



ACCESS TO TOILETS

Headline report



REVIEW PURPOSE

The review is driven by members concerns that limited toilet provision is impacting on mobility for disadvantaged groups, particularly older people, disabled people, pregnant women and parents and carers of young children.

CONTEXT - LONDON AND NATIONAL LOO CAMPAIGNS

- i. The review took place during a resurgence of campaigns over the last few year for more loos, driven largely by older people and older people's campaign groups, led in part by Age UK London.
- ii. The GLA health select committee wrote a report: The Toilet Paper in November 2021. This made several recommendations to the Mayor of London, including that Local Authorities develop Toilet Strategies and also included several actions for TfL to improve toilet information, accessibility and provision.
- iii. In May 2023 London Councils held an event focusing on Toilet Strategies, Community Toilet Schemes and more.
- iv. Age UK London have produced several resources on producing Toilet Strategies, Community Toilet schemes and using planning and public information.
- v. Age UK London have supported local Southwark residents to campaign.

CONTEXT - CHANGING PLACES

- i. There is growing awareness of the access needs of people with higher access needs – people who are most disabled.
- ii. The government has provided funding for more Changing Places loos and Southwark has made good use of this.
- iii. Government guidance / regulations are expected on this (details to be sourced)



OUTCOMES

The primary outcome the review aims to achieve is that the council develops a Southwark Toilet Strategy with local stakeholders.

BACKGROUND –SOME HISTORY

The council has reviewed its approach to toilets twice formally in the last twenty years :

- i. In 2005 Cabinet agreed a mini review and decided to open up more toilets in its estate, work with stakeholders including local supermarkets to increase provision, improve signage and close toilets not DDA compliant
- ii. In 2018 the Council Plan refresh undertook to create a network of accessible toilets and baby changing facilities

HOW THE COUNCIL DELIVERS TOILETS

The council delivers toilets through:

- i. Public Conveniences it maintains on the street and in parks.
- ii. Opening up toilets in buildings owned by the councils to the public, for example the office at Tooley Street and libraries.
- iii. Working with partners to increase publicly available provision, for example in Leisure Centre, Network Rail owned stations and by encouraging more provision through regeneration and planning.
- iv. Supporting Community Toilets whereby the council works with business to open up toilets in café, pubs, supermarkets etc to local people (although this is not currently active).
- v. Provision of information on the council website and through AssessAble.

TOILETS ARE AN EQUALITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

- i. Lack of toilets disproportionately impacts on old and disabled people, who will often not leave the home unless they can be sure of adequate provision.
- ii. Parents with young children also particularly need toilets.
- iii. Women need more toilets than men.
- iv. Race is a barrier to accessing public provision in café and pubs.
- v. Men with prostate cancer need bins.

TOILETS ARE AN EQUALITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE - RECOMMENDATION

Recognise that a lack of toilets disproportionately impacts on people with a Protected Characteristic, including old and disabled people in particular. A Toilet Strategy ought to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Poor provision is also a Public Health issue and negatively impacts on the health and wellbeing of residents.

TOILETS ARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUE

- i. Poor provision is an environmental health issue and negatively impact on the health and wellbeing of the community.
- ii. Homeless people are defecating and urinating in the streets and parks because there are no public toilets.
- iii. Parents are holding children over drains in the street because of poor provision.

ENVIROMENTAL HEALTH - RECOMMENDATION

- i. The lack of adequate, decent toilet provision is leading to unsanitary conditions in public spaces, particularly parks and the street. Poor provision is an environmental health issue. The council ought to work with partners to ensure, as far as possible, that there is adequate provision to meet the needs of the whole population of Southwark, including homeless people.

TOILET COLD SPOTS

- i. Provision is particularly poor in Peckham and Camberwell
- ii. Peckham Rye Station is due to have a toilet – however it unclear if this will only be a Changing Places Toilet and if other toilets will be provided in addition and if they will be located behind a barrier.
- iii. Concerns about anti-social behaviour are thought to be a concern here. These can and mitigated through engagement and good planning.
- iv. The council is a partner in the regeneration of the station led by Network Rail and such can use its influence to ensure provision meets the public's needs.
- v. Camberwell Green toilet provision is poor . The automatic toilet is frequently out of action , or has been removed (**clarification**) and the library toilet is not cleaned frequently enough. There is potentially an opportunity in nearby supermarkets and fast food places.

TOILET — GOOD PRACTICE

The toilets at Sainsbury's East Dulwich were commended.

Southwark Park (Pavilion Café by the lake) has good toilets.

Dulwich Park will have the gold standard of a fully accessible Changing Place, that also meets heritage standards. This will cost £70k unit per unit , including the associated ground work cost. This will open up the park to disabled residents.

The toilet in East Street market is good and formally had an attendant (**clarification on exact location and if it still has an attendant**)

TOILET COLD SPOTS - RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve provision in Peckham Rye Station by prioritising this in the Toilet Strategy and Regeneration plans. Together the council and Network Rail ought to provide more transparency on the plan, and options for toilets at Peckham Rye Station, and consult with local residents and stakeholders to bring clarity by 2025.

Improve Camberwell Green toilet provision by a) ensuring the library toilet is cleaned frequently enough b) engage nearby supermarkets and fast food places through a Community Toilet Scheme.

COMMUNITY TOILETS

- I. Southwark had, until recently, a Community Toilet scheme whereby it would work with businesses to promote use of toilets , however this has fallen into disuse over the last few years and is no longer actively supported.
- II. The Local Economy team are willing to liaise with businesses through their fora to promote such a scheme.
- III. There are a variety of good Community Toilet schemes, including ones in Richmond and Lewisham.
- IV. Community Toilet schemes enable the opening up or more toilets, particularly during business hours, in a resource effective way. They do require some consistent investment from the council and cannot be the only solution.

