



Glasgow City Council
Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City
Policy Committee

Item 1

26th November 2024

Report by George Gillespie, Executive Director of Neighbourhoods,
Regeneration and Sustainability

Contact: Jenny O'Hagan

Glasgow's Public Toilet Strategy Update

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of Glasgow's Public Toilet Strategy, a key action agreed as part of the Full Council motion of 26th October 2023.

Recommendations:

Committee are asked to note the content of this progress report and support the approach taken to the development of Glasgow's Public Toilet Strategy which will be presented at the upcoming Committee of 18th March 2025.

Ward No(s): N/A

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: N/A

consulted: N/A

1. Background

- 1.1. A public petition “Glasgow’s Parks and Public Spaces Need Public Toilets” in relation to concerns regarding the number, location and signposting of public toilets was heard by the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement (WECCE) City Policy Committee of 12th August 2021, and subsequently referred to the Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee (ELN CPC) for action and on-going reporting.
- 1.2. Public toilet provision was subsequently debated as part of a motion to Full Council on 26th October 2023. This Committee report has been structured to respond to the matters debated at Full Council, and specifically focus on providing an update on the development of a Glasgow Public Toilet Strategy; the key action agreed at Full Council.
- 1.3. All relevant reports, including the past Committee Reports referred to above, are contained in **Appendix A – Reports**.

2. Full Council motion of 26th October 2023

- 2.1. Full Council noted the progress which had been made in signposting public toilets in the City, including, listing all toilet facilities online at the Great British Toilet Map¹, and the installation of physical signage in parks.
- 2.2. A summary of the actions agreed as part of the Full Council motion of 26th October 2023, and how these items are responded to within this report, are summarised below:
 - 2.2.1. Full Council agreed for a Public Toilet Strategy to be developed within 12 months of 26th October 2023; i.e. by 26th October 2024. NRS have committed significant internal and external resources to this activity, reflecting the high-priority nature of the action. A detailed update on the development of the strategy is provided in this report.
 - 2.2.2. Investigating the removal of the 20p/ use charge for toilets provided by an external supplier. This is now being considered as part of the Public Toilet Strategy, recognising how toilet services are typically funded in the UK and the need for Local Authorities to balance the provision of high-quality services which also achieve value for money.
 - 2.2.3. A mapping exercise of public toilet provision and proximity to public parks and civic spaces was requested. This information is currently contained on the Great British Toilet Map referred to above, however, the Public Toilet Strategy has considered whether more effective systems may be available to the council.
 - 2.2.4. A further review of toilet opening hours, signage and use of technology within public toilets was agreed. This aspect has also been considered as

¹ <https://www.toiletmap.org.uk/> - referred to by the previous name of “Locations” in the motion

part of the Public Toilet Strategy and will be discussed in more detail within this report.

- 2.2.5. Continue to work with organisations on a public toilet awareness programme. As part of the Public Toilet Strategy, a 6-week public consultation exercise has been prepared and is ready for publication. A web link to the draft consultation questionnaire is provided as **Appendix B – Draft Public Consultation Questionnaire**.
- 2.2.6. Build upon the Sauchiehall Street Community Toilet Consultation 2016. This consultation did not identify an appetite within the local business community to support a community toilet scheme. As part of the above public consultation exercise, local businesses have been provided an opportunity to comment on the future of public toilets in Glasgow.
- 2.2.7. Exploring options of a comfort scheme small grants fund. Similar to the above point, as part of the public consultation, feedback has been invited from local businesses to help shape and improve the future public toilet service.
- 2.2.8. Engaging with vulnerable users on their experience of public toilets. A working group was established to guide the development of the Public Toilet Strategy and associated public consultation. This group contained a diverse mix of staff from across both the council family and external organisations, such as Police Scotland and the British Toilet Association (“BTA”), to ensure that vulnerable users were considered as part of the process.
- 2.2.9. Outlining how the council are improving accessibility for people with specific needs for larger cubicles. As part of the Public Toilet Strategy, the accessibility of public toilets was considered, to ensure a fair approach which meets the needs of these users.
- 2.2.10. Investigating how the City Development Plan can play a part in increasing public toilet provision. The role of the City Development Plan in respect of public toilet services is detailed within this Committee report.

3. The importance of public toilet services

- 3.1. Full Council of 26th October 2023 accepted the importance of public toilet provision, noting that the availability of public toilets is an equality and a public health issue.
- 3.2. Full Council also observed that adequate public toilet provision is a feminist issue with research showing women feel the lack of provision more acutely.

- 3.3. More broadly, accessible and sustainable public toilet facilities in the appropriate places encourage better community health, recreation, and participation, whilst supporting economic development and improving tourism. This is supported by evidence set out in a report ordered by the UK Government in October 2008².
- 3.4. Linked to these social benefits, the importance of effective public toilet provision has been highlighted within the council's commitment to Urbanism. By placing importance on the needs of women and non-binary people, the City can become more accessible to a wider demographic.
- 3.5. In addition, a recent review of parks lighting highlighted ([here](#)) that the provision of mixed-use facilities within parks could reduce anti-social behaviour and assist the reporting of crime, whilst also encouraging women and girls to use parks as supported by national guidance; 'Safer Parks (Improving Access for Women and Girls)'. Installing lighting columns within Glasgow's parks and greenspaces must be approached holistically, considering factors such as biodiversity and sustainability.
- 3.6. In summary, there is an opportunity for the council's public toilet services to promote improved health, social inclusion, and economic value to the City.

