



monmouthshire  
*sir fynwy*

Monmouthshire County Council

Local Toilets Strategy

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Reviewed December 2022

To Place Scrutiny Committee 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023



# Toiled Toilet

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Public toilets are essential to equitable access to public outdoor spaces. They allow for the space to become a destination for extended periods of socialising, exercise, commuting and accessing community and commercial services.
- 1.2 This Council continues to play a key role in providing safe, accessible and clean public toilets, together with its' Town and Community Council partners that also own and manage public toilet facilities across the county.
- 1.3 A substantial review of public conveniences was undertaken by a working group of the Strong Communities Select committee in 2009. Their findings were reported to Cabinet in July 2010, with recommendations for Town and Community Councils (T & CC's) to take over the management and funding of most of the public toilets at that time. The response from those Councils was generally favourable, with the consequence of sustaining toilets in the county, (that would have otherwise been closed), and reducing the County Council's costs.
- 1.4 The strategy, in draft forms, was discussed and further developed through Strong Communities Select committees in February and May 2019. Noting the previous work, Members wanted assurances that there is a mechanism to ensure recommendations are implemented.
- 1.5 The public survey conducted during December 2018 to January 2019 showed a mixed picture of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the current publicly available toilet provision. For example, 46% were satisfied with cleanliness, 41% disagreed. Strong messages included people stating there were too few facilities (80%); they wanted more information on location (69%); believed they should be free to use (79%) and they were not comfortable using private toilets where they weren't also a customer (78%).
- 1.6 The strategy also identifies negative aspects of providing public toilets over longer periods, as reported by Gwent Police. Drug taking has increased in recent times, and so closure times need consideration with our Town & Community Council colleagues.

- 1.7 The public reported they would like better information on opening times and locations. This will be assisted by promoting the Wales Public Toilet Map, helping people to find a public toilet where and when they need it.
- 1.8 The strategy recognises the contribution of the private sector, and indeed many major retailers recognise their public service role, including larger supermarkets and public houses. Further encouragement of private providers will be taken forward.
- 1.9 This Authority will continue to provide specialist advice to event organisers, to ensure adequate toilet provision at our regular large events, such as the Abergavenny Food Festival, agricultural, music and sporting events.
- 1.10 This Authority welcomes, and was successful in securing, a one off Welsh Government grant of £17,200 'in partial recompense for the additional work required to develop and publish local toilet strategies'. Officers will consider how best to utilise this one-off payment, together with Member and other stakeholder input.
- 1.11 The strategy was available for public consultation between 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019. Some points of accuracy were picked up, eg. opening hours, and recommendations generally supported.
- 1.12 The strategy was reviewed in early 2021 and reported to Strong Communities Select Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This initial review checked on progress against the recommendations in the 2019 published strategy.
- 1.13 The actions detailed in Section 12 of this strategy were largely implemented and reviewed as per Welsh Government requirements. Some were stalled due to the Covid 19 pandemic March 2020 to May 2022. Progress is reported in Section 12, but included –
- Consideration needed on 'Changing Spaces' provision, for use of more profoundly disabled persons. Leisure Centres to be considered, noting their proximity to town centres and because they are continuously manned during operating hours.
- The £17,200 WG grant to be used to fund Landlord Services, to use in 23/24 financial year, in consultation with MonLife.
- Our toilet provision data will be transferred to Data Map Wales, which will provide mobile app capability.
- Annual hygiene inspections now conducted by MCC Environmental Health.

## **2. Introduction**

2.1 The provision of publicly available toilets improves local amenity and supports activity in public open spaces throughout the county. There are 19 dedicated public toilets in Monmouthshire, 9 owned by this Authority and 10 owned by Town and Community Councils. This is supplemented by a number of toilets on Council property, such as Leisure Centres, that the public can access. The public also utilise toilets on private property, for example at supermarkets and public houses. Although most of the public provision is now run by Community and Town Councils, (of the 9 MCC owned, 5 are T&CC managed), it is a duty on Monmouthshire County Council to prepare and publish a local toilet strategy.

2.2 A public toilet can be defined as a toilet that is freely available for the general public to use. They can also be temporary facilities provided for a specific one-off purpose, for example a music festival. Public toilets can be provided on private property as long as they are freely available for general use. The importance of public provision is more important to certain groups in society, including older people, those with disabilities and parents/carers with young children.

