

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 FEBRUARY 2026
Subject	INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION
Wards affected	Bampton & Clanfield, Burford, Carterton, Charlbury & Finstock, Chipping Norton, Eynsham & Cassington, Witney & Woodstock & Bladon
Accountable member	Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment Email: lidia.arciszewska@westoxon.gov.uk Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance Email: alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Claire Locke. Executive Director – Corporate Services (Publica) Email: claire.locke@publicagroup.uk
Report author	Claire Locke. Executive Director – Corporate Services (Publica) Email: claire.locke@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	To seek funding for the renovation, redesign and repair of the Public Conveniences to be retained within the district to ensure a high-quality service for the customer.
Annexes	Annex A – Breakdown of costs for Option 1 – Repairs only Annex B – Breakdown of costs for Option 2 – Renovation & Redesign Annex C - SIAT
Recommendation(s)	<p>That the Executive resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Allocate funding of £532,140 within the capital programme for 2026/27 to enable the delivery of Option 2 - redesign, renovation and repair of public conveniences at Langdale Gate in Witney, Guildenford and High Street in Burford, Bampton Town Hall, New Street in Chipping Norton, Hensington Road in Woodstock and Kilkenny Country Park, and to introduce cashless payment at these sites. 2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director – Corporate Services in consultation with the Director of Finance and the

	Executive Members for Finance and for Environment, to agree the detailed design and improvements and to award the contract.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Public Conveniences working Group</p> <p>Consultation with relevant Town and Parish Councils will follow this decision, regarding proposed improvements to retained facilities</p>

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. In September 2025 Executive agreed to work with Town and Parish Councils to explore transferring public conveniences to them. Where transfer could not be achieved, it was agreed that the facilities would be closed. A report would then be brought back to Executive recommending investment in the facilities that would be retained.
- 1.2. The aim of this review has been to retain high quality facilities in locations where they are needed most. By closing lesser used facilities and those in locations where there is nearby alternative provision, the level of subsidy and therefore future vulnerability of this discretionary service can be reduced.
- 1.3. All the Town and Parish Councils with public conveniences in their Wards were emailed in September and provided with cost, income and usage data. Condition survey reports setting out anticipated repair and maintenance costs were also provided. The Executive Director – Corporate Services also offered to meet with each Council to discuss the options for transfer. Following this consultation it was confirmed that none of the Town or Parish Councils wish to take on the facilities due principally to the cost of subsidy required.
- 1.4. Lease for facilities at the Town Hall in Chipping Norton and Spendlove, Charlbury will now be terminated and the facilities closed. Facilities owned by the District Council at The Leys, Witney, Browns Lane, Woodstock, Back Lane, Eynsham, Black Bourton Road in Carterton which are in the Council's ownership, will also be closed.
- 1.5. The closure of these facilities will reduce the overall ongoing revenue subsidy and enable investment to be prioritised into higher usage facilities ensuring they are of a good quality, modern and user friendly. This report sets out options for investment in these facilities to leave a legacy for communities as Local Government Reorganisation approaches.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 West Oxfordshire District Council currently operates thirteen public toilets across the district, in 8 towns and villages. All sites charge 20p per use and this has not increased since charges were introduced in 2014. The planned closures will see this number reduce to seven public conveniences located at:
 - Langdale Gate, Witney
 - Guildenford Car Park, Burford
 - High Street, Burford
 - Hensington Road, Woodstock
 - Bampton Town Hall
 - New Street, Chipping Norton
 - Kilkenny Country Park (built 2019)
- 2.2 Facilities which will now close, will have signage displayed advising that closure will take place on 31st March 2026. Two of the facilities are leased, so the leases will be terminated. The facilities owned by the Council will be the subject of option appraisals to consider whether the buildings are retained, refurbished and let, or sold.

2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny working group set up to support the review of Public Conveniences will continue to meet to steer the investment programme in the retained facilities. The design and specific considerations such as accessibility will be shaped by the working group.

3. OPTIONS FOR INVESTMENT

3.1 There are several options for investing in the retained facilities. Condition surveys in 2025 identified repairs that would be required over the next 10 years. These indicative costs have been used to provide Option 1 – Repairs only. An alternative option would be the complete refurbishment of some of the facilities to provide more accessible and modern facilities, this is provided as Option 2. Option 2 includes the introduction of card readers at all sites to provide a cashless payment option for customers. It would be possible to deliver Option 1 with card readers but that has not been provided as a separate option in this report, but could be provided if the recommended Option 2 is not supported.

Option 1 – Repair of existing facilities

3.2 Annex A includes a breakdown of costs for each set of facilities and is based on anticipated repair costs over the next 3 years but with all repairs carried out in 2026 to bring facilities up to standard as quickly as possible and minimising the disruption to the customer. Whilst this would provide fit for purpose facilities it would not create any noticeable improvements for the customer. This is therefore the minimum standard that should be considered.

Option 2 – Redesign and refurbishment

3.3 The Councils public conveniences vary in design and standard of fixtures and fittings. Some are the traditional style, with entrance through an external door into a gender specific shared use space with wash hand basins and then access to individual cubicle doors. More modern facilities now have direct access to individual cubicles, served with their own wash hand basins and are generally gender neutral.

3.4 This direct access design of facilities is less likely to attract anti-social behaviour, as there is no shared space and vandals cannot damage toilet doors unseen. Newer facilities can be designed to design out vandalism, so that wall and floor covering and fixtures and fittings are very difficult to remove or damage. They are also more capable of being easily and thoroughly cleaned. Direct access is also easier for some customers with special needs, mental or physical challenges such as Dementia, as they only have to enter one door and it is easy for them to safely exit without any confusion. Cubicles are also larger so much easier for those with mobility problems, using a push chair or helping young children.