4. Planning context

- 4.1. The Full Council motion of 26th October 2023 required consideration of public toilet services from a planning context. A summary of the planning context has been developed by colleagues within the council's planning department, set out as follows:
 - 4.1.1. In terms of planning context, The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 states that a Local Development Plan is to include a statement of the planning authority's policies and proposals as to the provision of public conveniences and water refill stations. The Glasgow City Development Plan is currently at its Evidence stage, calling for evidence to support local spatial policies or proposals.
 - 4.1.2. Planning policies will also be influenced by the Council Plan and agreed Council policy statements such as the Feminist City motion adopted by the Council. Within this motion, the Council approved that in order to create public spaces that are safe and inclusive for women, and accessible for all members of the community, it is fundamental that women are central to all aspects of planning, public realm design, policy development and budgets.

² <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>

- 4.1.3. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 also requires the provision of Changing Places toilets within certain types of development when new development is proposed to be constructed. These are generally major large scale publicly used developments; for example, schools, community centres, retail outlets over 10,000 square metres, stadiums, major transport terminus, and so on. In practice, this latter requirement is also covered by Building Standards.
- 4.1.4. Any new or refurbishment of existing public toilets will require advice from planning colleagues.

5. Current Public Toilet Model

- 5.1. The council currently provides a diversified public toilet service model, which is explained below:
 - 5.1.1. Facilities are provided in some park locations which are operated by NRS and maintained by the council's Catering & FM. These facilities are free to use.
 - 5.1.2. Glasgow Life operate and maintain toilet facilities in sports venues, museums, and other locations throughout Glasgow. Whilst these facilities are free to use, it is noted that for security reasons and to prevent unauthorised use of the paid facilities within the building (e.g. gym facilities), some locations require permission to access the toilet via controlled reception.
 - 5.1.3. NRS receives an external public toilet service through Healthmatic Ltd ("Healthmatic") who operate and maintain four automated public toilets. These facilities are unlike traditional toilets as they provide automated features, including door opening / closing, cleaning, toilet paper dispensing and cashless payment (20p per use). However, despite being automated, these units do still require manual cleaning which is undertaken by Healthmatic staff. The Healthmatic contract was due to end on 31st March 2024 but has been extended until 31st March 2025 to allow time for the Public Toilet Strategy to be developed and approved.
- 5.2. The council operates one shared use building on Pollokshaws Road as part of the Healthmatic contract. This building incorporates a café which is sub-let by Healthmatic to a café operator – 'Hugs & Mugs'. A proportion of the rental income received by Healthmatic offsets the council's revenue costs associated with their service. Whilst it is noted that the Hugs & Mugs café was recently damaged by fire and is currently being repaired, this type of operating model can bring benefits to the council and is discussed in more detail as part of the Public Toilet Strategy update.

6. Public Toilet Consultation

- 6.1. A 6-week public toilet consultation exercise has been prepared and is ready for online publication.
- 6.2. Inclusivity was at the forefront of the public consultation. It was critical to encapsulate the diverse nature and needs of the Glasgow population and provide a platform to engage with communities to learn of their specific needs, and opinions and ultimately shape the Public Toilet Strategy.
- 6.3. The key stakeholder groups consulted as part of the consultation process are set out below:
- Glasgow City Council staff.
 - Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector (“GCVS”).
 - Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.
 - West of Scotland Regional Equality Council.
 - Glasgow Voluntary Sector Race Equality Network.
 - Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (“GCIL”).
 - Glasgow Health & Social Care Partnership (“HSCP”) – Health Equalities Department.
 - Community councils (with support from Glasgow City Council Communities team within the Chief Executive’s Department).
 - Glasgow Disability Alliance.
 - British Deaf Association.
 - Sustrans.
 - NHS.
 - Police Scotland.
- 6.4. The key findings of the consultation will be published within the finalised Public Toilet Strategy Report.

7. Glasgow’s Public Toilet Strategy Update

- 7.1. As detailed in this Committee report, the council currently operates a complex public toilet service model. Given the importance of public toilet services, as highlighted by Full Council, it was agreed that a Public Toilet Strategy would be developed to set the strategic direction of travel for the provision of these services.

