



**Public Conveniences
Task Group**

Draft Report

Chairman:

Councillor Emma Ellison

Task Group Members:

Councillor Lady Dulcie Atkins
Councillor Howard Ballard
Councillor Tom Ingham
Councillor Phil Orme
Councillor Cheryl Raynor

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Chairman: Councillor John Ibison**

• Introduction	Page 3
• Aims of review	Page 4
• The review process	Page 4
• Summary of evidence provided by Councillor Simon Bridge (Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder) and Ruth Hunter (Street Scene Manager)	Page 5
• Summary of evidence provided by Danfo (UK) Limited	Page 6
• Consultation with Town and Parish Councils and community groups	Page 8
• Conclusions and recommendations	Page 9
• Councillors' attendances	Page 11
• List of appendices	Page 11
• Appendices	Page 12

Introduction

Wyre has public conveniences at twenty different locations across the borough.

A review of public conveniences that was undertaken in 2005 recommended that the service be externalised, leading to a 15-year contract with Danfo that is due to expire in 2022. As a result of the 2005 review it was agreed to close the public toilets at six locations, although those at Cleveleys bus station, which were initially closed, were re-opened following capital expenditure by the council in 2012.

In anticipation of the end of the contract with Danfo in 2022, which does not include a renewal clause, members agreed to review the current service provision.

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Aim of review

The aim of the review, as specified in the scoping document (see Appendix A), was:

- To recommend future fees and charges, consider site locations, rationalisation of sites or alternative sites. Review current service and consider options beyond the current contract.

The review process

The task group held its first meeting with the Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder and the Street Scene Manager.

The group subsequently met with three representatives from Danfo (UK) Limited and carried out a consultation with all Town and Parish Councils, several community groups and other members of the public. A number of relevant documents and reports were considered by the task group.

The final task group meeting, at which the task group's conclusions and draft recommendations were discussed, was attended by the Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder and the Service Director People and Places.

Summary of evidence provided by Councillor Simon Bridge (Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder) and Ruth Hunter (Street Scene Manager)

Wyre has an award-winning public conveniences service that includes twenty units plus two 'Changing Places' facilities (Parkhill Road, Garstang and the Methodist Church, Queensway, Poulton).

A review of public conveniences that was undertaken in 2005 recommended that the service be externalised, leading to a 15-year contract with Danfo (UK) Limited, which is due to expire in 2022. Since 2007 the council has invested approximately £1.5m in public conveniences.

Income from public conveniences has increased year on year. This is not simply as a result of more users; some of the units' locking mechanisms have been updated to reduce the opportunities for loss of income as a result of doors not locking properly after use. Further improvement could be made in the future by using turnstiles, but this would be costly and also not necessarily 100% effective.

Income tables, provided to task group members by Ruth Hunter, gave an illustration of the level of use of each unit (not including Changing Places facilities) and it is clear that some units are very well used, have a high foot fall and bring in reasonable levels of income, whilst other units appear to be less well used. However, when considering the income against the fee, it is clear that even some of the lower income values reflect thousands of users over the course of a year, so their value (financial and social) should not be underestimated.

The 20p fee has been in place for twelve years. Many councils, including Blackpool, have increased their fee to 30p or higher. There have also been issues with radar keys as they are very widely and cheaply available to anyone. It could be argued that everyone, including people with disabilities, should pay the standard fee.

The contract with Danfo will run until 2022, with no explicit provision to extend beyond that date. Danfo have been an excellent partner for the council and, as far as is known, they are keen to continue to work with Wyre beyond 2022, depending on the outcome of any necessary tendering process. Danfo have been reliable and responsive and deliver an impressive service.

Although the provision of public conveniences is not a statutory responsibility, the council is acutely aware of the importance of the facilities in attracting people to shopping areas and visitor attractions. The provision of public conveniences also has an impact on the reputation of the local area and the borough as a whole.

