



# **NORWICH** City Council

**Committee Name:** Mousehold Heath Conservators

**Committee Date:** 18/03/2022

**Report Title:** Public toilet provision at Gurney Road car park

**Report from:** Head of environment services

**Wards:** Crome/Catton Grove

## **OPEN PUBLIC ITEM**

### **Purpose**

To decide on the options to be developed and costed for the provision of public toilets on Mousehold Heath.

### **Recommendations:**

To maintain the current provision (option 1) until the costings for works to refurbish the buildings as existing, with water saving and electricity saving measures and baby changing facilities added. (option 2).

### **Policy Framework**

The Council has three corporate priorities, which are:

- People living well
- Great neighbourhoods, housing and environment
- Inclusive economy

This report meets the great neighbourhoods, housing and environment corporate priority

This report addresses maintain a clean and sustainable city with a good local environment that people value strategic action in the Corporate Plan

The Mousehold Conservators Mousehold Heath management plan 2019-2028 has eight objectives, which are:

- A) To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.
- B) To protect Mousehold Heath and ensure that it is a safe and secure place to visit.
- C) To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.
- D) To manage Mousehold Heath in a way that has a positive impact on the environment.

E) To improve habitats and the natural environment for wildlife to enhance the biodiversity of Mousehold Heath.

F) To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.

G) To provide opportunities for local communities to be involved in all aspect of our work.

H) To promote Mousehold Heath to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sense of pride.

This report meets the objective(s):

A) To ensure Mousehold Heath is a welcoming place for people to visit.

C) To ensure that Mousehold Heath is clean and well maintained.

F) To safeguard the historic landscape, archaeological features and buildings of Mousehold Heath.

## Background

1. Mousehold Heath covers 84 hectares, and it provides recreational, health and environmental and biodiversity benefits for the residents of the city, greater Norwich and the region.
2. The Mousehold Heath Conservators are responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the public toilets, located adjacent to the public car park and the pavilion at Gurney Road.
3. The toilet blocks, male and female were built circa 1901 when the pavilion was built to serve visitors to the heath. The buildings are constructed from wood with a pitch tiled roof. A disabled facility was introduced more recently adjoining the male toilet block.
4. The toilets are a timber and brick construction and cover an area of approximately 27m<sup>2</sup>. They provide one male toilet, one female toilet, one disabled toilet, cold water handwashing and no drying (not a legal obligation) and have an electrical supply, internal lights, water supply and mains drainage.
5. Ongoing repairs have been undertaken over the years. This work has mainly been the replacement of wooden panels and roof tiles in keeping with the original design.
6. The pavilion next to the toilet block is locally listed. The toilet structures which are not identified as individual assets on the council's local list are also not mentioned on the local listing of the pavilion. Clarification regarding their status is currently being sought.
7. The provision of toilets has been considered previously by the conservators, and they have continued to provide them as a basic facility. The Mousehold Heath management plan 2019-2028 identified that the provision of the public toilets would be reviewed again in 2021/22.
8. Due to their proximity to the pavilion and the car park, the toilets suffer from a relatively low amount of vandalism. The level of use by heath visitors is not known. Observations by the wardens is that it is relatively low level use, although this may be as a result of the condition with people finding alternative places to use.
9. There are public toilets located at Mousehold pitch and putt. There are also toilets at the pavilion for use by clients to Zak's and in the changing rooms located at the Fountain Ground for use by those booking the football pitch.
10. The toilets were closed during the pandemic and opened to the public again early 2022.
11. The Mousehold Conservators hold a capital balance of £104,000.

## Report

12. The external condition of the buildings is very poor and unwelcoming. Work is required to replace damaged roof tiles. A condition survey of the buildings has identified that they are structurally in a maintainable condition, though there are external repairs required. They are in a poor decorative condition internally and the electrics and lighting require an upgrade.
13. The remaining life expectancy of the external parts of the building is 30 – 40 years except for the fascias, soffits and rainwater goods which is 10-15 years. There are some timber parts that do require repairing/replacing.
14. Internally the ceilings and walls are in good condition and have a remaining life expectancy of 50 years the toilets and basins are in average condition with a life expectancy of 20 years. The floors and internal decorating are in poor condition.
15. There are several possible options relating to the provision of public toilets on Mousehold Heath, which are set out below.
16. At a meeting of the Mousehold Conservators on 21 January 2022, the parks and open spaces manager asked for the conservators to email him any requirements they would like to be considered as part of the options report.
17. Two Councillors sent emails with items to consider. Cllr Brociek-Couton asked that the provision of a baby changing facility is included and Cllr Champion asked for the provision of an eco-toilet to be considered.
18. Due to NPSNorwich being unable to provide estimates for any works in the lead up to the services being brought in house on 1 April 2022, it has not been possible to give any indicative costs or timescales for the options.
19. There are a number of options regarding the future of the public toilet provision.
20. **Option 1: Do nothing (continue on the current basis)**

### Advantages

- The public toilets will be available for visitor to the heath.
- The capital receipt will not be used for the provision of a relatively low use facility.

