

**Swaffham Town Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Full Council held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Swaffham.

In attendance: Cllr S Matthews (Mayor)

Cllrs : Mr I Sherwood, Mrs S Lister, Mrs A Tigue,  
Mr D Wickerson, Mrs T Jennison, Mr P Darby, Mr S Bell.

Town Clerk: Richard Bishop.

Clerical Assistant: Kerry Furnass.

Public: 1

**1959. Apologies for absence.**

1959.1 Cllr M Edwards - Work Commitments.

1959.2. Cllr J Skinner - Personal.

1959.3 Cllr P Wade - Personal.

**1960. Declarations of Interest.**

1960.1 Cllr S Bell declared a personal interest due to the close proximity of his café to the public toilets.

**1961. Public Toilet Working Group Report.**

1961.1 The Council received a copy of the Public Toilets Working Group Report, circulated in advance of the meeting (see Appendix A)

1961.2 A Lengthy discussion took place regarding the Public Toilet Working Group Report. The Town Clerk informed the committee that he had received a written report from Cllr P Wade who was unable to attend the meeting. Cllr I Sherwood suggested as a Point of Order that the report should not have been included in the meeting.

Cllr I Sherwood asked for it to be noted in the minutes that there could be serious repercussions for the town in the current financial situation and that a flexible option is needed. He strongly recommends option 4 on Decision 1.

**1962. To decide whether to have cleaning contractors or the Town Council staff cleaning toilets; to subsequently agree to go out to tender or recruit the necessary staff.**

1962.1 Discussions took place regarding the options for the cleaning contract of the public toilets.

It was discussed as to whether there would be any other costs if the committee were to agree to option 4 on decision 1. The Town Clerk informed the committee that other costs could include training for staff, equipment to be purchased and advertising for the position. The committee were informed that details of any financial matters would all need to be agreed in the Budget. The question was also asked as to whether there is room available to store any equipment. The Town Clerk informed the committee that there is a store room at the back of the toilet block in between the two toilets.

1962.2 Discussions took place on how the toilets would need to be managed in terms of opening hours and staff coverage if option 4 were agreed. The Town Clerk informed the committee that the toilets would need to be managed properly and that staff would have to prioritise jobs on importance. This could mean that the toilets may have to be closed on occasion to deal with vandalism or an emergency. It was discussed as to whether staff were willing to include the toilets in their duties. The Town Clerk informed the committee that it was already in one member of staffs contract to clean the toilets and if the option to employ additional staff were agreed then this would be specifically detailed in any new employment contract.

1962.3 The Town Clerk reported to the Committee that the advantages of using option 1,2 or 3 would be that all the opening hours of the toilet would be covered in their contracts.

1962.4 Cllr I Sherwood proposed that the toilets were closed and that the committee should vote for the community Scheme.

**It was agreed not to close the public toilets and use the community scheme.**

1962.6 Cllr S Lister proposed option 4 on decision 1

**1. It was agreed to go with option 4 on decision 1. TOWN COUNCIL STAFF - To use our own Town Council Staff to match the lowest cost of approximately £20,000 we would need to look at 19 hours of cleaning per week at a cost of £9,121.72 + £2,094.17 for consumables (estimated at £40 per week). In order to make the job a more attractive proposition the Council could consider taking back the contracting for the Market litter picking = £4,995.00 and make the job 30 hours per week, if further savings of £3,600 can be achieved elsewhere then perhaps this position could be full-time.**

**1963. Decision on whether to use some of the capital reserve to put in turnstiles and meters to accept a charge for the public toilets and to confirm the amount of charge.**

1963.1 Discussions took place in regards to the options of installing turnstiles and meters in the public toilets. Concerns were raised by the Committee about the outlay of expenses for these options and after initial calculations were considered

**It was decided that it would take too long to recoup the outlay of capital cost.**

It was also commented by Councillors that staff time would then have to be used to empty the meters. It was then discussed whether turnstiles would have any effect on vandalism.

