

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
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TITLE OF REPORT: BALDOCK PUBLIC CONVENIENCE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE

1. SUMMARY

1.1 To present to Members of Baldock and District Committee potential options for the future provision of public conveniences in the High Street.

2. FORWARD PLAN

2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 1st March 2005.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Officers presented a report to Baldock and District Committee in July 2006, outlining the proposal to build a new public convenience in the High Street.

3.2 Officers presented the feedback from the Baldock and District Committee to the July 2006 Cabinet, where it was agreed that the proposal would not be undertaken for a facility as part of the Baldock Enhancement work. The following was resolved:

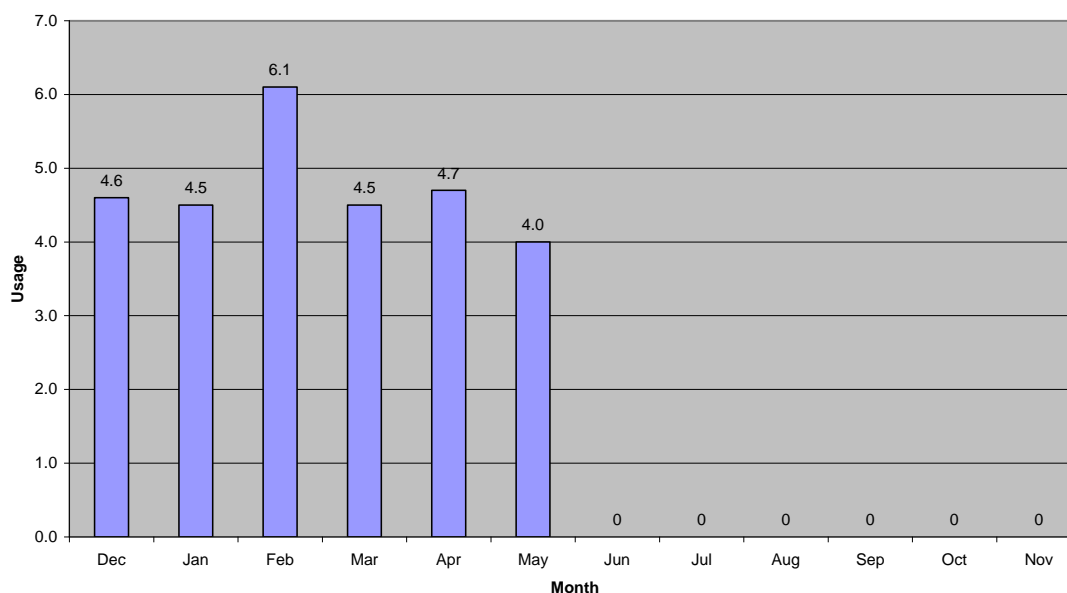
RESOLVED:

- (1) That the views of all Area Committees be noted with thanks;
- (2) That authorisation be given to proceed with the project as stated at the 6th June 2006 Cabinet Meeting with the exception of the following: -
 - (i) To defer the capital money that was allocated to undertake the new build in Baldock to 2007/08 and if any additional capital was required to complete this project, that money be made available from either the Baldock Town Centre Strategy or the Baldock Area Committee funds;
 - (ii) To retain the existing toilet provision in Baldock until 31st March 2008.
- 3.3 The historic underground facilities were closed on 31st March 2008, and the disabled facility changed use to enable male, female and disabled users.
- 3.4 When the Baldock Enhancement work was undertaken, provision of a new public convenience was investigated, however no decision could be made at that stage. The current facility has therefore remained open.

4. BALDOCK AND DISTRICT FACILITIES

4.1 The following chart shows the average daily usage of the current Baldock public convenience. This shows that the facility gets used approximately 4-6 times per day.

Baldock Public Convenience Average Daily Usage from December 2009



4.2 Compared with other facilities within the District, this demonstrates a very low use: for example the Hitchin Arcade facility has 252 and Royston Fish Hill has 113 visits per day.

4.3 The following details 5 options that are available to NHDC and the perceived pros and cons :

Options	Pros	Cons
1/ Close current facility and build a new one	Usage might increase. Provide a modern facility.	Additional revenue expense, est. £10,000 - £13,000 (depending on size) per annum. Need to agree location.
2/ Close current facility and do not build new one	Reduce revenue expense by £7,800 per annum.	Users would have to use either the Baldock Community Centre, Tesco or local facilities (if allowed).
3 /Refurbish current facility	Provide a better facility, which will include baby changing.	Unlikely to increase usage significantly.
4/ Community Toilet Scheme (The Council pays local businesses/facilities an annual amount and they let non customers use their facilities)	Reduction is annual revenue by approximately £2,800.	Would be reliant on local businesses/facilities to participate.
5/ Status Quo	Facility available.	Not a modern facility. Low use. Does not provide value for money.

- 4.4 The map attached at Appendix 1 provides a plan of Baldock and shows the current public convenience, locations that have toilets accessible to the public and proposed locations for a new facility.
- 4.5 Taking into account the layout of Baldock, it is suggested that any new facility should be located centrally within the town centre. As this area is a designated conservation area it is important that the external appearance is in harmony with the character of the town.
- 4.6 Officers have previously written to the Baldock Community Centre to see if they would like to take part in a 'Community Toilet Scheme', but no response was received. Therefore, officers will re-approach the Centre if this is an option that the Committee wishes to explore.
- 4.7 Officers have also contacted local businesses that have toilet provision and the majority have indicated that non customers already use their facilities. The owners do not like this, however. Most members of staff that were spoken to said they normally let them use their facilities.
- 4.8 From the four local businesses that were contacted, all have shown an interest in a 'Community Toilet Scheme' and would welcome discussing this further.
- 4.9 Taking on board the general observations that have been provided by the local businesses, it suggests that people visiting the town currently use other facilities instead of the Council facility. It is not entirely clear why this is, however comments received suggest that: people do not know where the facility is (poor signage); it is in use when they wish to use it; or they would rather use a facility in a café/pub.
- 4.10 The original budget in June 2006 was £127,500 and it was estimated that this would enable a new facility to be built which would include one adapted unit, one urinal unit and two W/C units. It is currently not known what this level of capital will provide in 2010/11, however it is unlikely that a similar sized facility would be achievable due to location, drainage etc.
- 4.11 If the Council decided to progress with a new facility, a Quantity Surveyor will be appointed to investigate potential options based on the current budget.

5. PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

- 5.1 Part 12 Development by Local Authorities, of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 explains that the District does not require planning permission for the facilities outlined in this report.
- 5.2 If a facility is to be built in Baldock, officers will work closely with the planning department to ensure that the final design is in keeping with the area, even though planning approval is not required.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As mentioned in para 4.10, there is currently £127,500 in the Council's capital budget for this project.

- 6.2 It was agreed that if the project does not require the full £127,500, the remaining money will return back to the Council for other capital projects.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Council has the power to provide public conveniences in proper and convenient situations by Section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936.

8. HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None have been identified.

9. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 9.1 Consultation has taken place with the Portfolio Holder.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 For Members of Baldock and District Area Committee to discuss and agree which option they wish to be undertaken, based on the table in para 4.3.
- 10.2 If Members of Baldock and District Area Committees wish to progress an option that is not mentioned in this report, officers will report back to Cabinet to seek authorisation.

11. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To agree how the current capital budget should be used.

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1 Appendix 1 – Map of Baldock High Street identifying current and proposed toilet provision.

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Appendix 1 – Map of Baldock High Street identifying current and proposed toilet provision.