2.3 The key outcomes of the strategy are to:-

- Provide direction on the appropriate location of public toilets throughout the county
- Ensure the maintenance and cleaning of public toilets, including those managed by others, occurs to an appropriate standard
- Ensure the community, including visitors, has good information on the public toilet availability and location
- Provide direction on where the Council should focus advocacy and encouragement of other organisations to provide public toilet facilities
- Provide an action plan for the improvement of public toilets throughout the county

## **3. Need for a strategy for providing toilet facilities**

3.1 Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, 'Provision of Toilets' came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 and places a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilet strategy for its area. Monmouthshire has the responsibility to –

- Assess the need for toilet provision for their communities
- Plan to meet those needs
- Produce a local toilet strategy, and
- Review the strategy, update and publicise revisions

3.2 This Authority, under the Act, must prepare and publish their strategy by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019. **Monmouthshire County Council published their first Local Toilet Strategy in June 2019.** It should be noted that the duty to prepare a local toilet strategy does not require local authorities to provide and maintain public toilets directly. The Local Authority must take a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed by their local population. Upon review of the strategy, Monmouthshire CC is required to publish a statement of progress. **This will be actioned after scrutiny of the review in January 2023.**

3.3 The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' which advises public bodies how to go about meeting their duty under that Act. The principle is made up of five ways of working that public bodies should follow when carrying out sustainable development. These are:-

- Looking to the long term so we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- Taking an integrated approach
- Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions
- Involving a diversity of the population in the decisions affecting them
- Acting to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse.

These five ways of working were utilised during the preparation, review, consultation and publication of the strategy.

#### **4. Aims of the Strategy**

4.1 The overall aim of this strategy is to review the quality and quantity of local toilets throughout the county. The public toilet provision is typically not directly via the Council, but the Authority seeks to ensure the provision of clean, safe, accessible and sustainable toilets. This is important for residents whilst out and about, visitors and businesses who will want attractive local environments in which to successfully operate. To achieve this aim, the Authority will –

- Identify the current level of public toilet provision
- Analyse the findings of (i) the questionnaire sent to gauge opinion, (ii) the public consultation, (iii) Abergavenny Town Council's own survey
- Consider the requirements of the general population and particular user groups
- Survey the condition and usage of existing facilities
- Identify any gaps in current provision
- Increase awareness of local toilet locations, including use of new technologies and communications

- Advise organisers on the provision of adequate temporary toilets for events in the county
- Provide a statement setting out the steps the Council will take to meet the need.

## **5. Reviewing the strategy**

- 5.1 Monmouthshire CC will prepare a progress report setting out the steps taken as a consequence of this strategy every two years. **An initial review was conducted in early 2021 and reported to Strong Communities Select Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Certain actions were delayed due to the Covid pandemic, and this was the same across the other Welsh Local Authorities.** The Authority may review its strategy at any time, for example where there is a change in local provision through a partner organisation, and will consult and publish any reviews accordingly. **Noting this delayed review is being reported in January 2023, the next review of the strategy will be scheduled for January 2025.**

## **6. Development of the strategy**

- 6.1 Noting the role of Town and Community Councils managing the majority of public toilets in the county, they continue to be engaged for their input into current provision and adequacy. Abergavenny Town Council carried out their own review of provision in their town, and their input is reflected accordingly. From the Council's perspective, Operations, Public Protection, Property Services, Tourism, Leisure and Culture were engaged, together with colleagues in Policy & Partnerships, Communications and GIS mapping, (Shared Resources Service).
- 6.2 Engagement with national retailers was undertaken once across the Welsh Local Authorities, to avoid them needing to answer similar questions 22 times.
- 6.3 A public consultation was undertaken from 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019 to assess the needs of residents, visitors and workers within the county. Key engagement mechanisms included:-
- Press Release to local papers 19<sup>th</sup> December, providing information on how to complete the survey
  - Provided to all Town and Community Councillors, and County Councillors
  - social media, including Facebook and Twitter.
  - Via our FB and Twitter feeds, Access to All forums notified, together with Monmouthshire Local Service Board Engagement Group, including the voluntary sector, housing associations and Police & Crime Commissioner.

- Paper questionnaires, when requested. So, for example, 40 hard copy versions were provided to the Abergavenny 50+ group.

6.4 Although the response to the survey was quite low, it highlighted certain concerns from those that completed it. These are summarised in Section 11.1.

6.5 This Authority is fortunate that a comprehensive review of public toilet provision was undertaken 10 years ago, in 2009. That previous work is referenced in this 2019 strategy and three Members also revisited all the tradition 'public toilet blocks', both those provided by MCC and Town & Community Councils. This is referenced in Section 11.2.

6.6 A public consultation exercise, seeking views on the draft Local Toilet Strategy, was conducted between 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019. Points of accuracy were picked up – since corrected – with overall support for the recommendations. Comments are summarised in Section 11.3.

6.7 Abergavenny Town Council conducted their own survey and reported their findings in September 2018. Their findings are summarised in Section 11.5.

## 7. **Linkage to other priorities – national, Public Service Board, Council, etc.**

7.1 **Older People's Commissioner (OPC) for Wales** - in 2014 the OPC reported that Council decisions to close public toilets were 'short sighted'. The OPC claimed that the money saved by Councils in the short term would have to be paid for later in health costs, as people became detracted from going out and about. This Authority's response to keeping public facilities largely open, is summarised in section 8 below. The OPC, in response to the WG consultation on local strategies stated 'strategies must be supported by funding in order to turn words into action'.