1963.2 Cllr S Lister proposed to install turnstiles in the public toilets.

**It was agreed not to use some of the capital reserve to put in turnstiles and meters to accept a charge for the public toilets.**

**1964. Decision on whether to use the manufacturers to bring the toilets up to a higher standard prior to any change being made.**

1964.1 A brief discussion took place regarding whether to use the manufacturers to bring the toilets up to a higher standard prior to any change being made. It would be subject to receiving satisfactory estimates.

1964.2 Cllr Paul Darby proposed that the manufacturers were used to bring the toilets up to a higher standard prior to any change being made. Subject to receiving satisfactory estimates.

**It was agreed to use the manufacturers to bring the toilets up to a higher standard prior to any change being made. Subject to quotes and budget.**

**1965. Actions from other parts from the Toilet Working Group.**

1965.1 There were no actions from other parts of the Toilet Working Group.

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Swaffham Town Council  
PUBLIC TOILET WORKING GROUP REPORT  
18<sup>th</sup> July 2011

**INTRODUCTION**

This report by the Public Toilet Working Group; originally tasked with looking at the feasibility of a Community Toilet Scheme and reported to the Town Council with their recommendations on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010. The Council agreed to take action on 6 of the 7 recommendations and this supplementary report is as a result of the agreed actions.

The Working Group consists of Cllrs Mr. S. Bell, Mr. P. Darby, Mrs. S. Lister, Mrs. S. Matthews, Mr. I. Sherwood, Mrs. J. Skinner, Mrs. A. Tigue, and Mr. D. Wickerson working with the Town Clerk. The Toilet Working Group has met on five occasions on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 25<sup>th</sup> May and 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010; 20<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011 respectively.

**DECISION 1**

**It was agreed to look at alternative ways of managing the public toilets and cutting expenditure; as it is not possible to implement the Community Toilet Scheme as proposed at the October 2009 meeting of the Town Council.**

**ACTION TAKEN & OPTIONS TO CONSIDER**

Various contractors have been met on site or at the Town Hall by Councillors or the Town Clerk to discuss their expertise and experience of running public toilets. There are four serious options now to consider:-

**1. COUNTRY GROUNDS MAINTENANCE -To continue with the current toilet cleaning contractor Country Ground Maintenance and re-negotiate a better service level agreement. The current contractor has taken time to settle into a routine and whilst there have been issues in relation to cleanliness and promptness in dealing with emergency incidents; there is now consistency in cleanliness. There have been relatively few complaints received from members of the public in recent months. In general whichever way the toilets are managed we have to encourage prompt reporting of problems to enable them to be dealt with swiftly. Current budgeted costs for the contractor are £15,015 with the overall costs totalling £23,800.**

**2. HEALTHMATIC - To look at taking on a new national contractor Healthmatic at a potential saving on £15,015 of £3,003 = £12,012. The Healthmatic deal would be for 10 years and indexed linked to RPI increases year on year. It would involve some capital costs of putting automatic doors on the toilets to enable remote or timed opening to be programmed. This work would be carried out at the cost of the contractor. There would be manual closing of the toilets each day. Overall costs totalling £20,797.**

**3. RICHARD & JANET WOOD - To revert to our original contractors Richard & Janet Wood who would like to come to an agreement in respect of rent for the Taxi premises and cleaning the toilets as a package deal. Cleaning the toilets at £600 per month + the £4,016 rent for the premises = £11,216; this is a saves £3,799 with the overall costs at £20,001. Richard & Janet declined to tender for the original current contract.**

**4. TOWN COUNCIL STAFF - To use our own Town Council Staff to match the lowest cost of approximately £20,000 we would need to look at 19 hours of cleaning per week at a cost of £9,121.72 + £2,094.17 for consumables (estimated at £40 per week). In order to make the job a more attractive proposition the Council could consider taking back the contracting for the Market litter picking = £4,995.00 and make the job 30 hours per week, if further savings of £3,600 can be achieved elsewhere then perhaps this position could be full-time.**

In summary there are issues to address with each option to find an ideal solution that would deliver a better service at a more reasonable cost. Using our own staff would give us greater flexibility, but using a contractor has advantages too, knowing there is always a service there regardless of personal circumstances.

