

## Appendix 2

### EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT PUBLIC FACILITIES UNIT

For further assistance with filling in this template, contact Delyth G Williams, [DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.gov.uk](mailto:DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.gov.uk), ext. 2708

#### 1) AUTHOR(S) OF ASSESSMENT

Gwyn Morris Jones, Head of Highways and Municipal Department

#### 2) ASSESSMENT START DATE

7<sup>th</sup> June 2017

#### 3) VERSION AND/OR DATE OF COMPLETION OF THE ASSESSMENT

It is expected that there will be more than one version of the Assessment. The different versions should be noted to ensure accuracy.

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#### 4) PURPOSE OF THE UNIT AND DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Note briefly the purpose of the unit and details of the proposal in question

The unit maintains, manages and cleans 73 public toilets across the County, and is responsible for managing the Public Toilets Grant Scheme for 35 businesses across the County.

It is possible to cut the entire budget as, at present, there is no statutory requirement to maintain public facilities.

This would involve:

- Closing every one of the 73 public toilets across the County, making 39 toilet cleaners who are currently employed redundant;
- An impact on residents and visitors who would no longer have convenient facilities.

In the Gwynedd Challenge engagement exercise 2015-16, several options were put forward in order to ascertain opinion from closing all public toilets to close 50 out of 73 or to close 25 out of the 73 public toilets in the County.

Following the Gwynedd Challenge engagement exercise, the Council in its meeting of 3 March 2016 recommended making cuts which included 'closing 50 out of 73 public toilets in the County.' In its meeting of 7 June 2016, the Cabinet supported the recommendation of the Communities Scrutiny Committee, to amend the decision to cut £244,000 from the service by first seeking to establish partnerships with local communities in order to avoid closing the facilities whilst achieving the same amount of savings.

In its meeting of 17 January, 2017 the Cabinet decided to achieve the £244,000 service cuts by implementing the Partnership Scheme with Town and Community Councils in order to keep the majority of the County's existing toilets open in the future.

## **5) PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION**

The comments below are a result of the consultation undertaken by the Gwynedd Challenge engagement exercise:-

The Older People's Council was of the opinion that cutting the Public Toilets service would affect them and note it as a priority. It is an essential service for them when they go out. A lack of public toilets would affect older people's independence.

"A very important resource for older people who don't like to go to private locations. Older people are more likely to have health issues which makes toilets more important and toilets in pubs are often not the cleanest"

"Public toilets – basic human needs. Needs to be free. Safety comes first – toilets we all need them"

The Pwllheli Carers' Outreach Group was of the opinion that cutting the Public Toilets service would have an impact on disabled people. They see this service as essential when they go out.

The users of CILDe Gwynedd (disabled people) note toilets as a priority but said that they would be willing to pay for it.

Some Ysgol Botwnnog pupils also said that public toilets were important:

- "Public toilets, something that's important everywhere, where would tourists use the toilet? Need to buy something in order to use many toilets e.g. Wetherspoon's."

On the questionnaire, people aged over 50 told us:

“Public toilets. Disproportionately affects the elderly, many of whom are prescribed diuretics, which already makes going out of the house difficult. Many elderly people have become increasingly housebound due to lack of existing provision. Any more would make them unable to go out at all.”

“...Also I use Gwynedd's public toilets in every town I visit so please don't close them!”

A disabled person said:

“Hello, I'm disabled and unable to drive so bus cuts affect my ability to travel also I use the public disabled toilets a lot, So cuts in these services will have marked impact on my quality of life “.

Other people noted

“Closing any toilets would seriously affect people with diabetes who need to urinate at a distressing frequency throughout the day. With no available toilet - where would they be supposed to 'pee' - in the street ? !!! Toilet closures would be criminal!”

“With young children, I make regular use of the leisure centres, parks and library's. Families with young children are also dependant on public toilets.”

As a result of the Cabinet's decision in June 2016 to seek to establish partnerships with local communities, discussions and consultations have been held with all Town and Community Councils during this period in terms of its importance to their communities and discussions are still ongoing.

## **6) THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE**

Include any relevant information about equality, e.g. will the change affect one cohort of people more than others (e.g. older people, women, etc.?) How do you know this? The evidence can be local, regional or national e.g. a report by the Assembly, engagement with a specific group of local people, data about gratitude or complaints, etc.

Public Health White Paper - Welsh Government October 2014 (the bill is at the stage whereby its awaiting Royal Assent) in terms of public toilets the aim of the legislation is to ensure that Local Authorities prepare a strategy to plan how its citizens have access to public toilets.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales welcomes the proposal to place a duty on each Local Authority to develop a strategy on the provision of and access to toilets for public use in their area. The proposal for Local Authorities to develop strategies builds on the Commissioner's report "The Importance and Impact of Community Services in Wales 2014". In her report, the Commissioner made it clear that community services, including public toilets, are not luxuries but are essential to the maintenance of older people's health, independence and wellbeing.

