

**The Highland Council**  
**Community Services Committee**

**28 April 2016**

Agenda Item	<b>12</b>
Report No	<b>COM 21/16</b>

**Public Convenience Strategy and Review of Highland Comfort Scheme**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

**Summary**

This report updates Members on progress in securing the agreed savings from the public conveniences budget and how this is to be applied. Members are also invited to approve recommendations for a strategy to deliver the savings, modifications to the Highland Comfort scheme, the level of charge for using public conveniences and that Local Committees take decisions on where secure payment facilities should be installed.

**1. Background**

1.1 At the Highland Council on 28 February it was agreed to reduce the public conveniences operational budget for 2016/17 by £250k from £1.233m to £0.983m. A further reduction of £344k is proposed for 2017/18 leaving a budget of £639k thereafter.

1.2 The Council operates 102 public conveniences and 27 comfort schemes. An external service provider maintains 94 sites, 3 are maintained directly by Community Service staff, 4 by Highlife Highland and 1 under a Community Challenge Fund scheme.

1.3 Annual Operating Costs:

External contractor	£662,000
Utilities	£441,000
Highland Comfort Scheme (2015/16)	£90,000
Highland Council sites	£40,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,233,000</b>

**2. Strategy**

- 2.1 To achieve the levels of savings required, a review of public convenience provision in the Highlands is being undertaken. Included in this are:
- availability of alternative publicly accessible facilities in public and commercial premises;
  - harmonisation in the level of provision, operating hours and dates;
  - provision of attendants for cash collection;
  - identification of options for Highland Comfort Schemes;
  - options for transfer of assets to local groups; and
  - options for saving on other operating costs such as energy and water.

- 2.2 There is provision of a part-time attendant at three sites: Aviemore, Grantown and Kingussie (which have showers), and full time attendant at Mealmarket Close in Inverness which was previously subject to low level anti-social behaviour.
- 2.3 It is proposed to review the provision of showers and reduce the level of attendance in toilets to a minimum, linking times directly to those when anti-social behaviour is most likely to occur.
- 2.4 The level of cleaning and servicing is related to usage and would be unchanged.
- 2.5 Ward Business Meetings are being used to hold discussions with Members on how to achieve local savings. For example, meetings with Wards 12 and 22 agreed savings for Fort William, and local Highland Comfort Schemes of about £20k.

### **3. Highland Comfort Scheme**

- 3.1 In August 2014, report COM28/14, provided Members with an update on progress to harmonise payments under the Highland Comfort Scheme. As contracts come up for renewal this has been implemented.
- 3.2 To date two operators in Lochaber have decided to leave the Scheme; advertisements for new operators are being arranged.
- 3.3 The current payment is between £200 and £300 per month. There are several locations where a lower or higher sum would enable some low and high usage facilities to be considered, which would provide a saving against current contracted costs.
- 3.4 An example of a lower payment would be where a commercial operation, such as a café, secures advantage by the incorporation of public conveniences into their operation.
- 3.5 The proposal is to set the minimum payment at zero and increase the upper limit to £500 per month.

### **4. Payment and cash collection**

- 4.1 At present cash collection occurs at five sites, where there is either an attendant (part-time) or secure means of cash collection in place. The payment is set at 20p and income is about £10k per annum.
- 4.2 The savings proposals agreed by Council included an increased collection of payments through the introduction of a secure payment collection facility.
- 4.3 Discussions have taken place with internal audit which confirm that the use of a secure payment collection system would comply with Council's policy on cash handling.
- 4.4 There are two industry recommended solutions suitable for high volume sites:
- an automated door system for 5,000 to 20,000 persons per year; and

- above 20,000 users a paddle-entry barrier system

Costs and options are being assessed including potential funding. Initial estimates suggest £3k for a door system and £7k to £12k for the paddle barrier.

- 4.5 With a coin operated controlled access system it is not possible to provide concessions, except to those with RADAR keys. An option to provide concessions via a card system, such as the Highlife Highland/Library Card, which would provide concession to residents of the Highlands, is being investigated.
- 4.6 The introduction of access control systems is also expected to reduce the incidence of low level damage.
- 4.7 Introduction of access control at the five sites indicated in **Appendix 1**, along with a 50p payment is expected to increase current income from £10k to about £80k per annum by ensuring all users pay. Further introduction of secure payment boxes at the other 19 higher usage sites listed in **Appendix 1** is expected to provide further additional income of £20k to £40k.

## 5. Implications

- 5.1 Discussions are ongoing between Human Resources and Community Services regarding the effect of TUPE on transfer of Council maintained sites.
- 5.2 At this time there are no legal, equality, climate change/Carbon Clever, risk or Gaelic implications arising from this report. There may be some rural implications if strategic rural sites are closed with no alternative option forthcoming.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to approve:-

- the strategy to deliver the agreed savings for 16/17;
- that the terms of the Highland Comfort scheme are amended to broaden the payment range to facilitate increased up-take;
- that the payment for using public conveniences is 50p; and
- that secure payment facilities be installed where practicable and with agreement of Local Committees.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 13 April 2016

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## Proposed Public Conveniences Cash Collection Sites

Ward	Area/Facility	Proposed Payment collection	Comments
<b>Ross-shire Skye &amp; Cromarty</b>			
10	A9 North Kessock Northbound	Yes	Type to be assessed
10	A9 North Kessock Southbound	Yes*	Subject to approval from site owner, Transport Scotland.
11	The Green, Portree	Yes	Type to be assessed
11	Broadford	Yes	Type to be assessed
6	Dornie	Yes	Type to be assessed
6	Ullapool	Yes	Type to be assessed
7	Alness	Yes	Type to be assessed
7	Invergordon	Yes	Type to be assessed
8	Tain	Yes	Type to be assessed
9	Dingwall, Ormidale	Yes	Type to be assessed
<b>Lochaber, Nairn Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>			
20	Aviemore	Yes	Existing part-time attended service with cash collection, consider option for access control system with clean and service only.
20	Grantown High Street	Yes	Existing part-time attended service with cash collection, consider option for access control system with clean and service only.
20	Kingussie	Yes	Existing part-time attended service with cash collection, consider option for access control system with clean and service only.
19	Nairn, Courthouse	Yes	Type to be assessed
12	Fort William, Station Brea	Yes	Type to be assessed
12	Fort William, Viewforth	Yes	Type to be assessed
22	Glen Nevis Centre	Yes	Type to be assessed
<b>Caithness &amp; Sutherland</b>			
2	Thurso, Tanyard	Yes	Type to be assessed
3	Wick, Whitechapel	Yes	Type to be assessed
<b>Inverness</b>			
15	Mealmarket Close	Yes	Fully attended with cash collection consider access control system with either partially attended or clean and service only.
15	Castle Wynd	Yes*	Inverness Common Good funded.
13	Drumnadrochit	Yes	Type to be assessed
13	Fort Augustus	Box installed	Consider replacement of payment box with access control system
13	Beauly	Yes	Type to be assessed