7.2 **The Well-being assessment** (April 2017) – Monmouthshire Public Service Board – highlights predicted increases in elderly persons in the county. By 2039 over 65's are anticipated to increase by 61%, with over 85's by 100%, ie. doubling in numbers. So decisions should reflect future changes in the numbers of more elderly people.

### 7.3 Council's **Local Development Plan**

7.3.1 There is reference to 'community facilities' in the adopted LDP -

Policy S5 – Community and Recreation Facilities  
Development proposals that provide and/or enhance community and recreation facilities will be permitted within or adjoining town and village development boundaries subject to detailed planning considerations.

Development proposals that result in the unjustified loss of community and recreation facilities will not be permitted.

7.3.2 Planning colleagues advise that seeking to secure Section 106 funding (a planning obligation) towards a public toilet would need to meet the tests laid down in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations. It would be difficult to see how a financial contribution towards public toilets would reasonably relate to a specific housing scheme being delivered. Any such obligation would not be defensible at appeal, and Council priorities lie elsewhere, including educational infrastructure. Planning obligations should not be used to provide a facility that should be provided by the Council or another public body in a more general sense.

#### 7.4 **MCC Community and Corporate Plan 2022/23**

7.4.1 Our overarching strategic plan for MCC refers to our purpose – ‘We want to be a zero carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life’. The provision of suitable public toilets supports well-being, health (it encourages people to be out and about in our towns and villages), and provides dignity to older persons as they are never far away from a public facility in our main towns.

7.4.2 Keeping populations healthy, using open spaces, etc. is supported by suitable public toilet provision. The latest plan also refers to prioritising ‘a fair place to live’, including ‘all residents have access to the services and support they need to live a healthy life’. There is also reference to ‘attractive town centres’, and suitable public toilet provision is an element of these Council priorities.

### **8. Provision of local public toilets**

8.1. Noting the earlier work of the ‘Public Convenience Working Group’, consisting of three County Councillors in 2009, it is useful to reflect on the current provision compared to 13 years ago.

8.2 The total MCC expenditure in 2009/10 was £306,038 compared to £119,258 in 2017/18, a drop of 61%. This does not correlate with a 61% drop in the number of public toilets provided, as majority are now financed and managed by Town & Community Councils. The total MCC expenditure in 2021/22 was £65,803. This was significantly less than a typical year due to (a) business rates not currently being charged, and (b) public toilets were shut for periods during 21/22 due to national Covid restrictions. This resulted in less maintenance costs, electric and water usage.

8.3 The 2009 review recommended certain closures. Seven were closed, namely Raglan; Main Road, Tintern; Mathern Road, Bulwark;



Healthmatic Unit, Bulwark; Linda Vista, Abergavenny; Llandegfedd reservoir and Llanthony Abbey car park.

8.4 Current provision (2022) is listed in Appendix A –

- MCC owned public toilets – entries 1 to 10, though 1 to 5 are managed and part funded by Abergavenny Town Council. Only 4 public toilet blocks are both owned and managed by MCC outright. **One block is recommended for closure, Whitehorse Lane (WHL), due to the significant cost needed for repair. One block is added, Linda Vista Gardens. So the overall number of blocks in Abergavenny, assuming WHL closed, remains the same.**
- Town & Community Council public toilets – entries 11 to 20 (ten in total), wholly owned, as a direct consequence of the 2009 review work, and managed by T&CC's.
- Public toilets in other MCC buildings – entries 21 to 36 (16 in total), includes provision in leisure centres, libraries, etc.
- Other publicly accessible toilets – entries 37 to 39 (3 in total). These are provided by others, namely CADW, a chapel group, and a 'Changing Place' in a community centre. **Welsh Government/Trunk Road Agency own the A40 block, (now closed by WG).**
- **Linda Vista Gardens block in Abergavenny has since reopened. Section 106 Planning funding was used to fully refurbish the facility, and are now maintained by the nearby tearooms. The block is opened and closed by the proprietors of the café, to coincide with their hours of opening, and are available for anyone to use.**

8.5 This Authority considers it hugely positive that the Town and Community Councils have typically taken up responsibility for local public toilet provision in our towns and villages. The harsh reality is, noting financial pressures on the County Council (in 2009 and ever since), that the majority of our public toilets would have been closed had our T&CC's not stepped in and taken responsibility.

8.6 An innovative solution was found to retain the public toilets provided at Usk Island, as part of the earlier Working Group review. Responsibility for managing the toilets was incorporated into the MCC contract issued to the hot food outlet at this location. This has proved a successful arrangement and has ensured the public facility remains open. **This arrangement is replicated for the Linda Vista toilet block, (as stated in 8.4).**

8.7 Public toilets, by arrangement with event organisers, will often be open for longer periods when required. So, for example, public toilets in Abergavenny will remain open throughout the weekend of the Abergavenny Food Festival. This demonstrates a willingness, by both the Town and County Council, to work with the private sector to make the visitor experience more enjoyable.