- 7.2. NRS recognised the need to engage with external experts to support the development of the Public Toilet Strategy and in August 2024 partnered with the BTA to lead the development of the strategy.
- 7.3. The BTA, founded in May 1999, is a not-for-profit Members Organisation that promotes the highest quality standard of public toilet facilities. The BTA work closely with industry suppliers and also provide consultation services to the public sector.
- 7.4. The council selected BTA as their partner to develop Glasgow's Public Toilet Strategy due to their experience in providing similar services to other Local Authorities, including Westminster City Council, Belfast City Council, Cardiff City Council, and many others.
- 7.5. In order to support the BTA and guide the development of the strategy, the council established a working group consisting of officers from across the council family and external organisations, as detailed below:
- Glasgow City Council, NRS – Property & asset management, greenspace and biodiversity, performance & information management, planning, community safety.
 - Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life – facilities management.
 - Glasgow City Council, Financial Services - Catering & FM.
 - Glasgow City Council, Chief Executive's Department - economic development, communities team.
 - Police Scotland (Safer Communities).
 - BTA.
- 7.6. In order to fully consider the views of the working group, and also respond to feedback from the 6-week public consultation exercise as detailed within this Committee report, NRS will present the Public Toilet Strategy to Committee on 18th March 2025.
- 7.7. The Public Toilet Strategy explores and makes recommendations under the following thematic areas:
- 7.7.1. Alternative public toilet service provision and methodology for consideration; including consideration of shared use buildings, charging model, security, and anti-social behaviour.
- 7.7.2. Legal requirements and recommendations; considers The Public Health Act, licensing and leasing, equality, social inclusion and accessibility matters.
- 7.7.3. Toilet operating model within public buildings, parks and open spaces.

- 7.7.4. Opportunity areas; specifically considering areas highlighted through the public consultation where a lack of provision exists.
- 7.7.5. Funding, sponsorship and support; considering the opportunities to maximise public toilet funding and engage with partner organisations.

8. Budget position

- 8.1. At this stage, whilst it is too early to determine the level of budget required to implement the recommendations of the Public Toilet Strategy, additional funding may be required. For this reason, a summary of the current budget position is provided below.
- 8.2. Currently the total citywide GCC financial revenue contribution to the provision of public toilets is £340k, the following budgets were allocated in 2022/23 for public toilets managed by NRS:
 - 8.2.1. Circa £134k for toilets operated by NRS Parks at Victoria, Kelvingrove and Botanics; of which circa £87k relates to cleaning services provided by Catering & Facilities Management (C&FM) within the council's Financial Services.
 - 8.2.2. Circa £206k for toilets operated by a private supplier, Healthmatic, at Stevenson Street, Collins Street, St Vincent Place and Pollokshaws Road.
- 8.3. Glasgow City Council has recently accepted £2.242m through the Scottish Government's Place Fund. A provisional sum of £250k is made towards public toilet services.

9. Policy and resource implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	Not applicable at this stage – further consideration will be given as part of the Public Toilet Strategy report to Committee in March 2025.
<i>Legal:</i>	Not applicable at this stage – further consideration will be given as part of the Public Toilet Strategy report to Committee in March 2025.
<i>Personnel:</i>	Not applicable at this stage – further consideration will be given as part of the Public Toilet Strategy report to Committee in March 2025.

Procurement: The Healthmatic contract is planned to end on 31st March 2025. The proposed future public toilet service will be discussed in the Public Toilet Strategy report to Committee in March 2025.

Council Strategic Plan: Supports the objectives of Grand Challenge 2, increasing the opportunity and prosperity for all our Citizens.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify. Achieving the council's equality outcomes has been a key focus of the Public Toilet Strategy and public consultation. A detailed Equalities Impact Assessment will be published alongside the report to Committee in March 2025 setting out how the Strategy supports these outcomes.

What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report? Whilst a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken at this stage, such matters have been considered by the Public Toilet Strategy working group and we feel the new Public Toilet Strategy will provide improved equality outcomes.

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage. No negative impacts have been identified at this stage.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify: Not directly linked.

What are the potential climate impacts as a Not directly linked, however, opportunities to provide more sustainable public toilet services

*result of this
proposal?*

will be considered as part of the Public Toilet Strategy to be presented to Committee in March 2025.

*Will the proposal
contribute to
Glasgow's net zero
carbon target?*

Not directly linked.

**Privacy and Data
Protection Impacts:**

Are there any potential
data protection impacts
as a result of this report
Y/N

No.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. Committee are asked to note the content of this report and support the approach taken to the development of Glasgow's Public Toilet Strategy which will be presented at the upcoming Committee of 18th March 2025.

Appendix A – Reports

A UK Westminster Government Committee report of 6th October 2008 in respect of Public Toilet provision:

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmcomloc/636/636.pdf>

A Report presented to the Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods Committee on 25th April 2023:

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=108505>

A motion debated at Full Council on 26th October 2023:

<https://glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/Agenda.asp?meetingid=18896>

A Place Fund Report to City Administration Committee on 30th November 2023:

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewDoc.asp?c=P62AFQDN81DNT1UTZ3>

Health literature suggests that the risk of violence targeted against women and other marginalised groups can deter use of bathrooms with resultant impacts on health and accessibility <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7142493/>

Committee Document; Parks Lighting Review Report on 11th June 2024: [Committee Information - View Committee Document \(glasgow.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix B – Draft Public Consultation Questionnaire

A draft of the online public consultation questionnaire can be accessed at the web link below:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/preview/OEDAT4/2C8318038E7F6CF60DC5C52DA48499>