### Disadvantages

- The toilets will remain unwelcoming to heath visitors.
- Potential positive reputational impact for the Mousehold Heath Conservators regarding the quality of provision.
- There will be no baby changing facility.
- There will be ongoing revenue expenditure to carry out temporary repairs, that will increase over time as the fabric of the buildings deteriorates.
- The potential loss of the buildings in the future as they reach a condition that requires them to be demolished.
- There will be a risk of visitors using the heath environs as a toilet.

- There will be a risk of tensions with leaseholder if there is increased use of pavilion toilets by non-clients.
- There is no reduction in water or electricity use.

**21. Option 2: Refurbishment as existing, with water saving and electricity saving measures incorporated into the design and add baby changing facilities into the existing provision**

**Advantages**

- The public toilets will be available for visitor to the heath.
- They will be more welcoming for visitors.
- A positive reputational impact for the conservators.
- It will ensure that the buildings will be maintained and exist into the future.
- The toilets will be more welcoming.
- The capital receipt will not be used for the provision of a relatively low use facility.
- The ongoing repair and maintenance expenditure will be reduced in the short to medium term.
- There will be a reduced risk of visitors using heath environs as a toilet.
- There will be a reduced risk of tension with leaseholder as non-clients will use the public toilets.
- A reduction in water and energy use.
- The

**Disadvantages**

- There will be a requirement for future revenue expenditure for repairs and maintenance.
- The potential loss of the buildings in the future as they reach a condition which requires them to be demolished.
- Easy to deliver and a relatively short timescale for the development of the specification, procuring and delivery.

**22. Option 3: Conversion of the male toilet to mixed gender including a baby changing facility, retain disabled toilet and closure of female toilet.**

**Advantages**

- The public toilets will be available for visitor to the heath.
- Toilets will be more welcoming for visitors.
- A positive reputational impact for the conservators.
- One of the buildings will be maintained and exist into the future.
- The toilets will be more welcoming.
- The ongoing repair and maintenance expenditure will be reduced in the short to medium term.
- The cleaning and consumables costs will be reduced.
- There will be reduced risk of visitors using heath environs as a toilet.
- There will be reduced risk of tension with the leaseholder as non-clients will use the public toilets.
- There would be the potential to convert the female toilet into a secure store in the future (if a purpose for it can be identified).

#### Disadvantages

- It is potentially the most costly option, excluding the eco-toilet option, which has too many unknowns regarding what would be required at this point)
- The capital reserve will be used for what is a relatively low use facility
- It is more complex to deliver, and it will take more time for the development of the specification, procurement and delivery.

### **23. Option 4: Close the toilets permanently**

#### Advantages

- Revenue expenditure will be minimal and relate to keeping the building secure and structurally safe.
- There will be a contract saving as the toilets will not need to be cleaned or consumables provided.

#### Disadvantages

- There will be no public toilets provided at what is a focal point for visitors to the heath.
- Potential reputational impact for the Mousehold Heath Conservators regarding the removal of toilet provision.
- The buildings would gradually deteriorate over time resulting in an unwelcoming sight to visitors to the heath and result in their loss at some point in the future when they become structurally unsafe.
- Increased risk of visitors using the heath environs as a toilet.
- Tensions with leaseholder if there is increased use of pavilion toilets by non-clients.

### **24. Option 5: Install eco toilet(s) as part of options 2 and 3 or if this is not possible as a stand alone unit.**

At the time of the report, it has not been possible to establish if the existing buildings could be used, the costs to retro fit, what would be viable and any potential negative impacts.

25. There is a need to research this option further if the conservators feel it is a option they would like to pursue. Information will be required, regarding the quantity needed, the cost of provision, installation and emptying and compliance with relevant environmental legislation.

#### Advantages

- The public toilets will be available for visitor to the heath.
- Reduced water consumption, which also reduces energy bills and carbon emissions.
- The public toilets will be available for visitor to the heath.
- A potentially positive reputational impact for the Mousehold Heath Conservators.

#### Disadvantages

- The provision of a composting toilet and compromised user experience, in a location that has existing utility supplies.

- A new contract would need to be procured by the conservators for the emptying, removal and storage of waste until it meets the requirements to be used as a fertilizer.
- Potential difficulties due to the proximity of the restaurant entrance with access, smells when emptying the facility and venting.
- There will be no contract saving as the toilets will require consumables and cleaning.
- If a stand alone unit is required, it will not resolve the issues with the existing toilet blocks.
- It will be more complex to deliver and take more time for the development of the specification, procurement and delivery of the facility and also a waste contract.

## **Implications**

## **Financial and Resources**

26. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2019-22 and Budget. There are no proposals in this report that would reduce or increase resources.

## **Reasons for the decision/recommendation**

27. Option 2 is recommended because:

- although the current provision is aesthetically in poor condition it is structurally sound and despite cosmetic deterioration internally and externally this can be remedied;
- utilities are currently in place to service the building;
- it can be delivered with some improved environmental benefits and;
- it will be the most cost effective option for a relatively low use facility that will halt the decline/loss of the buildings and deliver good facilities for visitors to the heath.

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