- 8.8 Reviews on social media, etc. can be helpful in identifying good and poorer facilities. MCC can act on any feedback accordingly and/or provide praise when appropriate. One example of recent positive feedback -

*Abergavenny Bus Station - Dec 22 – “As a disabled person these toilets are a godsend when we are travelling in the area. We sometimes go to the West of England and Abergavenny makes a great resting point for a cup of tea etc. The toilets are clean and tidy and well maintained”.*

## 9. **Provision of toilets in private sector**

- 9.1 **Thirteen** years ago, during the time of the Working Group review, there was Welsh Government funding comprising an annual grant of up to £17,500. Only two premises took up the offer of making their toilets available to the public, ie. people could use without being paying customers, for which they received £500 p.a. However, WG funding was subsequently withdrawn and therefore the grant payment was also withdrawn to the two participating businesses.
- 9.2 Whether there is an appetite to revisit seeking local businesses to open their toilet facilities to public use will depend, in a large part, to whether any funding is re-established. Public Protection staff regularly visit all local public houses, retail providers, restaurants, etc. and would be ideally placed to promote any future scheme.
- 9.3 Large national retailers were contacted once for a response in relation to their premises throughout Wales, to avoid duplication and effort. They recognised that the general public did use their toilet facilities when not necessarily making a purchase. This was accepted, noting many will be regular or future customers to their store or eating/entertainment venue. The retailers contacted did not wish to have the national toilet logo on display at their entrances.
- 9.4 Environmental Health Officers will conduct checks of toilets provided for the public as part of their inspection regime. Members of the public can complain to them, **or via our local Hubs**, should they have any concerns regarding cleaning, facilities and overall hygiene.
- 9.5 Monmouthshire is fortunate to host a number of highly successful events throughout the county, including food and music festivals, sporting events, agricultural shows, etc. Monmouthshire Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) provides advice and guidance on toilet provision, including numbers, types of facilities, access and overall suitability.

## **10. Mapping locations of publicly accessible toilets**

- 10.1 One element of the strategy is to accurately map information on location of public toilets, together with facilities available and opening times. Locations will be promoted via a 'mapping app' specifically designed for mobile technology. Participating premises will display a nationally agreed sticker in a prominent place. The design, stipulated by Welsh Government, is as follows –



- 10.2 The Monmouthshire public toilet information has been shared with Welsh Government to enable a national dataset, the 'Lle map', to be created. The data created in the Lle map will be available as an open data service accessible to everyone. The link to the Lle portal is as follows –

<http://lle.gov.wales/home>

- 10.3 The dataset will be available in both English and Welsh. The public will be able to see and search the data as it appears on this site, to see the whole of Wales or focus at particular areas. Monmouthshire CC will embed the locally configured map onto its website, and provide a link to the national Lle map, assisting anyone searching data for other areas they might be visiting. Although under development, the map will also be available here –

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouthshire-local-toilet-survey>

- 10.4 Mapping of toilet provision across Wales is due to be updated by providing all the relevant information through Data Map Wales. When fully set up by Welsh Government, this Authority will be able to input and edit data themselves and, in so doing, be able to keep all information up-to-date, ie. locations, opening hours, etc. This will be progressed in 2023.

## **11. FINDINGS of public survey/other**

### **11.1 MCC survey – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

- 11.1.1. The survey to gauge public opinion ran between 19th December and 11th January 2019. The low response rate, at 132 completed surveys, could be in part due to no announcement of any public toilet closures.

The full analysis of the survey findings can be found via our website, via this link –

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouthshire-local-toilet-survey>

11.1.2 The majority of the responses were from people from Abergavenny, at 61% of the total. Responses by area were as follows –

Abergavenny – 61%

Monmouth - 12%

Chepstow - 8%

Caldicot - 5%

Other - 14%

11.1.3 People were asked what they thought about the current provision, in the area they most frequent, in terms of adequacy, accessibility, cleanliness, etc. and responses are provided below –

**Table One**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
There are too few facilities	39 (32%)	41(34%)	21 (17%)	2 (2%)	19 (15%)
The location of facilities is not convenient	27(21%)	40(31%)	36(28%)	1(1%)	25 (19%)
The location of the facilities does not feel safe	4 (4%)	32 (37%)	45 (47%)	3 (3%)	11 (9%)
There is not enough information on where facilities are located	37 (32%)	43 (37%)	13 (11%)	1 (1%)	22 (19%)
The lack of facilities has stopped me from visiting certain locations	14 (9%)	33 (22%)	38 (26%)	37 (25%)	26 (18%)
Facilities are not open at the times I need them	12 (10%)	32 (27%)	39 (33%)	4 (4%)	31 (26%)
The cleanliness of facilities is generally good	4 (2%)	52 (44%)	31 (26%)	18 (15%)	16 (13%)