"Help the Aged" paper: Nowhere to Go: Provision of Public Facilities in Britain (May 2007) highlights the social cost for older people of the reduction in public facilities:

12% of older people (1.2 million) feel confined to their homes, 13% of older people (1.26 million) do not go out more than once a week and approximately 100,000 never go out.

Its evidence suggests that the lack of public facilities is a significant contributory factor to the loneliness older people feel, with more than half of older people feeling that the lack of local public conveniences prevents them from going out as often as they would wish.

House of Commons' Select Committee - Provision of Public Facilities, twelve session report 2007-08

The Community and Local Government Department: Improving the Public's Access to Quality Public Facilities - Strategic Guidance

## 7) RELEVANCE AND IMPACT

The relevance of the proposal to the general equality duties and to all of the protected characteristics (equality groups) must be shown. It should clearly note what the actual or likely impact will be. It is possible that not all duties or characteristics will be of relevance or will be impacted; however, should relevance and/or impact be identified in any one or more categories, there will be a need to proceed with the Assessment.

### 7a)

<b>General Duties of the Equality Act</b>	<b>Relevance</b> Does the cut affect the duties below?	<b>The actual or likely impact</b>
<b>Abolishing illegal discrimination, harassment and victimisation</b>	no	
<b>Promoting equal opportunities</b>	yes	Some cohorts would find it difficult to go out and would therefore experience problems accessing services, socialising etc. By working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils the hope is that it will reduce the impact by keeping the majority of the facilities open.
<b>Encouraging good relationships</b>	yes	Failing to go out could affect socialising which is contrary to the duty to encourage good relationships. By working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils the hope is that it will reduce the impact by keeping the majority of the facilities open.

7b)

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Relevance</b> Does the cut affect the characteristics below?	<b>The actual or likely impact</b>
<b>Race</b>	no	No discriminatory impact.
<b>Disability</b>	Yes	<p>Likely impact - Disability Charities and organisations which represent older people are of the opinion that cuts to public facilities will have a very damaging effect in terms of them being prevented or being afraid of venturing out of their homes due to the lack of facilities available in the community. Some ailments or impairments could make the impact worse.</p> <p>By working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils the hope is that it will reduce the impact by keeping the majority of the facilities open.</p>
<b>Gender</b>	no	No discriminatory impact.
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	no	No discriminatory impact.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	no	No discriminatory impact.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	relevance	<p>In general terms, there would be no more impact on these groups than on the general public; but with some religions using alternative private facilities would be restricted in using some establishments (e.g. pubs) - it could be against a religion or belief.</p> <p>By working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils the hope is that it will reduce the impact by keeping the majority of the facilities open.</p>

<b>The Welsh language</b>	no	No discriminatory impact.
<b>Age</b>	Yes	<p>Likely impact - Older People</p> <p>Charities and organisations which represent older people are of the opinion that cuts to public facilities will have a very damaging effect in terms of them being prevented or being afraid of venturing out of their homes due to the lack of facilities available in the community.</p> <p>By working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils the hope is that it will reduce the impact by keeping the majority of the facilities open.</p>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Yes	<p>Likely impact - Children</p> <p>Parents and guardians of babies and young children need to be able to use suitable facilities in men and women's public facilities when visiting public places and often at short notice. Parents with babies and young children could be unwilling to use facilities in pubs, which limits the choice of facilities for them.</p> <p>By working in partnership with the Town and Community Councils the hope is that it will reduce the impact by keeping the majority of the facilities open.</p>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	no	No discriminatory impact.

## 8) ADDRESSING THE IMPACT

<b>a)</b>	<b>Note any possible impact in terms of equality</b> Summary of the above  The reduction in facilities affects everyone. However, the proposal does not target specific groups, but some groups could be affected more than others due to the cut. The reduction in public facilities could have an impact on the willingness of specific groups, namely older people, children and disabled people to access public places, socialise and shop locally. This can lead to loneliness and a detrimental impact on an individual's welfare.
<b>b)</b>	<b>What steps can be taken to reduce or improve these impacts?</b>  The Partnership scheme offers the possibility of keeping significantly more toilets open in the future when compared to that anticipated with the previous option for cuts.  In implementing the Partnership Scheme it is anticipated that at least 51 public toilets can be kept open with the support and co-operation of Town and Community Councils and others. There are other advantages to the Communities and this Council in implementing this scheme e.g. the possibility of developing alternative arrangements for maintaining the provision for the future with at least 35 toilets having the potential for the community to take more responsibility for their maintenance.  Develop alternative arrangements similar to the Local Public Facilities Grant Scheme currently funded by Welsh Government if the Council decides to extend the scheme.
<b>c)</b>	<b>Is there a need to reconsider the plan?</b>  As noted above, the planned cut as been reconsidered by seeking to establish a partnership scheme with Town and Community Councils and others with the majority of the public toilets being kept open in the future.