

Teignbridge District Council

Full Council

29th July 2025

Part I

The Provision of Public Conveniences

Purpose of Report

To seek approval to dispose of public conveniences as set out.

Recommendation(s)

The Council RESOLVES to:

- (1) Dispose of the public conveniences as detailed in Section 4.2.
- (2) Close those public conveniences listed in Section 4.2 which have not been disposed of by April 2027.
- (3) Further review those public conveniences as detailed in Section 4.3.

Financial Implications

See section 5.1 for potential financial savings. The impact on the Modern 25 target for savings from public conveniences needs to be factored into any decisions made and alternative savings to be found to meet the ongoing budget gap if not supported.

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Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications arising out of this report save that there is an obligation to obtain best value.

See Section 5.2

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Risk Assessment

See section 5.3

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Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

See section 5.4
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Executive Member

Cllr Peter Williams - Executive Member for Environmental Services.
Cllr David Palethorpe – Executive Member for Assets, Economic Development, Major Projects and Communications.

Appendices/Background Papers

- Appendix 1: Proposed Project timeline following committee approval.
- Appendix 2a: Charts showing responses to the multiple-choice questions from the public consultation approved by Full Council in October 2024.
- Appendix 2b: A summary, with supporting statistics, of anonymised responses to the free-text questions from the public consultation approved by Full Council in October 2024.
- Appendix 3: Facilities Review and Scoring Information
- Appendix 4: Members Briefing Presentation Slides
- Appendix 5 – Equalities Impact Assessment

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Public conveniences are a discretionary service provided by some local authorities. Teignbridge District Council currently provides 22 public conveniences across the district. Further details are available online here [Public toilets - Teignbridge District Council](#).

1.2 The Modern 25 programme, based on the Ignite report and benchmarking against authorities with a similar profile, identified that the Council's spend on public conveniences is greater than comparable authorities. It recommended a review of provision to ascertain if current levels are providing best value and a target ongoing annual saving from the service of £250,000. Further detail on the benchmarking is included in Appendix 4.

1.3 As part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) estimated cost savings from the review of public conveniences have been forecast.

1.4 The Council gave approval on 29th October 2024 [Agenda for Full Council on Tuesday, 29th October, 2024, 10.00 am - Teignbridge District Council](#) (item 71) to review all potential options for the provision of public conveniences in Teignbridge.

1.5 Numerous neighbouring authorities have undertaken similar exercises, and reduced provision or adjusted running models. Examples include Dartmoor National Park, East Devon, North Devon, South Hams and Torbay.

1.6 There are existing successful models of public conveniences within Teignbridge being provided by Town and Parish Councils. Examples include Abbotskerwell, Bishopsteignton, Bovey Tracey, Christow, Exminster, Ipplepen, Kingskerswell, Teignmouth and Ogwell.

2. Public Consultation

2.1 Following Full Council approval on 29th October 2024 a comprehensive open public consultation exercise was undertaken.

2.2 All Town & Parish Councils were contacted, and easy access QR code posters were displayed in all public conveniences, leisure centres and on our website and social media channels inviting feedback.

2.3 The consultation utilized a digital platform with alternative paper options offered for those wishing to respond in writing. The consultation ran from 12 November 2024 to 23 December 2024. A total of 5,577 responses were received.

2.4 A full set of responses to the closed option questions is attached to this report as Appendix 2a. A summary of the contents of the free text responses is also included as Appendix 2b.

2.5 The responses were generally in favour of the Council continuing to provide public conveniences. The most important facilities to residents and visitors aligned with usage levels.

2.6 Themes from the responses included

- 45% of people said they would be prepared to pay to use the facilities,
- 35% reported that they have had difficulty accessing alternative facilities,
- 83% reported that the conveniences were well maintained,
- 33% respondents confirmed they had a long-term limiting illness or condition.

3. Facility Review

3.1 A comprehensive assessment of existing public conveniences has been completed as part of the review into provision.

3.2 Each site has been scored as detailed in the table below against the following three criteria.

- Usage – based on consultation, footfall data and water consumption.
- Costs – factoring in ongoing revenue costs.
- Strategic importance – incorporating the following considerations.
 - The provision of changing places and disabled facilities
 - Facilities linked to other Council Owned assets, examples include Decoy Country Park and Dawlish Lawn.
 - Coverage – accounting for the number of facilities in any given location.
 - Liquidity – the anticipated ease of disposal, including exiting a Council lease, sale of freehold or leasing.
 - Ownership status – whether owned or leased and the details of any arrangements in place.
 - Alternative uses / value – whether the assets hold any prospect value for alternative uses.

Further details in relation to the scoring for each facility are included in Appendix 3: Facilities Review and Scoring Information.

3.3 In addition, the following facilities were considered independently due to their current circumstances.

- Newton Abbot, Market Walk – currently closed awaiting Market Walk redevelopment which will include a new public convenience provision at street level. It is anticipated that management of these public conveniences will be linked to a management contract / agreement. The current facility will be repurposed. Recommended the new facility remains closed until a suitable management contract is in place and the Market Hall has formally opened.
- Bakers Park – the convenience block here has been recently constructed and already has a payment system installed and linked to a Teignbridge park with a concession opportunity. Recommend no changes to this facility.
- Teignmouth Point – Teignmouth Town Council are providing alternative provision in the vicinity which would render this facility surplus. Recommend this facility is closed and alternative uses explored to repurpose or dispose following the completion of the Town Council site.
- Brunswick Street, Teignmouth - closed for over a decade. Teignmouth Town Council are providing alternative provision in the town and this location was considered surplus by them. Recommend this facility remains closed and suitability for alternative uses to repurpose it are explored.
- Newfoundland Way, Newton Abbot - already Town Council run on an occupational lease. Recommended this facility is closed or transferred.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Table 4.1 shows the scores following the public convenience site reviews.

Table 4.1 Site scores following review

Facility Location	Score /15
Dawlish Boat Cove	11
Dawlish Lawn	10
Dawlish Warren Beach Walk	10
Shaldon Ness Tunnel	10
Dawlish Warren Car Park Beach Road	10
Newton Abbot, Station Road	9
Newton Abbot Decoy Park	9
Ashburton Kingsbridge Lane	8
Starcross Strand	8
Widcombe in-the-Moor	8
Newton Abbot Cricketfield Road	8
Dawlish Barton Hill	6
Moretonhampstead Court Street	6
Kingsteignton The Fountain	6
Dawlish Sandy Lane	6
Lustleigh	6
Newbridge Widcombe in-the-Moor	5
Shaldon The Strand	5
Chudleigh Car Park	4
Buckfastleigh Victoria Park	3

4.2 It is proposed that public conveniences with a score of 8 or below, and those proposed in Section 3.3 are classified as 'In Scope' for disposal, or closed, if no alternative provider can be found by April 2027. Disposals will prioritise transfers to Town & Parish Councils, or other interested parties, with sites remaining as public conveniences, with authority delegated to the Head of Assets to agree terms. The 'In Scope' public conveniences are listed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 In Scope Public Conveniences

Facility Location	Score /15	Annual Cost 2024/25
Ashburton Kingsbridge Lane	8	£19,346
Starcross Strand	8	£18,519
Widcombe in-the-Moor	8	£18,200
Newton Abbot Cricketfield Road	8	£17,953

Dawlish Barton Hill	6	£20,017
Moretonhampstead Court Street	6	£17,045
Kingsteignton The Fountain	6	£11,714
Dawlish Sandy Lane	6	£11,330
Lustleigh	6	£11,278
Newbridge Widecombe in-the-Moor	5	£14,639
Shaldon The Strand	5	£22,150
Chudleigh Car Park	4	£23,761
Buckfastleigh Victoria Park	3	£15,081
Market Walk, Newton Abbot	Linked to redevelopment	£45,376
Brunswick Street, Teignmouth	Closed for 10+ years	£1,427
Teignmouth 'The Point'	Town Council Replacement pending	£0
Newfoundland Way, Newton Abbot	Town Council Transfer	£0

4.3 Out of Scope Public Conveniences

A further review on transfers and charging for use at the 'Out of Scope' public conveniences detailed in Table 4.3 will be undertaken. Details of this further review will be presented to the appropriate committee for approval in due course. Many authorities charge for the use of public conveniences to support their ongoing operational costs. Local examples include Cornwall, East Devon, South Hams and Torbay.

Table 4.3 Out of Scope Public Conveniences

Facility Location	Score /15	Annual Cost 2024/25
Dawlish Boat Cove	11	£19,428
Dawlish Lawn	10	£29,674
Dawlish Warren Beach Walk	10	£36,202
Shaldon Ness Tunnel	10	£23,386
Dawlish Warren Car Park Beach Road	10	£9,987
Newton Abbot, Station Road	9	£15,561
Newton Abbot Decoy Park	9	£15,615

5. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

5.1 Financial

5.1.1 The annual running costs for each public convenience in 2024-25 are detailed in Section 4 of this report. The proposals in this report will generate £267,836 per year from April 2027 and contribute to the medium-term financial plan as identified through the Modern 25 programme. Initial costs for transfer will be covered by revenue savings within the first 6 months.

5.1.2 The current public convenience cleansing contract expires on the Oct 01, 2026, with an option to extend to September 30, 2027. The contract allows for a reduction in value that would be within the proposed reductions. Notice would be required for any contract reduction by 30th June 2026. This aligns with the project timeline detailed in Appendix 1.

