



Decision Maker:	Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services
Date:	9 th August 2017
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Church Street public conveniences - Response to petition (Mr Murad Qureshi)
Wards Affected:	Church Street
Key Decision:	No
Financial Summary:	No financial implication
Report of:	Executive Director for Growth Planning and Housing and Executive Director for City Management and Communities

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Church Street public conveniences had attracted a variety of anti-social behaviour to the local area that had become an increasing significant problem. Street dwellers were using the facilities as a “safe haven” for collecting water; bathing; laundry; sleeping; and there was also further abuse from drug dealers and users as a place of business. Consequently, following wide consultation with Ward Councillor’s and key stakeholders the difficult decision was taken to partially close the facilities for a period of time to discourage this anti-social behaviour.
- 1.2 During this period the disabled toilet has remained fully operational with access controlled through a key coded lock installed by WCC and the access code distributed to market traders and selected locals, including the petitioner.
- 1.3 The reduction in anti-social behaviour in the immediate area has been marked and the current regime extended. It is proposed that this course of action should be continued for the foreseeable future. Church Street is a major regeneration project for the Council and the current toilet block is likely to be converted to a new use with toilet facilities being re-provided locally.

- 1.4 The petition attracted a total of 46 signatures before it closed on 30th March 2017.
- 1.5 This report seeks to respond to the issues raised in this petition and advises upon the action taken by the Council and the rationale.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services notes the receipt of the petition.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services approved the attached draft response to the petition.
- 2.3 That the lead petitioners be advised of the actions to be taken in respect of this matter and be kept up-to-date of developments.

3.0 Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 To respond to the locally sensitive issue raised in the petition in accordance with the Council's petition scheme.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Church Street has long been a problem area for the Street Inspectors with an escalation in anti-social behaviour and it was identified that the public toilets located on Church Street was the catalyst for much of the problem.
- 4.2 The population of street dwellers in the local area had dramatically increased due in the main to an influx from Eastern Europe who had settled in the area. The public toilets quickly became a place to bathe; collect water; wash clothing; a changing facility; and a place to sleep. The toilet facilities were often abused and vandalised leading to complaints from members of the public feeling threatened and also the condition of the facilities that they encountered.
- 4.3 In addition to the street dwellers, the facilities were also being used by drug dealers and drug users as a safe place to conduct their business.
- 4.4 The Council have worked with the local traders to provide key access to the toilets during the period of closure.
- 4.5 Petition details:-

*"We the undersigned petition Westminster City Council to:
'Re-open the public toilets along Church Street for the market'*

The petition's details read:

“seek the immediate re-opening of the Council public convenience at the junction of Church Street and Salisbury Street, outside the Traders Inn NW8 8QE.”

Created by: Mr Murad Qureshi

5.0 Response to petition

- 5.1 The Council is committed to the regeneration of Church Street and the provision of a range of quality services to its residents.

The regeneration of Church Street is being master-planned and the design is expected to include: the current toilet building moving into another sustainable use with the provision of a new form of public conveniences factored in to serve the local community.

While the regeneration is being progressed it is the view of the Council to extend the existing partial closure of the Church Street toilets indefinitely. In doing so we are supporting both the local community by moving on the anti-social behaviour while supporting our front-line officers on the ground going about their work, often under difficult circumstances. We will retain the current controlled access arrangements in place, continuing to provide an on-going facility to the disabled toilet for the market traders.

Representations have previously been made to the Council for the toilets to be manned and opened to the public all day on Saturday and Sunday. The Council has discussed this with the operator who has expressed health and safety concerns for staff who have been threatened in the past when trying to carry out their duties.

6.0 Financial Implications

This report has no financial implications.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There is no legal obligation for the Council to provide public toilets and many local authorities no longer provide public conveniences.

8.0 Outstanding issues

- 8.1 None

**If you have any queries about this Report please contact:
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at 020 7641 5465 or gslocombe@westminster.gov.uk
or Alan Rhind, Head of Operational Property
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Background papers:

1. **Draft Letter: for Councillor Mitchell.**

For completion by the **Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services**

Declaration of Interest

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: _____ Date: _____

NAME: Councillor Tim Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services

State nature of interest if any

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(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendations in the report entitled **Church Street Public Conveniences – Response to Petition** and reject any alternative options which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed

Councillor Tim Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Corporate Services

Date

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment:

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If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Director of Law, the City Treasurer, and, if there are resources implications, the Director of People Services (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.

Appendix A

Other Implications

1. **Resources Implications** – no implication
2. **Business Plan Implications** – no implication
3. **Risk Management Implications** – no implication
4. **Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment including Health and Safety Implications** – no implication
5. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – no implication
6. **Impact on the Environment** – no implication
7. **Equalities Implications** – no implication
8. **Staffing Implications** – no implication
9. **Human Rights Implications** – no implication
10. **Energy Measure Implications** – no implication
11. **Communications Implications** – no implication

Note to report authors: If there are particularly significant implications in any of the above categories these should be moved to the main body of the report.