It might be possible for local communities to help support public conveniences, and increased partnership working might be a viable development worthy of consideration. There might also be opportunities for advertising which are currently untapped.

Summary of evidence provided by Danfo (UK) Limited

Three representatives from Danfo (UK) Ltd – Andrew McIllduff (General Manager), Grace McGrath (HR Admin and Quality Manager) and Christine Jefferson (Team Leader) – attended a task group meeting. Andrew McIllduff and Grace McGrath gave a Powerpoint presentation and then responded to comments and questions from councillors.

Danfo have a 15-year contract with Wyre Council, which is due to expire in 2022. The company is well aware of the need to review services and of the budget pressures faced by local authorities. Danfo try to help promote public conveniences as a vital part of the council's business, which is particularly important in visitor locations. Danfo also take the view that their role is much more than simply providing toilet facilities – they seek to work in partnership with local authorities to improve the local environment, including raising the appearance and profile of buildings.

Each unit is cleaned as least once or twice a day as a basic minimum. If there is a cause to make additional visits for any reason (perhaps to carry out a repair, for example) additional cleans are carried out. In addition, extra resources are allocated for busy community events such as Tram Sunday in order to ensure that Danfo have a presence throughout and so maintain a high standard of service.

All Danfo's facilities are single-user rooms which negate many of the social issues that have had the potential to be prevalent previously. Only very occasionally do problems occur with people sleeping in the units in Wyre, for example, but it is accepted that if people are determined enough, they will do so.

In addition to the standard units Wyre has two Changing Places facilities, in Poulton and Garstang respectively, which have recently been awarded Platinum status at the 'Loo of the Year Awards' 2018, all of Wyre's other toilets having been awarded Gold. This is a reflection of the standard of maintenance and cleanliness delivered by Danfo's staff.

Changing Places toilets are essential in facilitating any person with severe disabilities, who also needs a carer with them when they go out. People with disabilities often make decisions about where to go, dependent upon whether a Changing Places facility is available. It would be ideal if other areas of Wyre, and in particular the popular coastal areas of Cleveleys and Fleetwood could provide such a facility. A potential venue in Fleetwood has already been identified, fitting in well with Fleetwood Town Council's plans for the introduction of beach wheel chairs.

A sluice toilet operates in St Annes, benefitting visitors with camper vans, another idea that Wyre could consider in the future.

Coin income has become increasingly important to councils, particularly for those with areas of heavy footfall. A number of other councils charge 30p (e.g. Blackpool) or 40p (e.g. Keswick, Whitby) compared with Wyre's current charge of 20p.

In Keswick the appearance of the toilet building has been improved by local businesses supporting advertising and by using the talents of a local artist. There is also the potential to use toilet units in Wyre for educational posters or displays, Rossall Point being a good example.

The task group questioned Andrew McIllduff about cashless facilities. A limited number of card reader facilities have been introduced in Keswick, Whitby and Pembrokeshire, with some success in the busiest units. It is anticipated that the number of cashless toilets will increase as people carry cash less often.

Danfo would be happy to become involved in projects with other businesses to explore the provision of additional toilets.

The use of radar keys is open to abuse, especially as they are available for purchase very cheaply on the internet. In Sefton the use of radar keys has been withdrawn. Other innovations have been introduced in Keswick, all local residents having a returnable token for free use of toilets. Other areas have introduced coded key pads.

Danfo are keen to extend the contract with Wyre, and are prepared to discuss and consider any new proposals that might be made.

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Consultation with Town and Parish Councils and community groups

The task group invited all the borough's Town and Parish Councils and some community groups in Thornton and Cleveleys to comment on the current and possible future provision of public conveniences.

12 responses were received from Town and Parish Councils.

19 comments were posted on the Visit Cleveleys website.

Comments from 3 people were received from the Thornton Action Group.

The responses indicate that the Town and Parish Councils and the representative community groups are broadly happy with the current provision, although a degree of reluctance to an increase in fee was expressed.