Toilets should be free to use	61 (51%)	34 (28%)	8 (7%)	1 (1%)	16 (13%)
I don't like using toilets in shops or restaurants because I feel like I need to buy something	59 (50%)	33 (28%)	11 (8%)	1 (1%)	15 (13%)

#### 11.1.4 In summary, of those responding –

- 80% thought there were too few facilities
- 52% stated locations not convenient
- 41% not feeling safe, (50% safe)
- 69% wanted more information on location
- 31% lack of adequate facilities, (51% satisfied)
- 37% believed not open at times needed, (36% satisfied)
- 46% satisfied with cleanliness, (41% disagreed)
- 79% believed toilets should be free to use, (only 8% disagreed)
- 78% weren't comfortable using private toilets where they weren't a customer

#### 11.1.5 Further pertinent points captured were as follows –

- 55% reporting using Council public toilets, 39% private, 6% those in other MCC property, such as Leisure Centres
- 73% thought provision adequate between 9am and 6pm
- Baby changing facilities, across public and private toilets, inadequate 48%, adequate 42%, with people reporting private provision better (81%) than public (21%)
- 67% considered disabled provision in public and private toilets inadequate
- When asked about good facilities, Brewery Yard, Abergavenny got some praise, and many in private sector, notably major supermarkets
- When asked about poor facilities, Whitehorse Lane, Abergavenny came in for most criticism. **Shut since March 2020 – recommended to move to permanent closure.**
- Some thought there was no toilet in Bailey Park, although there is with limited opening times.
- 64% would like to see a sticker or poster to show where public toilet facilities are available, with 27% saying an App would be helpful.

#### 11.1.6 Most frequent comments referred to –

- Cleanliness
- Lack of information on opening hours
- Ideally there is investment to improve existing public blocks

- Not enough baby changing facilities
- More toilets desirable

11.1.7 When asked for thoughts for the future, 40% suggested private providers should encourage non-customers to use their toilets; 36% suggested closing certain public blocks to utilise funding to better maintain those that continue; and 23% suggested MCC seek further investment to improve existing provision across the county.

11.1.8 The information gathered can be utilised in forthcoming conversations with T&CC's, Gwent Police and others when planning future provision.

## 11.2 **Member comments, February 2019**

11.2.1 Three Councillors, together with our Facilities Supervisor, undertook a survey of the public toilet blocks on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019. 18 were visited, both those owned by this Authority and those owned and managed by Town & Community Councils. Their overall summation referred to (1) standards of cleaning generally satisfactory when MCC providing the service, (2) condition of fabric requires attention in a number of blocks, both MCC and T&CC managed, (3) emergency alarms in disabled toilets not working in 17 of the 18 visited, (4) signage often missing or inadequate. Members asked for a full 'condition survey' of all toilet blocks by the Council's Property Services section. This was undertaken in April 2019, see 11.4 below.

11.2.2 The initial draft strategy was presented to a Special Strong Communities Select committee on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019. As well as Members confirming the poor condition of some of the blocks, (eg. Caldicot Country Park), other comments were made as follows –

- Both reactive (broken panels, etc.) and proactive spending needed to provide facilities of a suitable and safe standard. Property Services to prioritise maintenance work in MCC toilet blocks
- Like to see the £17,200 one-off WG grant put towards repair costs
- Need to research the effectiveness of 'blue lights' in public toilets, eg. drug users could revert to using mobile phone lighting to locate veins
- Helpful if, on receipt of all the Welsh toilet strategies, Welsh Government gave guidance on recommended numbers relating to average footfall in towns and other areas of public use
- Further to this, could some 'grading system' be introduced to ensure suitable standards are maintained? If nothing nationally, potentially MCC could introduce their own rating system.
- Strategy needs to be brought to attention of other organisations, namely Brecon Beacons National Park and Welsh Government, (WG). WG have a vested interest as providers of trunk roads, including the heads of the valleys A465, and their historic environment service, CADW. The Road Haulers Association have raised the difficulty of

inadequate toilet provision across the trunk road network, which should be an important issue for WG.

- Noting drug paraphernalia (11.6.3), concerns expressed re MCC cleaning staff exposed to this, plus issue that staff work on their own increasing risk.
- A strategy to 'audit progress' over time helpful, particularly noting Monmouthshire is a major tourist destination.
- Pre-decision scrutiny on 21<sup>st</sup> May reaffirmed these points. Of particular note was the desire to ensure the recommendations of this strategy are effectively implemented. The Officer/Member group – two Members were nominated by the Strong Communities Select committee – will be charged in overseeing the recommendations. **Noting our new Administration, since May 2022, Members to consider whether they want to form a small Officer/Member working group.**

11.2.3 A Member of the Committee asked 'Access for All', local disability group, for their view on emergency alarms in disabled toilets. This request was made further to deficiencies noted during site visits on 7<sup>th</sup> February. A representative commented on common faults concerning emergency alarms, (pull cords too high, incorrect location of cords, missing toggles), and installations not checked regularly. Reference was also made to Approved Document M, Section 5 'Sanitary accommodation in buildings other than dwellings', which providers need to have regard to when providing disabled accessible public toilets.