5.1.3 Failure to support the recommendations will result in an annual budget pressure of £267,836, plus any increases associated with increased utilities costs, unbudgeted repairs and maintenance costs, a new cleansing contract from 2027 and inflation.

5.1.4 The costs for each facility are included in Appendix 3.

5.2 Legal

The provision of public conveniences is a discretionary power.

5.3 Risks

The risks associated with the proposals are;

- Financial risks for the Council if not supported – see Section 5.1 of this report. There are related risks associated with the transfer process dependent on negotiations with Town and Parish Councils and other interested parties and financial factors such as holding costs of closed sites whilst the assets are either sold, leased or demolished.
- Impacts on residents and visitors that depend on the facilities. Further detail in relation to this risk is included in the Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix 5.
- Impact on tourism and businesses – There are both opportunities and threats linked to the proposals. A reduction in public convenience provision could deter visitors. Alternatively, it could provide opportunities

for local businesses to offer the use of their facilities and increase business opportunities. There are also business opportunities to re-design facilities to incorporate both conveniences and retail concessions in a more sustainable business model.

- Impact on Council staff and other mobile workers dependent on facilities, such as bus and taxi's drivers. Further detail in relation to this risk is included in the Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix 5.
- Impact on the local environment– further detail is included in Section 5.4
- Risks relating to Local Government Reorganisation. Whilst no specific details are available, there is potential for closures of public conveniences following the establishment of a new unitary authority.

The primary mitigation against the risks identified will be to prioritise the transfer of the In-Scope public conveniences to Town and Parish Councils or third parties for continued provision. Where this is not possible a balance between the ongoing costs of provision against the availability of public conveniences is required. The availability of alternative facilities within specific locations has been factored into the review and associated scoring, used to determine which public conveniences have been included.

5.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact

The environmental impacts are difficult to quantify with certainty due to the range of potential outcomes. Were all facilities to be transferred to alternative operators as conveniences any changes would be negligible.

The in-scope public conveniences set out in Section 4.2 consumed approximately 900 cubic metres of water each in 2024/25 giving rise to 325 kgCO₂ per site for water supply and wastewater treatment. Where closures or changes of use act to reduce consumption, this will contribute to improved water security whilst providing a marginal reduction in the council's carbon footprint.

It is difficult to attribute electricity consumption data to the in-scope public toilets set out in Section 4.2 given that some electrical supplies serve multiple uses such as external car park lighting. Increases in energy consumption resulting from

change of use to more energy intensive practices such as food outlets may act to increase carbon emissions, though this will have a limited effect given the low footprint area of each site.

The increased risk of fouling in public spaces could result in hygiene issues if facilities are closed. Proactive monitoring and management of any issues arising will need to be carried out as required.

Where existing convenience infrastructure is reliant on private foul water disposal, changes to provision may reduce the risk of failure of existing infrastructure in the future and any subsequent risk to water quality.

It is unclear whether changes in public convenience provision would change transport behaviour or result in net changes in related carbon emissions. Those who depend on public convenience provision may change their journey and destination behaviours which could have positive or negative carbon impacts.

5.5 Project Delivery

The outline project plan and timescales are shown in Appendix 1. A multidisciplinary team will be established to ensure the resources required for the successful delivery of the review are in place.

Initial work will focus on the collation and provision of data to inform Town & Parish Councils during the consultation phase, wider community communications and preliminary work within the legal and assets teams.

6 Alternative Options

6.1 Do Nothing

Maintaining the current level of provision would create a cost pressure of £267,836. Savings projections attributed to this service, linked to the Modern 25 programme have been used to inform the medium-term financial plan. This cost pressure is likely to increase annually with the requirement for a new cleansing contract in 2027 and increased utilities costs and inflationary pressures.

6.2 Change the score threshold for 'In Scope' facilities

This option could see an increased or reduced number of disposals, with the extreme of stopping the Council provision at all sites. The savings delivered would increase or decrease accordingly in line with the figures shown in Section 4. For example, if a score threshold of 6 was agreed it would generate £193,818 of savings annually.

There is a recognition that public conveniences do play an important role in the delivery of the Council's wider strategic aims, particularly around our parks, resorts and tourist areas.

7 Conclusion

The decision to reduce any valued service provided by the Council is a difficult one. The impacts of the proposed future public convenience provision in the district must be balanced with the Council's requirement to remain financially viable.

The proposed approach is based on a detailed evaluation of the current facilities. The methodology used to identify those within scope for disposal, factors in the need to make significant savings in relation to this non-statutory service area.

Every effort will be made to support the transfer of facilities to Town and Parish Councils, or alternative providers, to limit the impacts on our communities. There does, however, need to be a clear process to realise the identified savings in a timely manner.

The opportunity for Town & Parish Councils to take responsibility for public conveniences provides a degree of certainty for continued provision for local communities, against the uncertain backdrop of Local Government Reorganisation.