

REPORT TITLE: PROPOSED TRANSFER OF PUBLIC TOILETS AND TWO CAR PARKS TO PARISH COUNCILS

21 JULY 2026

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Kelsie Learney

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WARD(S): ALL WARDS

PURPOSE

This report seeks Cabinet approval to progress the transfer of four public convenience assets and two free car parks (Kidmore Lane and Harestock) to Parish Councils, where agreement can be reached, as part of the Council's wider commitment to localism, community-led service delivery and preparing for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Public conveniences are important community assets that support residents, visitors, local high streets and tourism across the district. Equally, the two free car parks play an important role in serving their local communities.

The proposed transfers recognise that Parish Councils are often best placed to shape, manage and invest in these local assets in a way that reflects local priorities and needs.

The report therefore proposes the transfer of the four public convenience sites and the Kidmore Lane and Harestock car parks, subject to agreement with the relevant parish councils, together with any associated operational arrangements.

The proposed approach will give parish councils greater influence over the future of these facilities, support local decision-making and create opportunities for future investment where sustainable long-term management arrangements can be secured.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve the transfer of the Council's four parish public convenience assets to the relevant Parish and Town Councils, subject to final legal and financial agreements. Where agreed with the relevant Parish or Town Council, this will also include the transfer of the Kidmore Lane and Harestock free car parks as part of a single local management arrangement.
2. Delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Strategic Director and the Director of Legal, to negotiate and finalise the detailed legal, financial and operational terms of each individual transfer, including the assets to be transferred in each case
3. Approve the continuation of existing operational support arrangements, including cleaning services and any agreed service contributions, until April 2027 where appropriate to support an orderly transition.

IMPLICATIONS:1. COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME

1.1. Greener Faster

Local ownership of the public conveniences will allow fewer resources to be used as local management should allow more reactive management of issues such as leaks.

The city council has invested in electric vehicle charging points in car parks neighbouring the toilets in parished areas. Any transfer of car parks alongside the toilets, would need to take into account the ongoing support for these EV charging points.

1.2. Thriving Places

Public conveniences support vibrant local centres, tourism destinations and community spaces by ensuring residents and visitors have access to essential facilities.

Supporting Parish Councils to take on greater responsibility for local assets strengthens community stewardship and local place shaping.

1.3. Healthy Communities

Public conveniences form part of inclusive and accessible public infrastructure which supports residents of all ages and abilities to confidently access town and village centres, parks and community spaces.

The proposal supports stronger local ownership and responsiveness to community needs.

1.4. Good Homes for All

n/a

1.5. Efficient and Effective

The proposed transfers support a more sustainable long-term operating model for public conveniences across the district.

The approach reduces ongoing operational liabilities for the Council whilst maintaining local provision.

1.6. Listening and Learning

Enagement has taken place with Parish Councils regarding future arrangements for public conveniences.

The proposal reflects feedback from parishes who expressed interest in taking a greater role in local asset management and service delivery.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1. Public conveniences create ongoing operational and maintenance costs for the Council, including utilities, cleansing, repairs and reactive maintenance.
- 2.2. The proposed transfer arrangements of public conveniences would reduce the Council's future operational liabilities by an estimated £30,000 per annum whilst enabling services to continue locally.
- 2.3. Transitional financial support arrangements are proposed to continue as they are now, within existing budgets, until April 2027 to support Parish Councils in taking on management responsibilities.
- 2.4. Future refurbishment investment would only proceed where sustainable long-term management arrangements are secured.
- 2.5. Detailed financial implications for each asset transfer will be finalised through individual legal agreements, which would include an understanding of the financial impact if discussions included the transfer of neighbouring car parks too. The balance sheet value of the assets will be removed and show as a "loss" on disposal in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. However, as a non-cash transaction, the "loss" will be reversed out of the General Fund balance.
- 2.6. In summary the cost of running each public convenience is set out in the table below. These costs are based on 2025/26 financial year.

Public Conveniences	Balance sheet value as at 31/03/26	Annual income (cont. from Parish)	Annual Expenditure	Annual net surplus/(cost)
Alresford	79,000	7,000	(15,000)	(8,000)
Bishops Waltham	154,000	7,670	(15,350)	(7,680)
Denmead	67,000	6,730	(13,450)	(6,720)
Wickham	74,000	8,110	(16,230)	(8,120)
Total	374,000	29500	(60,000)	(30,500)

Where an individual agreement to take on the public convenience includes the transfer of city council owned car parks these legal agreements would include their financial implications. In summary the cost of running each public car park in the area is set out in the table below;

Car Parks	Balance sheet value as at 31/03/26	Annual Income	Annual Expenditure	Net annual surplus/(cost)
Kidmore Lane	264,600	2,300	(7,000)	(4,700)
Harestock	£145,000	<£500	0	£500
Total	£409,000	£1,800	(7000)	(£4,200)

The costs of the car park management above does not include depreciation, staffing or enforcement costs. As the car parks concerned only make up a small percentage of the overall car park estate, no savings in staffing and enforcement costs are anticipated. Similarly, the table above excludes periodic one-off costs such as resurfacing which will also present a saving to the council should the car parks be transferred to the parishes.

3. LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Individual legal agreements would be required with each parish or town council, to take into account the financial, and operational requirement for the continued operation of the facilities and other assets alongside them.
- 3.2. The current cleaning contract with Wettons, allows for the removal of individual toilets from the cleaning contract.

4. WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None. The proposals do not directly impact Council staffing structures.
- 4.2. Operational arrangements currently managed through existing contracts would continue during transitional periods where agreed.

5. PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. These are assets which are fully owned by the city council. The relevant locations are
 - New Alresford. - Station Road toilets
 - Bishops Waltham - Central Car park toilets
 - Denmead - Kidmore Lane car park and toilets
 - Wickham - Station Road toilets
 - Harestock - Priors Dean Road Car park

The transfers would offer long leases or freehold transfers depending upon the aspirations of the parish councils and the attributes of the facilities to be transferred. Development potential on any car park land will be reviewed prior to transfers and restrictive covenants and/or overage provisions included if necessary.

6. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1. Engagement has been and is being undertaken with relevant Parish Councils regarding future management arrangements for public conveniences.
- 6.2. Parish Councils have been invited to consider a range of future operating models including local management and ownership arrangements.
- 6.3. Several parishes have expressed interest in taking on a greater role in local management and stewardship of facilities.
- 6.4. Ward Members will continue to be engaged throughout the process as detailed proposals are developed.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1. Supporting locally managed community assets can reduce unnecessary duplication and support more responsive local maintenance arrangements.
- 7.2. Future refurbishment programmes provide opportunities to improve environmental performance, accessibility and energy efficiency of facilities.

8. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1. Public conveniences are important community infrastructure supporting accessibility and inclusion for residents and visitors.
- 8.2. Transfer arrangements and future investment proposals will seek to maintain accessible provision and appropriate disabled access arrangements.
- 8.3. Equality considerations will continue to be assessed as part of individual asset transfer arrangements.

9. DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1. None required

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure	Detailed financial information, including running costs, maintenance liabilities and any income streams, will be shared with parish councils as part of the due diligence process. Appropriate legal agreements will be put in	Transfer of assets and services can reduce Winchester City Council's future financial liabilities whilst enabling local councils to make decisions that reflect local priorities and community needs.

	place to protect the Council's interests.	
Reputation	Early engagement with parish councils, ward members, residents and key stakeholders. Clear communication that the proposals support local decision-making and are not simply a cost-saving exercise.	Demonstrates the Council's commitment to localism, community empowerment and preparing communities to play a greater role in service delivery as local government structures evolve.
Property	Asset condition surveys, legal investigations and title reviews will be completed before any transfer. Agreements will clearly define future responsibilities and liabilities.	Provides an opportunity for parish councils to invest in and improve local assets, ensuring decisions are taken closer to the communities that use them.
Community Support	Engagement and consultation with parish councils and local communities will inform the approach. Transitional support arrangements can be considered where appropriate.	Stronger local ownership can increase community involvement, responsiveness and accountability for local facilities and services.
Loss of provision	Transfers will only proceed where there is confidence in the future operation and maintenance of the asset. Appropriate lease, transfer or service agreements will be established.	Creates the opportunity for assets such as public conveniences and car parks to be managed in a way that reflects local priorities, helping to secure their long-term future.
Timescales	Early legal, property and finance engagement will ensure issues are identified and resolved promptly. A phased approach can be adopted where appropriate.	Progressing transfers ahead of Local Government Reorganisation provides greater certainty for local communities and allows sufficient time for implementation and transition.

Local Government Reorganisation	Early transfer of appropriate local assets reduces uncertainty regarding future ownership and management arrangements under successor authorities.	Provides an opportunity to place genuinely local assets under local stewardship ahead of LGR, ensuring decisions are taken by organisations with a direct connection to the communities they serve.
Achievement of Outcomes	Clear transfer objectives and success measures will be agreed with receiving parish councils. Post-transfer monitoring arrangements will be considered where appropriate.	Supports the Council's wider ambitions around devolution, community empowerment and ensuring services remain responsive to local needs.
Other	Individual asset considerations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.	Opportunity to strengthen partnerships between Winchester City Council and parish councils, creating a model for future collaborative working and service delivery.

11. SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

- 11.1. The Council currently operates a number of public conveniences across the district which provide an important service to residents, visitors and local communities.
- 11.2. Aaway from central Winchester these include 4 in parished areas at
 - Alresford (Station road)
 - Bishops Waltham (Basingwell Car Park)
 - Deneamd (Kidmore Lane)
 - Wickham (Station Road)
- 11.3. Public conveniences support tourism, local high streets, community activity and accessibility, particularly for older residents, families and people with disabilities.
- 11.4. The ongoing operation and maintenance of public conveniences presents increasing financial and operational pressures for the Council. At present with each parish covering at least half the cost of the operation and maintenance

of the toilets, the costs to the city council is estimated at £30,000 per annum which includes rates, operational cleaning costs, utilities and maintenance costs.

- 11.5. As part of wider service reviews and discussions regarding Local Government Reorganisation, the Council has engaged Parish Councils regarding future management arrangements for public conveniences.
- 11.6. The engagement explored a range of options including:
 - Continuing current arrangements
 - Parish operational management
 - Longer-term lease and ownership models
- 11.7. Parish councils have responded individually, with all indicating a clear interest in playing a more active role, particularly where this could support the long-term viability of local facilities. Bishops Waltham for example have taken on the responsibility for cleaning the toilet in their parish since the 1st January 2026.
- 11.8. The proposed transfer of all four parish public convenience assets reflects the Council's commitment to supporting localism and devolved community asset management, and builds on the decision taken to improve the public toilets across Winchester taken in September 2023. Since this time the majority of toilets across Winchester have been upgraded, including Alresford and Bishop's Waltham. The city council remains committed to upgrades to Denmead and Wickham toilets if the transfers, securing their long term futures, go ahead.
- 11.9. The proposed arrangements could be long term leases through peppercorn lease agreements designed to provide local flexibility whilst protecting community access and use, or through full freehold transfers. The choice will be dependent upon individual Parish and Town council aspirations and the attributes of individual locations.
- 11.10. Discussions are ongoing with individual parish councils, but approval is required to transfer the facilities, which will then allow each parish council to take a formal decision about taking on the facilities.
- 11.11. Expressions of interest in taking on the operation and management of the toilets permanently have raised the possibility of taking on their neighbouring car parks too, to secure their position as community assets post LGR. The income and expenditure related to these is set out in the financial section of this paper. Whilst these are valuable community assets the cost and benefits of running these car parks are not significant, and could potentially benefit from a transfer to secure local community ownership.
- 11.12. Each parish would need to review the condition of assets in their parish prior to making a decision about transferring the toilets and potentially the local car

parks, so that they are aware of the liabilities that these entail, not just the local benefit that it would bring with local control of the facilities.

11.13. The Council also proposes transitional support arrangements until April 2027 to support Parish Councils in assuming operational responsibilities, in essence continuing to cover the cost of maintaining and operating the public conveniences at the current rate.

11.14. Future refurbishment and investment opportunities would be linked to securing sustainable long-term management arrangements. If there is no interest from individual parish councils to taking on the responsibility for operation and maintenance of the facilities, then the city council does not have the financial resources to continue their refurbishment.

11.15. **Conclusion**

11.16. Public conveniences remain important community assets which support residents, visitors and local economies across the district.

11.17. The proposed transfer of all four parish public convenience assets, and the highlighted car parks supports the Council's wider ambitions around localism, devolution and community-led service delivery.

11.18. The approach enables greater local control and stewardship of assets whilst supporting a more sustainable long-term operating model.

11.19. The proposed arrangements provide a managed and collaborative transition ahead of wider Local Government Reorganisation.

11.20. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the progression of transfer arrangements with the relevant Parish Councils. Following such an approval each individual parish council would need to understand the responsibility and activity entailed within this and then agree to take on the asset. This progression is one which the city council would aim to achieve by April 2027, .

12. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1. Retaining all assets under direct Council management

12.2. This option was considered but rejected due to ongoing financial pressures, increasing maintenance liabilities and the wider direction of travel towards devolution and community-led asset management.

12.3. Closure of facilities

12.4. Closure was not considered appropriate given the importance of public conveniences to residents, visitors, accessibility and local economies.

12.5. Short-term arrangements only

- 12.6. Short-term arrangements were discounted as they would not provide sufficient certainty for Parish Councils to invest in or sustainably manage facilities over the longer term.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

[\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 13/09/2023 09:30](#)

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

None