



North Devon Council

Report Date:

Topic: Cattle Market Toilets, Barnstaple

Report by: Chief Executive

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report follows two Urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive to temporarily close the toilets due to numerous incidents of the toilets being used for drug taking and other criminal and anti-social behaviour.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That subject to comments from officers and agencies, Members approve the closure of the toilets until the Easter school holidays.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To ensure that the health and safety of the public is not compromised and in an effort to ensure that the anti-social and criminal behaviour does not re-occur. It is not considered that the current closure is of sufficient length to disrupt the previous behaviour.

4. REPORT

- 4.1. The toilets in the Cattle Market car park have, until recently, been habitually used for drug taking, dealing and other anti-social and criminal activity. Prior to Christmas numerous reports were received highlighting this activity taking place on a daily basis which has also been observed by council officers on the ground and in the CCTV control room.
- 4.2. Council cleansing staff were removing drug taking paraphernalia discarded on the floor of the toilets on a daily basis.
- 4.3. Efforts had been made by the police and the council to dissuade this activity through increased uniformed patrols and through use of the street Marshalls. Those efforts were unsuccessful and so a decision was taken to close the toilets over the Christmas period. This was primarily as a result of reduced capacity within the cleansing team and a concern that any reports of drug littering would not be able to be responded to as quickly which could then result in public health issues.
- 4.4. Following the initial closure period, a further period of closure was authorised which will expire on the 7th February 2023.
- 4.5. Enquiries are being made with the relevant agencies and officers seeking views on a further extended period of closure and also seeking views on the impact of the recent closures.

- 4.6. Closing the toilets will not have stopped drug taking but neither the council nor the police have identified any significant redistribution of the drug related issues to other toilets or similar facilities.
 - 4.7. No complaints about the closure have been received from the public.
 - 4.8. At the time of writing this report, responses from some officers and agencies are still awaited but will be reported to committee to enable the committee to reach a decision on a lengthier closure.
 - 4.9. In the longer term, the council can explore possible measures that could be introduced to deter the usage. These could include a card based charging system. Alternatively, members could consider an alternative use for the building given that the proposed new toilets in the Pannier Market are scheduled to be opened in May.
 - 4.10. If the committee does approve a longer closure, the public will continue to be directed towards the toilets in Green Lanes for the time being.
5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
- 5.1. The policing of the toilets and the continual clearing away of drug paraphernalia does take resource away from other areas but has been managed within existing budgets.
6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT
- 6.1. Please detail if there are/are not any equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report. If so, please complete the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Summary form available on Insite and email to the Corporate and Community Services Team at equality@northdevon.gov.uk.
 - 6.2. Alternative facilities are available within a short distance of the toilets and so it is not considered that equality issues arise.
7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
- 7.1. Please undertake an Environmental Assessment and complete the checklist (EAC) form available on Insite. If there are no environmental implications arising from your proposals please state that there are none. If after completion of the assessment there are environmental implications please provide a brief summary. If you require any further information please contact the Sustainability and Climate Change Officer. Email completed EACs to donna.sibley@torridge.gov.uk
 - 7.2. There are no environmental implications from this report.
8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES
- 8.1. What impact, positive or negative, does the subject of this report have on:
 - 8.1.1. The commercialisation agenda:
 - 8.1.2. Improving customer focus and/or



8.1.3. Regeneration or economic development

8.2. Whilst it could be said that the loss of these facilities makes the town centre less attractive, the use of such a public and central building for drug taking during all hours of the day carries with it a risk that the reputation of Barnstaple as being a pleasant and safe area to visit will be damaged.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

9.1. Part 3 Annexe 1 paragraph: 1(b)

9.2. Delegated power

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: