

**HITCHIN COMMITTEE
8 SEPTEMBER 2015**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

13

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE : THE ARCADE TOILETS, HITCHIN ACCESSIBILITY

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT,
RECYCLING AND ENVIRONMENT

1. SUMMARY

A request was made by Hitchin area committee for information on the accessibility for users of The Arcade toilets in Hitchin. This was in response to a request from a member of the public for the toilets to be fitted with automatic opening devices.

2. STEPS TO DATE

The door opener was replaced in May 2014 following a complaint about access. The newer opener provides a delayed close mechanism and a holding open mechanism to allow a greater time to enter the facility. At the time of fitting this was set at 23 seconds but is adjustable.

Following a further complaint from the same resident officers have investigated the building regulations requirements and found that the current door opening device meets these requirements.

In addition officers have instructed a consultant to investigate the accessibility of the toilets, both in terms of accessibility for all users and accessibility for the complainant specifically. This report has been received and confirms that an automatic opening device on these toilets is not appropriate.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

Comments from the consultants report include the following:-

All cubicles meet the minimum British Standard 8300 (2009) - Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people and Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings - Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings (Section 5: Sanitary accommodation). The accessible toilet cubicles are designed to provide wheelchair turning space and transfer access to the WC from one side.

The entrance doors to each accessible cubicle all meet the British Standard and Building Regulations Document M overall size and outward opening requirement. The door to the Howard Park & Gardens accessible toilet does not have an internal grab rail fitted, only a door handle and all toilets have door closers installed. All door locks mechanisms meet requirements.

We believe that the reason that the disabled pensioner has difficulties in opening the accessible toilet door is not the door itself but because he cannot use his right arm to open the door. A wheelchair/disability scooter user would move their vehicle up to the left hand side of the door, leaving space for the door to open, and then open the right

hand hung door with their right hand, move the wheelchair/disability scooter forward into the opening which would keep the door open whilst entering the cubicle. This would also apply when leaving the cubicle, turning the wheelchair with its left hand side against the inside of the door whilst opening it with their left hand and pushing it open. If the door was hung on the left hand side he would be able to open the door with his left hand but then other users with lack of use with their left hand would be unable to open the door and their vehicle would probably obstruct the door to the right hand side of the accessible toilet door.

All three toilets are substantially compliant to accessible toilet standards and regulations and provide a high standard of facilities which should be able to be safely and comfortably used by all types of users: males, females, babies and children and those who need to use accessible facilities.

We understand that [redacted name] complaint is the only one of its type, and from a single user. In our experience, we inspect thousands of away from home toilets each year, power operated doors are very rare in public toilets anywhere in the UK.

Your toilet usage records will evidence the use of the accessible toilet in The Arcade toilets, which will be many thousands per annum with a single complaint of this type, and therefore, in our opinion, the need for the installation of a powered entrance door cannot be justified and, if installed, it could lead to different risks to toilet users and passers-by.

Our usage counters show the accessible toilet at The Arcade has approximately 1500 visits per month.

Additional recommendations made in the report will be shared with our maintenance contractor to implement.

4. NEXT STEPS

Officers are not recommending further works to the doors at The Arcade toilets and therefore the complainant will be written to outlining the findings and conclusions of the report.

5. APPENDICES

None

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

British Standard 8300 (2009) - Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people.

Approved Document M: Access to and use of buildings - Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings (Section 5: Sanitary accommodation).

Consultant report – Loo of the Year Awards – August 2015