

APPENDIX A

BRIEFING REPORT

Hoe Promenade Public Conveniences Update



Background

Over a number of years Plymouth's network of public toilets have been in decline. Whilst the service have strived to maintain a good level of provision and cleanliness, years of under investment and reduced revenue budgets have resulted in a network that looks tired and is increasingly subject to structural issues. An options paper was considered at the Environmental Services Executive group with agreement that the waterfront toilets are a high priority and should be considered first under any proposed refurbishment schedule. Improvements to these public toilets help to meet the policy laid out in Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan 2014-1034; PLY20 - Managing and Enhancing Plymouth's Waterfront, specifically by improving the City's assets along the waterfront and delivering high quality and integrated public realm improvements. This project will build on the success of previous work and help to improve the visitor's experience of Plymouth's waterfront public spaces.

In December 2017, it was decided that £709,755 would be allocated within the Capital Programme, funded by Corporate Borrowing from the Maintenance of other City Assets scheme within the Priority List, to deliver a phased programme of improvements to public toilets along the Hoe Foreshore. This was to include the toilets at West Hoe Park, the Promenade and Tinside. It was acknowledged that the Hoe Foreshore toilets at Tinside was directly linked to the refurbishment of the Terrace Café.

There was a delay in reaching agreement over the style and design of the toilets at West Hoe Park which resulted in planning consent being granted in April 2019 for a new building at West Hoe Park.

During preparations for tendering the works, but separately to this, the tenant at the Terrace Café decided to proceed with their approved development to be ready for 2020, with the result being that the Tinside refurbishment was removed from the tender process.

Tenders were sent out in June 2019 for the two remaining sites (West Hoe and Hoe Promenade) as separate lots. A total of ten companies were invited to tender for the works resulting in two compliant returns.

Following analysis of the bids in compliance with the agreed evaluation criteria one contractor was selected as the successful tenderer, however, due to the tenders received exceeding the expected value set aside for the work, in August 2019 it was decided to proceed with West Hoe toilets alone because they were regarded as the priority.

Additional funds were granted in May 2020 for work to commence on the Hoe Promenade toilets so works began onsite in September.

Project Update

- Due to planning requirements, the intention for the Hoe Promenade toilets was to retain the existing external walls and cut doorways out of the recessed archways, however, when the contractor began this element of the work, it became apparent that the structural stability of the wall was not sufficient to enable the wall to remain in place which could not have been foreseen in advance of the works starting.
- The structural engineer verified these findings and also advised that the stability of the rear wall was such that additional support would be required.
- During considerations of the best way forward, it was highlighted that provision of welfare facilities for Plymouth City Council staff and volunteers based in the depot at the rear of the building were required. Options to incorporate these facilities within the rear of the building, which according to the original plan would have remained unused, wasted space, have therefore been considered.

Impact of Additions on Costs

- The additional works required to the toilets offers an opportunity to provide much needed facilities for the depot staff and volunteers. If these facilities are not incorporated within the build, a third of the building would only be suitable for storage, which would be inconvenient for the depot staff as the only access would be through the service door from the front, public side of the building.
- As this is an existing building, it would be more cost effective to utilise it to full potential rather than using temporary welfare provision for the depot staff and volunteers which have a shorter lifespan and higher maintenance costs. The use of temporary units reduces the depot's functional space for vehicles, plant equipment and materials.
- Furthermore by ensuring that there are basic welfare provisions in the depot, this supports the Council's ambitions to increase people's connection and community involvement with natural infrastructure (as per the ERDF funded project Green Minds and UK funded Future Parks Accelerator).
- There is a significant recognised value from engaging a broader section of the community to be involved in voluntary work to act as stewards for green space sites around the city. PCC staff at the Hoe already work with volunteers, as seen with the Mayflower Improvements project, to work towards achieving the vision set out in the Hoe Masterplan. Additional facilities, in addition to the upskilling of the workforce underway through the Future Parks project, would allow a significant step up in numbers of people able to volunteer but also value those already engaged with this work.
- The existing provision of facilities for the depot staff is not compliant with HSE requirements which state that "suitable and sanitary conveniences and washing facilities should be provided... adequate suitable and secure space should be provided to store workers' own clothing and special clothing... changing facilities should also be provided for workers who change into special work clothing." This is particularly relevant for the depot staff who are required to undertake works outdoors and in all weather conditions.
- This development could not be agreed for a future date as the rear wall would need to be demolished and re-constructed in order to be of sufficient stability to cut out the doorways required for access from the depot. This would require a large construction job at a later date and the elements of the current works would have to be re-done.