11.2.4 The Chair of the Committee and Head of Public Protection met with the 'Access For All' representative on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 to capture their observations. Two visits to public toilets were undertaken to use a proforma used for disabled facilities. This proved very useful and will be taken forward when regular, routine inspections are undertaken by MCC, (as per recommendation 9).

### **11.3 Public consultation comments**

11.3.1 Further to the public survey, another opportunity to comment was afforded via public consultation. This ran from 22 February to 3 May 2019. The Cabinet Member for Public Protection was informed of progress of the draft strategy, noting it going to Individual Cabinet Member Decision for approval prior to adoption.

11.3.2 Most comments, from Town and Community Councils, related to points of accuracy, eg. opening times, and a couple being unclear on the £1,200 annual grant from MCC towards running costs. These were referred to Operations Finance section. It is assumed most satisfied with the recommendations noting no adverse comments recorded.

11.3.3 Abergavenny Town Council provided the most detailed comments, including –

- MCC will need to determine a mechanism to ensure improvements to those public blocks owned by Town & Community Councils or others
- Further regard is needed towards families and those with more profound disabilities
- Noting problems with anti-social behaviour in Abergavenny, Town Council happy to assist in seeking solutions with partners
- The strategy is light on coping with future demand, noting aging population
- Supports some form of grading system for the county

#### 11.4 MCC Property Services condition survey, April 2019 & subsequent surveys by Environmental Health

11.4.1 At Strong Communities Select Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Members asked for a condition survey to be undertaken. The Authority's Property Services section was notified accordingly and a survey of 18 public toilet blocks was undertaken in April 2019.

11.4.2 A 77 page report was received on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019, outlining their findings. Going forward, the recommended small Officer/Member working group can analyse the detail and share specific findings with the owners of these facilities, noting many are owned by Town and Community Councils or other bodies.

11.4.3 A summary of the Property Services assessment is provided in Table Two, columns 1 & 2. Environmental Health subsequently visited the blocks again in 2020 and 2022, columns 3 & 4 –

**Table Two**

	<b>Apr '19 Property Services</b>	Estimated repair costs (April 2019)	<b>Feb '20 Environmental Health</b>	<b>Aug '22 Env Health</b>
<b>A. MCC owned public toilets</b>				
1. Abergavenny Bus Station	C	£36,900	Good	Fair
2. Abergavenny – Castle Street	B	£6,800 Work done 21/22	Good	Good
3. Abergavenny – Whitehorse Lane	C	£93,300	Poor	<b>CLOSED</b>
4. Abergavenny – Brewery Yard	A	0	Excellent	Good
5. Abergavenny – Bailey Park	B	£6,700	<b>CLOSED</b>	<b>CLOSED</b>
6. Caldicot – Caldicot Country Park	C	£25,000 Work done 19/20	Excellent	Excellent



7. Monmouth – Cattle Market	B	£1,700 Work done 20/21	Good	Good
8. Usk – Maryport Street	B	£4,800 Work done 21/22	Good	Good
9. Usk – Usk Island	C	£4,900 Work done 22/23	Good	Excellent
<b>B T &amp; CC owned public toilets</b>				
10. Caerwent	C	£4,600	Excellent	Good
11. Caldicot – Jubilee Way	B	£4,200	Excellent	Good
12. Chepstow – Welsh Street	B	£2,400	Excellent	Fair
13. Chepstow – Castle Dell/TIC	B	£2,500	Excellent	Excellent
14. Chepstow – Riverside	C	£8,400	Good	Fair
15. Gilwern	B	£7,400	Good	Good
16. Goytre	B	£5,700	Good	Good
17. Monmouth – Agincourt Street	C	£8,300	Good	Good
18. Tintern	C	£13,300	Excellent	Excellent

#### 11.4.4 Table Two can be summarised –

MCC facilities were rated as 2 excellent, 4 good and 1 fair. 4 remained at the same rating, 2 went up, one went down.

T&CC facilities were rated as 2 excellent, 5 good and 2 fair. 6 remained at same rating, 2 up, one down.

Of the 16 surveyed August 2022, 13 of the 16 were judged good or excellent, 81% of total. Only 3 were deemed 'fair', (19%).

11.4.5 Overall there was a slight improvement in ratings of the 16 facilities surveyed. The pandemic slowed progress in structural improvements and, now all are rated, comparisons can be made year on year.

### 11.5 Abergavenny Town Council (ATC) survey, 2018

11.5.1 The Projects committee of ATC conducted their own assessment of public toilet provision in Abergavenny, and reported their findings in September 2018. Their public survey generated 355 responses.