COMMUNITY TOILETS - RECOMMENDATION

1. Invest in a refreshed Community Toilet scheme using London boroughs, such as , Richmond and Lewisham as examples .

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) - 1

The Commission heard that concerns about anti social behaviour are sometimes given as reasons not to open toilets, or restrict provision . An example of this is Peckham Rye station where members and residents reported that concerns about ASB have been cited as a potential obstacle to delivery or may result in a toilet behind the barrier.

Officers said that that anti- social behaviour has been an issue in Southwark and that Belair Park toilet suffered an arson attack and Portland Street toilets near East Street Market have been destroyed twice, and immediately repaired.

Conversely members reported that once **Portland Street toilet (clarify)** used to be well looked after , when there was a attendant.

The former GLA building , opposite Tooley Street, is currently under new ownership and the public have been consulted about future uses. A top public concern is that the toilets, which include a Changing Place, will remain open. These have been subject to anti social behaviour the there have been changes made to reduce ASB by amending the delivery and design. It is hoped that the consultation will modle keeping this provision open and reducing ASB through engagement.

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) -2

AG UK London supplied some conducted some desk top research on the Commission behalf on this issue and this made the following points:

- I. Being clear that the value of clean , safe toilets, including the economic benefits to the entire community (such as business on the high street) and positive impact on resident's health and wellbeing is of more importance than the cost to maintain public toilets.
- II. Find out what the specific type of ASB is that people are concerned about as vandalism , drug use, sex work or using a toilet for shelter has different causes and approaches to mitigate .
- III. Take a partnership approach to develop measures and address concerns proactively. This can be by using various strategies such as regular monitoring, security measures, and cleanliness protocols, to ensure that the facilities are well-maintained and safe for all users.
- IV. Collaborate with local law and council enforcement and community organisations to deter any anti-social behaviour in the vicinity and to develop a realist plan based on capacity.
- V. Where possible include attendants as their presence deters many forms of ASB.

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB) - RECOMMENDATION

Toilet have a high value to the community and as such the cost of mitigating ASB is not a good reason to deny provision. ASB can be addressed through engagement with partners to improve design and make the most of local capacity to prevent and deter ASB . This ought to include understanding the types of passible ASB and working with the police, TfL, council enforcement and community organisations to mitigate and prevent. Consideration ought to be given keeping toilets clean and well maintained, and the use of attendants where possible.

OPENING UP SOUTHWARK ESTATE TOILETS

- I. Since 2005 Southwark has opened up toilets in the council's control to increase public access.
- II. There is now an accommodation review looking at over 200 toilets in building in the council's control as well as local partners. It is anticipated that around 100 can be opened up to the public.

SOUTHWARK ESTATE TOILETS - RECOMMENDATION

1. The Commission supports the accommodation review and recommends this is incorporated into a Toilet Strategy to maximise engagement and information.

INFORMATION AND SIGN POSTING

- i. Southwark maps out toilet provision on the council website but the map is not always accurate.
- ii. Southwark uses AccessAble, which is a well used resource.
- iii. A paper copy map would be useful, as produced by Lewisham.

INFORMATION AND SIGN POSTING - RECOMMENDATION

The Commission supports the use of AccessAble, which is a well used resource .

It recommends that the website is kept updated in the short term and over the longer term more work is done as part of a Toilet Strategy to provide accurate information to residents and visitors .

Officers indicated that that they consider a map would form part of a revised Toilet Strategy / Community Toilet scheme and this would consist of a hard copy as well as digital offer. The Local Economy Team could play a role in ensuring business engagement and anticipated that libraries would stock copies.

Lewisham have an excellent printed map that would be useful to replicate in Southwark.

TOILET STRATEGY

Strategies are important as lots of different parts of the council have responsibility for different aspects of toilet provision. A plan will bring these together:

Age UK say a good toilet strategy should include:

- i. Meaningful ongoing community engagement with residents. This should be a diverse group, including older residents, representative of the wider community. It is important that meaningful consultation is inclusive and that people without the internet are included.
- ii. A needs assessment based on mapping existing toilets available for public use, identifying gaps by working with communities and other partners to identify solutions.
- iii. An action plan to review and improve public information about provision. Consideration should be given to the quality of signage, maps, website information, and the use of newsletters, media, posters and leaflets to raise awareness about toilet locations.
- iv. Aim to mainstream public toilet provision into strategic policy such as urban planning policy.

TOILET STRATEGY - RECOMMENDATION

Develop a Toilet Strategy through engagement with a range of local people, mapping needs and gaps, co-creating solutions and provision of an action plan that interfaces with planning and regeneration.

LEADERSHIP

Developing and delivering a Toilet Strategy will take leadership from both elected members and officers to pull together the work of different council departments, build partnerships with community stakeholders and engage with the public.

The Commission consider the either the cabinet member for Public Health or a Cabinet member with the Environmental Health and Streets for People brief in their portfolio is best placed to provide strategic leadership . Likewise a senior officer from either the Public Health team or Environment Department would be well placed to provide officer leadership.

LEADERSHIP — RECOMMENDATION

The Commission recommend that the Toilet Strategy is led by:

- I. The cabinet member for Public Health or a cabinet member with the Environmental Health and / or Streets of People brief in their portfolio
- II. A senior officer

NEXT STEPS

- I. Request information on upcoming Changing Places regulations/ guidance. Officers referred to new guidance expected on Changing Places toilet provision with duties to provide accessible provision where people convene.
- II. Request on update on provision in parks (2 page briefing)
- III. Request clarification on the current status of :
 - a) The automatic loo on Camberwell Green
 - b) Toilets in the vicinity of East Street market toilets location and status (eg Portland Street) , and if they previously or currently have an attendant
- I. Request an update on the accommodation review