

To: COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: PROVISION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES WITHIN NORTH LANARKSHIRE
From: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES		
Date 9 APRIL 2002	Ref: KW/LH	

1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Community Services Committee on the increased level of feedback concerning the closure of a number of public conveniences across North Lanarkshire.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1 While there is no statutory requirement for a local authority to provide public conveniences this has been a common feature of public service provision. There has been a trend throughout the country to reduce this provision as a result of budget saving requirements and the increasing cost of running such facilities due to vandalism and other anti-social behaviour, especially behaviour associated with drug abuse.

2.2 As a result of a requirement to make efficiency savings for the financial year 2000/2001, Council approval was given to close the following facilities:-

- South Circular Road, Coatbridge
- Gartlea Road, Airdrie
- Anderson Street, Airdrie
- Belhaven Terrace, Wishaw
- Thorn Road, Bellshill
- Manse Road, Newmains
- Stane Corner, Shotts

This enabled a saving of £199,500 to be made.

2.3 The facilities approved for closure in April 2000 had already been identified as in need of significant additional funding to maintain the buildings to a satisfactory standard.

3. **OPTIONS**

3.1 Due to the ongoing feedback associated with this Council decision, Community Services have investigated the possible use of other Community Services Council buildings as public convenience provision.

3.2 Within Community Services department there are facilities such as:-

- Community Centres
- Arts and Theatre Venues
- Community Education Centres
- Libraries
- Sports Centres

- 3.3 While facilities such as Community Centres, Arts and Theatre Venues and Community Education facilities have toilets for public use, their opening hours are irregular and often dictated by letting activity. There are also concerns associated with the protection of children utilising these facilities should the toilet area be designated as a "public convenience" facility. Therefore, it is the departments view that due to the availability and accessibility issues surrounding these locations it is deemed that they are unsuitable to be identified as public conveniences.
- 3.4 Alternatively, sports centres and libraries operate on a more structured basis and public access to utilise toilet facilities within these units is already well established. Unfortunately however, some of these facilities are experiencing increasing levels of anti-social behaviour, again specifically linked to drug abuse. This abuse has taken the form of discarded needles being left within facilities and on one occasion a member of the general public overdosing. It should also be noted that public conveniences benefit from regular cleaning and replenishment of janitorial supplies during operational hours. Monitoring also takes place throughout the day by toilet attendants in the case of the six manned facilities, and electronically in the automatic public conveniences. The majority of council buildings have toilets that are cleaned and monitored once each day.
- 3.5 A review is currently underway within Community Services building cleaning section concerning the increased provision of automatic toilets. Negotiations are underway with the assistance of colleagues from Planning and Environment and a variety of suppliers concerning the introduction and relocation of current units in order that they may be upgraded to accommodate issues such as disabled access. Although the additional costs associated with the introduction of new automatic facilities would not be as significant as those previously identified within manned facilities, these additional costs would require discussion and agreement between Community Services and Central Finance via the Policy and Resources (Finance) Sub-Committee.
- 3.6 The Department made contact with Glasgow City Council and South Lanarkshire Council concerning the operational arrangements currently in place in both authorities relating to access to Council buildings in order to utilise toilet facilities. Both authorities were able to confirm that although they do not promote council offices as public conveniences local managers have the discretion to allow or deny access.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 In considering the availability, accessibility and anti-social behavioural issues involved in designating facilities as a public convenience, access should continue to be permitted within the sports centers and library facilities.

4.2 Community Services building cleaning section should accelerate the current negotiations with their suppliers concerning the increased number of automatic toilets within the authority, in order to improve the provision of this service. There will be financial implications arising from the provision of any additional toilet facilities. This issue will require to be addressed between Community Services and Central Finance.

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 That only dedicated public conveniences be promoted as public convenience facilities.

5.2 That the cost of relocating and upgrading the automatic public toilet across the authority be investigated in conjunction with the Planning & Environment Department and Central Finance.

5.3 That a further committee paper be presented identifying proposals concerning the increased number, upgrading and re-siting of current automatic public convenience across the authority.

5.4 That the report be referred to Area Committees for information.

Paul Ginter.