities in towns on the weekends and evenings, concern regarding some disabled toilets not being suitable for dual purpose of baby changing facilities, request for permanent toilet provision in the town centre, especially at night time.
- 6.10 The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the 19th March 2019 scrutinised the draft Local Toilets Strategy and broadly supported it. Members felt that in respect of baby changing facilities and disabled toilet facilities, numbers of each were low and that more could be done to encourage private sector and other groups to work together to make these facilities available where they are needed. There was also comment on the need to increase general provision of toilet facilities across the County Borough.
- 6.11 The importance of facilities to residents was highlighted and that the knowledge of toilet provision in many areas may make a difference in a person leaving their home, especially for people with certain health conditions. This will in turn have a positive effect on their wellbeing. Members also felt that the lack of advertising is a problem as many residents are unaware of any facilities that offer the use of their toilet provision for public use. A Member commented about promotion of the

Welsh Government toilet logo sticker, to ensure that the public understand that it means that members of the public are welcome to use facilities where the sticker is displayed.

- 6.12 Comments were received in relation to having more toilet facilities available in cafes, bars, shops, etc. will increase footfall to that business although it was recognised there will be costs involved in providing and maintaining facilities. It was felt that increased toilet provision will be good for town centre footfall and the economy and “unlock the potential” of our towns.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under consideration are implemented.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 This strategy has been prepared in accordance with the statutory duty set out in Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 9.1 The Local Toilets Strategy aligns with the other existing priorities and plans such as the Council’s Corporate Plan 2016-2020 and the Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan 2018-2023. These plans set the strategic direction at a regional and local level. The Local Toilets Strategy cuts across a number of the objectives and aims to support them. Publicly accessible toilets are needed by every one of us at some point where we live, work or visit and so the provision touches on all areas of the Council in some way.
- 9.2 Due regard has been made to the Five Ways of Working, as contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, when preparing, reviewing, consulting on and publishing this strategy.
- 9.3 The Strategy has identified current levels of publicly accessible toilet provision and considers ways that the use of existing facilities can be enhanced and maximised for the **long term**. The strategy also includes an objective to promote additional, appropriate and accessible facilities, with supporting actions.
- 9.4 The Assessment of Need public consultation revealed that some respondents felt that the lack of facilities has stopped them from visiting certain locations. If the objectives and action points contained within the strategy are to be realised, then the strategy will contribute

towards the **prevention** of loneliness and social isolation that many people experience.

- 9.5 This strategy is **integrated** with other strategic plans and in particular it seeks to enhance and improve people's experiences of our town centres and the night time economy, while enabling people with disabilities or chronic health conditions to have access to appropriate and available facilities.
- 9.6 In preparing this strategy, the Council has **collaborated** with other Local Authorities in Wales to share ideas and ways of working, sought involvement from other organisations including Cwm Taf University Health Board and sought to work in partnership with businesses to improve the number of publicly accessible toilets which can be mapped and available. There has also been engagement with community groups to discuss how to enhance toilet provision and the active consultation processes adopted have sought to **involve** residents, visitors and businesses in the development of strategy. .
- 9.7 The Local Toilets Strategy will also support the Council to contribute to many of the Wellbeing Goals contained within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including **a healthier Wales**, where people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood; **a more equal Wales**, which enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances; and **a Wales of cohesive communities**, ensuring attractive, viable, safe and well connected communities.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The Council is required to produce and publish a Local Toilets Strategy. The results of the Assessment of Need public consultation and the statutory 12 weeks public consultation have been considered in producing the strategy. The Local Toilets Strategy must now be subject to final approval by Cabinet with a view to it being published as soon as possible, in accordance with the requirements of the Statutory Guidance.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

- Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017: Provision of Toilets
- The Provision of Toilets in Wales: Local Toilets Strategies Statutory Guidance, June 2018

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