11.5.2 The survey identified Brewery Yard as the most frequently used, followed by White Horse Lane, the bus station and Castle Street.

Castle Street and the Bus Station facilities were judged the best for cleanliness, White Horse Lane the worst. Overall, over 50% considered the Abergavenny toilets well presented, generally clean although basic.

- 11.5.3 Regarding potential improvements, 31% thought ATC should increase the precept to fund improvements, 18% selected 'close one of the blocks and invest saved money to improve the remaining', 16% suggested charging.
- 11.5.4 When asked for further comments, most referred to Abergavenny being a tourist town so should have decent toilets, anti-social behaviour stemming from toilets, a need for upgrading and the importance of adequate provision for those with different medical conditions.
- 11.5.5 A Town Councillor inspected the four toilet blocks in August 2018 and commented "The cleaners have an unenviable task ... Graffiti and mess has to be removed from surfaces, needles retrieved from the floor, basins, toilets and bins, and all sorts of strewn around detritus cleared up."
- 11.5.6 Three recommendations were put to ATC, in readiness for 19/20, being (i) retain the status quo, (ii) close one block (White Horse Lane being preferred), (iii) introduce a small charge for usage, and consider whether toilets remain in MCC ownership or transfer to ATC.
- 11.5.7 Noting MCC retains ownership of the toilet blocks, together with the joint priority of promoting tourism, having thriving town centres, etc. dialogue will continue between ATC and MCC on the best options going forward.

## **11.6 Gwent Police comments**

- 11.6.1 Police colleagues reported anti-social behaviour, notably drug taking, in public toilets in Abergavenny and Monmouth. They have made representation to the Town Councils affected, to request closure of public toilets, including disabled facilities, by early evening (17.00 was suggested) to prevent anyone seeking to sell or take drugs doing so from public conveniences.
- 11.6.2 Specifically drug activity was reported at Whitehorse Lane, Abergavenny, Agincourt Street, Monmouth and Cattle market (Blestium Street), Monmouth. Police have included these sites in their regular PCSO patrols. Two prosecutions were taken before Christmas 2018 for possession of Class A drugs in Abergavenny.
- 11.6.3 Cleaning crews, since December 2018, have started recording the number of syringes and other drug paraphernalia, to establish the extent of the problem. Both Gwent Police and MCC Cleansing report a steady increase in recent years.

- 11.6.4 Solutions will be discussed through 'Problem Solving Groups' between MCC Officers, Emergency Services and any others with an interest. Another aid might be to 'blue light' public toilets, whereby drug users cannot see veins thereby making conveniences less attractive.
- 11.6.5 There are also health and safety considerations to consider, both for Police and MCC Cleaning personnel, visiting toilets with drug paraphernalia.
- 11.6.6 Gwent Police would wish to be included in any conversations about future provision in our towns, noting their involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour reduction. In the meantime they will continue to seek to arrest for any illegal drug use. They recognise most toilets are now provided by T&CC's so will continue dialogue with facility providers.

## 12. Actions

### Monmouthshire CC will –

1. Continue to work closely with Town & Community Councils on options for maintaining and improving public toilet provision in the county. **On-going, regular dialogue with T&C colleagues, eg. suggested improvements and associated costs.**
2. Give particular focus on ensuring public toilets provided for disabled persons are suitable and safe. **MCC to consider options for 'Changing Places' facilities across the county. Our 4 Leisure Centres can be listed as 'Other Facilities' on the 'Changing Places' website, to direct more profoundly disabled persons to suitable facilities.**
3. Work with partners on how to best utilise the £17,200 Welsh Government grant. **Recommended the £17,200 vired to Landlord Services to spend in 2023/24 year, in consultation with MonLife, eg. to upgrade a Leisure Centre facility to full 'Changing Places' status.**
4. Work with the private sector to seek to provide more publicly available toilets where most needed. **On-going, no unmet need currently identified.**
5. Display the national 'toilet/toiled' national logo (see 10.1) in all participating toilet facilities, including Leisure Centres, libraries, etc. **Undertake in 2023/24, though noting limitations on suitable areas to display the logo.**
6. Improve awareness and information available on publicly accessible toilets by updating information on the Monmouthshire CC website and L1e open access data held by Welsh Government, together with App development. **To be done in conjunction with Welsh Government proposals in 2023. Data Map Wales will be used to map out all public toilet provision across Wales.**
7. Regularly review cleaning and maintenance standards, together with T&CC's who typically manage the public toilets in our towns and villages. **MCC Landlord Services have a repair schedule,**

informed by Facilities Manager and any other MCC/public concerns.

