

MOTION ON NOTICE



Date of Council Meeting: 29 January 2024

Title of Motion:

In lieu of loos

This Council believes that...

1. The availability of public toilets is an equality issue, a public health issue and a human right;
2. Access to clean, accessible toilets with appropriate facilities, which meet the needs of people of all ages, genders and abilities is a basic requirement of health, hygiene and personal safety;
3. Adequate public toilet provision is a feminist issue with research showing women feel the lack of provision more acutely [1];
4. Access to a toilet is about social inclusion, being part of a community and being able to move around the city barrier free, taking advantage of our cities' green and blue spaces;
5. Having clean, well-situated and accessible public toilets would reflect positively on Plymouth with residents and visitors; and
6. Taking a strategic look at public toilet provision from a multi-service perspective would have a positive impact on many people's experiences of enjoying and taking advantage of Plymouth's public spaces. This could be particularly true for pregnant people, people with children, young people, disabled people, the elderly, the chronically ill and people with invisible and underlying health conditions, all of which may require more frequent use of a toilet.

This Council notes that...

1. Relieving oneself in public is a criminal offence in England (Public Order Act 1986 and Environmental Protection Act 1990) and as such, residents should be provided with abundant opportunities for avoiding this situation;
2. Plymouth is among the top 10 cities of women struggling to afford sanitary products. Many people in our city are hit by period poverty, with 26 per cent unable to pay for tampons, pads and menstrual cups [2];
3. Provision of public toilets is not evenly spread across the city; and
4. Current information regarding public toilets on the Council's website is inadequate and missing key information such as cost and payment methods accepted.

Additionally, this Council notes that budgets, and space, to build new public toilets is limited. As a consequence, this Council believes that where provision is currently lacking, a Community Toilet scheme (i.e. working with local businesses) could be introduced to cover demand.

A well thought out Community Toilet scheme would offer a mutually beneficial arrangement for the Council, public and local businesses. With participating businesses potentially benefiting from:

- a. Free publicity on Plymouth City Council's website and printed maps;
- b. Free window signs encouraging potential customers to enter the premises;
- c. Potential increase in trade from customers making purchases as a result of entering the premises to use the facilities;
- d. Potential inclusion in a public toilet awareness programme; and
- e. A financial contribution from the Council in exchange for providing clean, safe facilities.

Therefore, Council resolves to request that the relevant Cabinet Member

- **to develop a public toilet strategy within the next 12 months with the input of the relevant Scrutiny Committee, that includes but is not limited to:-**
 - An in-depth review of our existing public toilets
 - An assessment of public toilet opening hours, signage and potential use of technology at public toilet sites to increase opening hours
 - A feasibility assessment of a Community Toilet Scheme
 - A costed analysis of introducing free hygiene and menstrual products in Plymouth City Council buildings and public toilets
 - A plan for a public toilet awareness programme
 - Exploring options for developing a Comfort Scheme small grants fund, similar to Highland Council [3]
 - Engaging with vulnerable users, like women, children, disabled and elderly people on their experience of using public toilets
 - Outlining how Plymouth City Council are improving accessibility for people with mobility issues and people who care for young children who need changing facilities or larger cubicles
 - Investigating how the Joint Local Plan can play a part in increasing public toilet provision
 - Investigating that all public toilets in Plymouth be made free of charge

References

[1] No Place to Go - How Public Toilets Fail our Private Needs by Lezlie Lowe

[2] [Period poverty in Plymouth sees 26 per cent of women unable to afford sanitary products - Plymouth Live \(plymouthherald.co.uk\)](#)

[3] [Highland Comfort Scheme | Highland Council public toilets | The Highland Council](#)

Proposer: Cllr Lauren McLay

Seconder: Cllr Ian Poyser