There appears to be some guarded support for encouraging public conveniences to be opened to the public in larger stores and other businesses, and there are already some successful examples of this arrangement in the borough.

The responses from the community groups were also valuable but more difficult to quantify as they were relatively unstructured personal comments. There was support for more Changing Places facilities to be provided, mixed views about an increase in charge and numerous comments about the conveniences' cleanliness, both positive and negative.

Comments were also made about (i) the potential for better provision of toilets in areas of heavier footfall, (ii) problems with radar keys and (iii) the need for better signage.

Serious concern was expressed by Cabus Parish Council that two laybys on the A6 (Fowler Hill Layby and Woodfold Lane) were being used as main stopping points by commercial trucks, as evidenced by the dumping of excrement and urine in bottles and bags, which was potentially an environmental health hazard.

A summary of the responses received from Town and Parish Councils at attached at Appendix B.

Conclusions and recommendations

Wyre is well-provided with public conveniences, the number and location being broadly commensurate with need. The toilets are generally clean and well maintained. The contract with Danfo has been very positive since it began in 2007. Danfo have been efficient and responsive; they are not complacent about current performance, always seeking to take steps to improve the service to the public. The company should be commended for that.

The current contract expires in 2022 and does not contain a clause to enable it to be extended.

RECOMMENDATION ONE

That the current number and location of public conveniences in the borough be maintained.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

That, while recognising the excellent performance of Danfo, all options for continuing the provision of public conveniences be explored in good time before the expiry of the current contract in 2022.

The 20p fee has been in place since the 2007. Many other local authorities, including local neighbours, have increased their fee and the task group concluded that this would be an appropriate action to take.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

That the fee for using public conveniences be increased from 20p to 30p borough-wide, subject to a review of the cost and process by which the coin mechanisms can be updated.

There is compelling evidence that the use of radar keys for people with disabilities to access public conveniences is not working. Radar keys are widely available at low cost and frequently abused.

It is recognised that we are moving towards an increasingly cashless society, with less people routinely carrying cash, and the provision of public conveniences should reflect that. Cashless facilities should begin to be introduced in the busier units, making access to public toilets more straightforward for many people.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

That the facility to use a radar key be withdrawn, all users being required to pay a fee for use.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

That options for making cashless payments be explored and introduced gradually.

The borough already has two Changing Places facilities, in Poulton and Garstang respectively. The task group found evidence and strong opinion in support of developing more such facilities, many people with disabilities deciding on where and whether they can go out, depending upon where appropriate facilities are available. The popular Wyre coast in particular, which attracts many visitors, would benefit from the provision of a Changing Places unit.

RECOMMENDATION SIX

That the introduction of additional Changing Places facilities be considered, in Fleetwood to complement the beach wheelchair initiative, and in Cleveleys.

The task group notes that a sluice toilet successfully operates in St Annes, benefitting visitors with camper vans. Members were also aware of the motorhome trial that was undertaken at Central Car Park, Fleetwood, following a Cabinet decision taken on 12 July 2017, and of the subsequent Portfolio Holder decision published on 21 March 2019.

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN

That the task group commends the decision taken by the Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, published on 21 March 2019, to explore the provision of toilet, water and sluicing facilities at the Central Car Park, Fleetwood.

Evidence was given that two laybys on the A6 were frequently being used as stopping points by passing trucks, causing a potential environmental health hazard, there being no toilet facilities available. It is recognised, however, that the land is not owned by Wyre Council, so the council does not have the ability to resolve the issue on its own.

RECOMMENDATION EIGHT

That options for providing a toilet facility on the A6 in Cabus Ward be explored with Lancashire County Council, Cabus Parish Council and other interested parties.

The task group was enthused by hearing about examples where public convenience units had been used to deliver campaigns (e.g. mental health, domestic violence) and provide advertising or creative space, using both internal and external walls.