3.5 Annex B provides recommendations based on the current design and standard of fixtures and fittings. It is recommended that facilities at New Street, Chipping Norton and Hensington Road Woodstock would benefit from redesign to provide gender neutral direct access facilities which are refitted to provided new modern facilities. Facilities at Guildenford car park, Burford and Langdale gate are already direct access but would benefit from a complete refit. The remaining facilities at High Street, Burford, Market Square, Bampton and Kilkenny Country Park are considered to be of a suitable standard so would

just be subject to the repairs identified in Option 1. As Kilkenny Country Park facilities were only built by David Wilson Homes and transferred to WODC in October 2019 they are already more modern direct access facilities, providing four cubicles, so they only require minimal repairs.

3.6 A detailed specification will need to be prepared and costs obtained for a total refurbishment of the facilities.

Cashless payment

3.7 All of the public conveniences are currently charged at £0.20 per use, payable by cash payment which releases door openers. The installation of card payment for public conveniences is now common practice. With far fewer people carrying cash now, it is considered a more convenient way to make payment and generally increases usage. Disabled persons with a RADAR key can still access the accessible units at each set of facilities for free.

3.8 In order to install card readers there generally needs to be a new modern and robust cubicle door fitted. Cost per cubicle including a replacement door is estimated at £4000. Under Option 2, the doors at four sets of facilities would be replaced anyway so the cost for card readers would only be around £1,000 per unit. Where new doors are installed anyway it is recommended all units are fitted with card readers. Where there is no refit planned, card readers would only be installed on 2 units to reduce the capital costs but introduce the choice for customers to use cash or card payment. Cash collection services will still need to be retained, there would be no change to this contract cost of £650 per year per set of facilities.

3.9 It is not recommended that cashless payment is introduced under Option 1, particularly to the old-style units located at Hensington Road and New Street, as these facilities really need a more thorough overall. The mechanisms are also more likely to suffer vandalism when inside an internal shared space.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The Council could decide not to invest in the retained facilities but unless repairs are carried out the condition will deteriorate further.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the Council allocates funding of £532,140 for the investment in its retained public conveniences and installs card readers to enable cashless payments. This will provide a higher standard of facilities and payment choice for residents and visitors.

5.2 Reducing the number of facilities and related cleaning and maintenance costs and removing cash payments will further reduce revenue costs from retained facilities. Making the service more sustainable and increasing usage in the facilities that are retained.

5.3 Investing in Public Conveniences provides a very beneficial legacy for communities in West Oxfordshire as Local Government Reorganisation approaches. The provision of high-quality

facilities will benefit residents and visitors to Towns and villages across the district and support the local economy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The provision of public convenience currently has an annual revenue cost to the Council of £269,747.
- 6.2 The previous decision made by Executive in September 2025 to close certain facilities will reduce the level of subsidy by £114,754 per year, although some allowance should be made for an increase in usage at retained facilities. For budget setting purposes it is considered a revenue saving of £100,000 will be generated. Closure of these facilities also avoids the need to invest in repairs, avoiding costs estimated at £87,700 over the next three years.
- 6.3 The closed facilities which are owned by the Council can be sold generating a capital receipt or refurbished and let generating a new lease income stream. The financial costs and benefits of these options will be considered separately as part of option appraisals.

6.4 The following table summarises the cost options for investment. All costs are high level estimates and have been collated before any design preparation for the renovation of facilities:

Facilities	Option 1 – Repair only	Option 2 – Redesign, renovation and repair, card readers
Guildenford Car Park, Burford	£5,650	£91,350
High Street, Burford	£6200	£14,200
Hensington Road, Woodstock	£9800	£92,050
Langdale Gate, Witney	£16,150	£124,000
New Street, Chipping Norton	£9750	£103,050
Market Square, Bampton	£4650	£8,650
Kilkenny Country Park, Carterton	£2150	£10,150
Sub-total	£54,350	£443,450
Prelims and fees	£13,587	£44,345
Contingency sum	£5,435	£44,345
Total	£73,372	£532,140

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Public conveniences are a discretionary service and therefore the Council could cease to provide the service.
- 7.2 The Council is the leaseholder for the facilities in Bampton. The repair costs identified in this report just cover the internal fixtures and fittings which the Council is responsible for under the terms of the lease.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 The Council has been open and transparent with its costs, income and the condition of facilities during the consultation with Town and Parish Councils, which has ensured that consultees understand why some facilities have been considered for closure. Reducing the level of service subsidy and improving the condition of the retained facilities should make the service more sustainable into the future, reducing the risk that the discretionary service is withdrawn completely.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was provided with the report in September 2025. Any redesign and refurbishment will consider the needs of those with physical or mental impairments to ensure design layout and colour schemes make the facilities as accessible and user friendly as possible.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are limited opportunities to reduce the climate impact of public conveniences. Solar PV has previously been explored but the low energy usage, the cost to install and the very small roof size means there is no significant benefit. Rainwater harvesting may be an option to enable rainwater to be collected and used for toilet flushing, however this requires a substantial water storage tank so will be dependent on there being suitable space and location for such a tank. This will be explored and costed where it is deemed feasible.

10.2 There will be a reduction in utilities used where toilets are closed but demand may transfer to the facilities remaining open.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)