

REPORT TO ASSETS AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

PUBLIC TOILETS NON-CASH PAYMENTS



Report Reference A-22-10
Meeting Date 13th February 2023
Agenda Item 6
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Town Council has two public toilet buildings (Malt Street and Bexton Road), each comprising a unisex, female and unisex accessible toilet (with baby change). The council is in contract with Danfo for the operation of the public toilets until 2038¹, the contract includes the ongoing maintenance of the toilets including cleaning and coin collection.

Use of the toilets is subject to payment of a 20p fee or use of a RADAR key for the accessible toilet. Income is collected by Danfo and credited against the quarterly invoices. The buildings also include commercially let spaces generating a monthly rental income. The net cost for the 2023/24 financial year is £20,770.

2.0 NON-CASH PAYMENT OPTIONS

It is increasingly common for people not to carry cash. This therefore presents some potential users with issues in accessing public toilets.

It is possible to install contactless readers to the public toilets. The cost to install a contactless reader at each site (i.e. for one of the cubicles at each site) would be approximately £2,250 per reader. There is then a monthly cost of £10 per reader and a 4.95% transaction fee. It is noted that the income derived currently benefits from users overpaying e.g. using a 50p coin when they do not have 20p, it is therefore possible that income would decrease with users being able to pay with card. Conversely, it is unknown how many users are being lost through not being able to pay.

There are contactless change machines on the market which would enable users to pay by card to collect coins – these are commonly used in arcades. However, the ongoing fees are similar and this would present an additional operational requirement in stocking coins. There is also the likelihood that they could be vandalised or targeted for theft. This option is therefore not recommended.

3.0 USAGE FEE

Danfo has advised that 30p is now the more common charge for use of public toilets. 2013 is the 10 year anniversary of the Town Council taking on public toilets and introducing the 20p fee.

The committee could consider increasing the usage fee to 30p. It should be noted that this will not necessarily increase the income by 50% as since no change is dispensed some users may already be

¹ The contract was for a period of 25 years from 2013. An early termination fee of £123k applies.

paying more than 20p to use the toilets (e.g. by paying with a higher denomination coin). However, it would likely increase income by some margin.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

The table below shows the total income for each building and the equivalent number of users².

Calendar Year	Bexton Road	Malt Street	Total	Eq. Users
2014	£910.60	£3,972.60	£4,883.20	24,416
2015	£900.00	£3,722.60	£4,622.60	23,113
2016	£1,289.00	£4,122.20	£5,411.20	27,056
2017	£919.20	£3,952.40	£4,871.60	24,358
2018	£798.00	£3,674.00	£4,472.00	22,360
2019	£610.60	£3,483.60	£4,094.20	20,471
2020 ³	£603.60	£2,965.60	£3,569.20	17,846
2021 ⁴	£645.20	£2,025.60	£2,670.80	13,354
2022	£414.20	£2,928.20	£3,342.40	16,712

Bexton Road has notably significantly lower use than Malt Street. This is expected as it is in a lower footfall area and adjacent to free toilets within Booths. That said, it does have approx. 2k-3k users per year which is not insignificant.

As stated, it is possible that cashless payments will generate additional income for users who do not carry cash. It would enable more users to access the toilets in an increasingly cashless society. Conversely, there is a risk that it will not attract new users but instead reduce income through users paying the set fee rather than overpaying with whatever coin they have available.

It is therefore recommended that the committee considers:

- a) Increasing the usage fee to 30p at both sites
- b) Introduces a card payment option at the unisex cubicle or accessible cubicle (due to it having baby change facilities)

The committee could then review impact on income levels and assess whether it would be worth implementing at Bexton Road and/or other cubicles.

² 2013 is not included as it was a part year, with King Street being operational from September and Bexton Road from late October.

³ Use reduced due to COVID reducing footfall within the town centre

⁴ Use reduced slightly due to COVID reducing footfall within the town centre and at Malt Street due to building works affecting opening