RECOMMENDATION NINE

That options to use public conveniences from promotions, campaigns, displays and advertising be explored.

Councillors' attendances

There were 4 meetings of the task group.

Name	Meetings attended (maximum 4)
Councillor Lady Atkins	3
Councillor Ballard	3
Councillor Ellison	4
Councillor Ingham	2
Councillor Orme	3
Councillor Raynor	4

Councillor Brian Stephenson was originally listed as a member of the task group (see Scoping Document, Appendix A) but took no part in the review.

List of Appendices

- Appendix A Public Conveniences Task Group – Scoping Document
- Appendix B Consultation with Town and Parish Councils – Summary of responses

Task Group - Scoping Document – Public Conveniences

Review Topic	Public Conveniences	
Chairman	Councillor Emma Ellison	
Group Membership	Councillors Lady Atkins, Howard Ballard (Vice Chairman), Tom Ingham, Phil Orme, Cheryl Raynor and Brian Stephenson	
Officer Support	Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer.	
Purpose of the Review	To review the current service provision, including locations and charges and consider options beyond the current contract term with Danfo.	
Role of Overview and Scrutiny in this Review (mark all that apply)	Holding Executive to account – decisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Existing budget and policy framework	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Contribution to policy development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Holding Executive to account – performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Community champion	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Statutory duties / compliance with codes of practice	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aims of Review	To recommend future fees and charges, consider site locations, rationalisation of sites or alternative sites. Review current service and consider options beyond the current contract.	
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing witnesses at task group meetings. • Comparative statistics for costs and use • Site visits • Comparisons with other local authorities, benchmarking, identifying best practice 	
Scope of Review	<p><u>Within Scope:</u> Current and futures level of provision and site locations Fees and charges Contract provision / alternatives A variety of other issues could be considered, including: (i) advertising potential, (ii) interior lighting, (iii) signage, (iv) use of radar key, (v) provision of Changing Places facilities</p>	

	<p><u>Outside scope:</u> Alternative use of buildings.</p>
Potential Witnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Holder • Service Director People and Places • Street Scene Manager • Danfo personnel
Documents to be considered	<p>Current contract Annual review reports Audit Reports Previous O&S reports Procurement / legal options</p>
Risks	
Level of Publicity	Medium
Indicators of a Successful Review	
Intended Outcomes	Summary document of recommendations for future service provision.
Approximate Timeframe	3 months.
Projected Start Date	30 October 2018

Public Conveniences Task Group

Consultation with Town and Parish Councils - Summary of responses

A short questionnaire containing six questions about the provision of public conveniences, as approved by the task group, was sent to each of Wyre's twenty-one Town and Parish Councils (referred to as Parish Councils). Twelve responses were received. A formal 'nil' return was received from Fleetwood Town Council.

Responses were received from:

Cabus
Catterall
Claughton-on-Brock
Forton
Garstang
Inskip-with-Sowerby
Kirkland
Myerscough and Bilsborrow
Nether Wyresdale
Pilling
Preesall
Stalmine-with-Staynall

QUESTION 1

Do you currently have Wyre Council / Danfo public conveniences in your parish?

Yes 4 (Garstang, Nether Wyresdale, Pilling and Preesall)
No 8

Comments:

Yes, happy with function and location. Suggested improvements would be to tidy up externally. Would benefit from power washing. Bushes are overgrown and there is algae. The 20p charge should not be reviewed. (Nether Wyresdale).

The public toilets are used and appear to be working well. (Pilling)

The location of both sets of public conveniences is fine, no improvements were identified. The 20p charge was seen as acceptable and the council did not think it needed to be reviewed. (Preesall)

No requests have ever been received by the council for a public convenience, therefore no perceived need. (Stalmine-with-Staynall)

The Town Council is happy with the facility.

QUESTION 2

Does your Town or Parish Council run/own a public toilet?