8. Environmental Health Officers to inspect both public and privately provided toilets as part of their inspection regime. Provide a grading of public toilet blocks to determine progress over time. **Done, Table Two.**
9. Work closely with Gwent Police to find solutions to reduce anti-social behaviour associated with public toilets. **On-going, to revisit noting changes to Gwent Police personnel.**
10. Work with other agencies with an interest in suitable and hygienic provision, including Welsh Government, CADW and Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. **On-going.**
11. Provide proactive advice to all event organisers in the county on the suitability of their toilet provision. **On-going. All organised events in county receive information on suitable toilet provision, noting numbers attending, type of clientele, etc.**
12. Respond to any Welsh Government recommendations on public toilet provision, and seek out notable practice adopted in other counties. A 'rating scheme' would be welcomed. **Any WG guidance awaited. MCC have introduced their own rating scheme in the interim.**
13. Set up a small Working Group, of Members and Officers, to ensure recommendations are implemented. **For further consideration by Members, noting change in administration in May 2022.**

## Appendix A

Area	Address	Postcode
<b><u>1. MCC owned public toilets</u></b>		
1. Abergavenny	Bus station, Swan Meadow, Abergavenny,	NP7 5HL
2. Abergavenny	Castle Street, Abergavenny	NP7 5EE
3. Abergavenny	Whitehorse Lane, Abergavenny* <b>Closed since April 2020</b>	NP7 5AS
4. Abergavenny	Brewery Yard, Abergavenny	NP7 5SD
5. Abergavenny	Bailey Park, Abergavenny <b>Open weekends &amp; summer holidays</b>	NP7 5PW
6. Abergavenny	Linda Vista Gardens	NP7 5DL
7. Caldicot	Caldicot Country Park, Caldicot	NP26 4HU
8. Monmouth	Cattle Market, Monnow Street, Monmouth	NP25 3EG
9. Usk	Maryport, Maryport Street, Usk	NP15 1RW

10. Usk	Usk Island, Pontypool Rd, Usk	NP15 1SY
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## **2. Town & Community**

### **Council public toilets**

11. Caerwent	Main Road, Caerwent	NP26 5BA
12. Caldicot	Jubilee Way Car Park, Caldicot	NP26 4BG
13. Chepstow	Welsh Street, Chepstow	NP16 5JA
14. Chepstow	Castle Dell Car Park, (TIC), Chepstow	NP16 5EY
15. Chepstow	Riverside, Upper Church Street	NP16 5HU
16. Chepstow	Thomas Street, Chepstow	NP16 5DH
17. Gilwern	Crickhowell Road, Gilwern	NP7 0DE
18. Goytre	School Lane, Goytre	NP4 0BL
19. Grosmont	Rear of Town Hall, Grosmont	NP15 2AU
20. Monmouth	Agincourt Street, Monmouth	NP25 3DZ

### **3. Public Toilets in other MCC buildings**

21. Abergavenny	Leisure Centre, Old Hereford Road, Abergavenny	NP7 6EP
22. Abergavenny	Museum, Castle Street, Abergavenny Library, Baker Street, Abergavenny	NP7 5EE
23. Abergavenny		NP7 5DB
24. Caldicot	Leisure Centre, Green Lane, Caldicot	NP26 4BN
25. Caldicot	Caldicot Castle, (April 1 - Oct 31st only)	NP26 4HU
26. Caldicot	Community Hub, Caldicot	NP26 5DB
27. Chepstow	Leisure Centre, Welsh Street, Chepstow	NP16 5LR
28. Chepstow	Community Hub, Bank Street, Chepstow	
29. Chepstow	Museum, Bridge Street, Chepstow	NP16 5HZ NP16 5EZ
30. Gilwern	Library, Upper Common, Gilwern	NP7 0DS

31. Monmouth	Shire Hall, Agincourt Square, Monmouth	NP25 3DY
32. Monmouth	Leisure Centre, Old Dixton Road, Monmouth	NP25 3DP
33. Monmouth	Museum, Priory Street, Monmouth	NP25 3XA
34. Monmouth	Community Hub, The Rolls Hall, Monmouth	NP25 3BY
35. Tintern	Old Station, Tintern (April 1 - Oct 31st only)	NP16 7NX
36. Usk	Community Hub, 35 Maryport Street, Usk	NP15 1AE

**4. Other publicly accessible  
toilets**

37. Tintern	Tintern Abbey, Tintern – CADW owned, (leased to MCC)	NP16 6SE
38. Llanfoist	Friends of Llanfoist Chapel, New Cemetery, Llanfoist Improved 22/23	NP7 9LF
39. Monmouth	Bridges Centre, Drybridge Park, Monmouth	NP25 5AS
40. Mitchel Troy A40	Mitchel Troy, Monmouth Closed by WG	NP25 4HY

**Note –** Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRN's) submitted to WG 1/2/19, together with Welsh version. Above list detailed with opening hours and facilities available at each facility. Full details on opening hours for each site available here –

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/monmouthshire-local-toilet-survey>

Original Local Toilet Strategy published June 2019

Progress report 29.4.21

Local Toilet Strategy Review January 2023, scrutiny via Place Committee 12.1.23

**December 2022**