

Motion to Council – 11th September 2014

Public toilet closures

To be moved by Cllr Tim Warren on behalf of the Conservative Group

This Council:

- Welcomes investment to modernise public toilet provision within Bath and North East Somerset as part of the contract with Healthmatic, but has a number of serious concerns about some of the planned changes as set out below.
- Believes that the closure of a number of public toilets within Bath and North East Somerset, as well as the planned reductions in capacity in many of the Council's remaining public toilets, has been handled in a way which has caused unnecessary and avoidable anger and opposition amongst many of the communities impacted.
- Is concerned that the Cabinet have denied the public any opportunity to have their views heard on this matter, with no consultation on the planned closures and alterations to public toilets with service users or residents.
- Is deeply concerned at the way in which the Cabinet has ignored the requests contained within a number of petitions which have called for the Council to rethink the reductions in toilet cubicles, in particular in parks and busy family areas.
- Is deeply concerned at the lack of democratic accountability which has surrounded the process of toilet closures and alterations, with no Cabinet decision relating to the closure of public toilets that can be democratically challenged and called-in by Councillors.
- Strongly disapproves of the way in which Cabinet has acted in a manner which is not in the spirit of the February Budget resolution, which included £120,000 to meet the cost of delaying the reduction in public conveniences for up to a year 'to provide further time to consider opportunities for alternative provision', as well as a further £100,000 of capital expenditure to 'develop concessionary opportunities alongside public toilets to increase use of Council assets, minimise liability and retain local toilet provision'.
- Believes that through its actions, the Cabinet has demonstrated contempt for the views of residents on this matter and has shown a complete unwillingness to listen to alternative points of view.

Council resolves:

1. To place on record its strong disapproval for the way in which the closures and changes to public toilets have been undertaken to date.
2. To request that Cabinet instruct Healthmatic to pause any further alterations to public toilets which it is responsible for, whilst an up-to-date review is undertaken of the toilet capacity needed at each location, this time including a full consultation which takes into account the views of residents and users of the public toilets, and that similar reviews and consultation exercises are undertaken at locations where a reduction in cubicle numbers has already taken place.
3. To request that Cabinet hold further discussions with Healthmatic to seek options to increase toilet capacity at locations where the consultation mentioned in (2) reveals it to be necessary.
4. That in the case of toilets recently shut by the Council, Cabinet is asked to revisit and abide by the resolutions contained within the Council motion passed in September 2013 in relation to public toilets (which was passed unanimously by Council), as well as the subsequent Budget resolution of February 2014.