**DECISION 2**

**It was agreed that the Public Toilet Working Group report back to the Town Council at the earliest opportunity with their recommendations in respect of improving the day to day cleaning of the toilets.**

### **ACTION TAKEN & OPTIONS TO CONSIDER**

The current Service Level Agreement can be adapted to whichever way the Council choose to manage the toilets in the future. There are only very minor amendments to make.

**1) The specification would need careful changes to modify the document into a job description if the task were to be taken on by an employee or employees of the Town Council.**

**2) The hidden cost of the contractors is the impact on the Council staff in dealing with emergencies or just receiving and dealing with complaints; this needs to be factored in when considering management options.**

**3) A monitoring role must be incorporated into whichever option is finally agreed upon, whether contractors or Council staff are used to clean the toilets**

### **DECISION 3**

**It was agreed that the Personnel Committee make final recommendations to the Town Council for any proposed changes relating to staff.**

### **ACTION TAKEN & OPTIONS TO CONSIDER**

The Personnel Committee worked on the staffing review with the Town Clerk last year culminating in changes for the 2011/12 budget. It was not possible to consider all the variations of outside staff until such a time that the Council decide which way to manage the toilets.

The alternative possibilities to contractors could be as follows:-

- 1) To employ a part-time person (cleaner/caretaker) for 19 hours each week.**
- 2) To employ a part-time person (cleaner/caretaker/litter picker) for 30 hours each week.**
- 3) To employ a full time person (cleaner/caretaker/litter picker/Groundsman) for 37 hours each week.**
- 4) To use existing outside staff to clean the toilets and employ a contractor to carry out the work they are currently employed to do.**
- 5) To partially use existing outside staff to share the cleaning duties at the public duty, covering for holidays and sickness etc. To then use the new member of staff as part of a team.**
- 6) To look at other cleaning contracts in the town (i.e. Assembly Rooms and Community Centre) and see if by taking on a full-time employee that an overall saving could be made for the Town Council and Icen Partnership.**

### **DECISION 4**

**It was agreed to defer a decision on whether the Working Group should be tasked with finding a method of consultation to as a minimum find out if the general public are prepared to accept an increase in Council Tax and/or a 20p charge for toilets.**

### **ACTION TAKEN & OPTIONS TO CONSIDER**

The Toilet Working Group have not considered any form of consultation in relation to the possibility of a 20p charge or an increase in Council Tax to pay for the toilets as per the deferred decision of the Town Council. A 20p charge with turnstiles is considered in three options below:-

#### **OPTION A**

**Privacy partition & turnstile to men's WC, Turnstile to ladies and Electronic locks to external doors £13,520.00+Vat**

## **OPTION B**

Replace urinals with pans & cubicles to men's, Turnstiles to men's & ladies and Electronic locks to external doors £19,988.00 + Vat

## **OPTION C**

No change to current free access to toilets

### **DECISION 5**

**It agreed that a survey is now finalised and carried out as a matter of urgency to allow the Working Group to report back to the Town Council at the earliest opportunity.**

#### **NO FURTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

The Working Group have decided not to undertake any consultation in advance of reporting to the Council. The Council to consider consultation with the town on the management options.

### **DECISION 6**

**It was agreed that the Working Group summarize all points made in correspondence, with concise reason to include or reject as part of future management; in their final recommendations to the Town Council.**

#### **NO FURTHER ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

The analysis of the correspondence has been taken into account in the document overall including any recommendations.

### **DECISION 7**

**It was agreed to include a policy on petitions as part of a public engagement strategy.**

#### **ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

The policy on petitions is in a draft public engagement strategy to be agreed by the Town Council.