Yes 0
No 12

QUESTION 3

If you have answered NO to Question 2, is it something that would ever be on your Town or Parish's agenda for consideration?

Yes 0
No 12

Comments:

We would be interested in understanding how to get Wyre Borough Council or Lancaster County Council to provide Public Conveniences within Cabus – particularly in the areas of the 2 laybys on the A6 (Fowler Hill Layby and Woodfold Lane) which are used as main stopping areas by commercial trucks/lorries as evidenced by the wholesale dumping of excrement and urine in bottles and bags – an environmental health hazard. (Cabus).

QUESTION 4

Does your Town or Parish financially support a third party to run or make accessible a public toilet facility?

Yes 0
No 12

QUESTION 5

If the opportunity arose for your Town or Parish council to enter into a joint venture with Wyre /Danfo/another party in order to provide a new or additional facility would you be positive in your response?

Yes 3 (Nether Wyresdale, Pilling and Preesall)
No 9

Comments:

Cabus Parish Council would be open to the receipt of information please. (Cabus)

Councillors feel Catterall PC is too small to take on or work with anyone to supply and maintain toilets. Unless the PC were not involved. (Catterall).

The Parish does not support sufficient visitor numbers to support a facility. (Inskip).

Pilling Village Hall may be interested in offering public toilets on the new field. (Pilling)

The council would not rule out talks particularly if another facility was a possibility, however, the consensus was that the council is happy with the current system. (Preesall).

Budgetary constraints would prohibit any joint venture. No need for a new facility has ever been identified. (Stalmine-with-Staynall).

QUESTION 6

Should consideration be given to approaching larger stores and other businesses and organisations in the community to seek their agreement to make their toilets available to the public? What might be the implications? How might this be approached, if you think it is worth exploring?

Yes	3 (Claughton-on-Brock, Garstang and Nether Wyresdale)
No	7
Unclear	2 (Inskip-with-Sowerby and Stalmine-with-Staynall)

Comments:

We have a very specific, localised, problem in Cabus which centres around the 2 laybys off the A6 (Fowlers Hill Layby and Woodfold Lane) being used by lorries/trucks as resting places. There are no public conveniences on these laybys and the only 'businesses' are the snack vans which service the passing trade in these locations but don't themselves have any toilet facilities. If Wyre were to provide public conveniences in Cabus, would the toilets be closed at night, and would they included facilities for disabled people. (Cabus).

There are no appropriate businesses in the village to offer this facility. (Catterall).

We would support this but recognise that a cautious approach needs to be taken and whilst some businesses may be prepared to provide limited facilities it will probably be predominantly economics that determines their responses. A targeted approach to key traders in areas where there is a distinct real requirement should be defined. Offers of financial support (sharing some of the cost) would also maybe provide some incentive to participate and the public goodwill is another aspect that could be influential. (Claughton-on-Brock).

Within the Parish is Forton Services and this has toilet facilities. There is also an ice cream parlour and Restaurant. The Post Office is within the Church and this also has toilet facilities. (Forton).

This arrangement currently works with Booths (Garstang).

The BP garage already offer public toilets and these were so well used in July when the M6 was closed. (Kirkland).

I think it's highly likely that visitors to the parish come to patronise one of the several attractions. There are toilet facilities at all of them, which leads me to the conclusion that stand-alone public conveniences aren't needed in Myerscough and Bilsborrow. (Mterscough and Bilsborrow).

YES - but WBC need to consider reducing business rates in order to contribute to the provision and its maintenance & cleaning. (Nether Wyresdale).

Councillors commented on how stores abroad charge for the public to use their toilets. If the need was there then businesses could be approached to see if they would be willing to provide access to the public. The toilet facilities in Knott End are adequate, therefore there is no need for an approach to be made at this point in time. (Preesall).

If the council received complaints that toilet facilities are not available the council would speak with the landlord of the local pub to see if they would be prepared to make their toilets available to the public. (Stalmine-with-Staynall).

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