

PUBLIC TOILET REVIEW

PREPARED BY: Kelvin Shooter (Manager, Parks & Recreation Assets)
TEAM: Parks & Recreation Assets
APPROVED BY: Anthony Wilson (General Manager Community Services)
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SUMMARY/OBJECTIVE

This report brings to the attention of the Council a review that has been recently undertaken of the Council's public toilets in reserves and public areas. This review considers location, usage, and the quality of facilities and servicing of those currently existing facilities.

Following on from the success of the Foreshore modular toilet design, this has been refined and the improved design is presented for adoption as a standard modular toilet. The report further suggests a list of potential locations for the modular toilets with a ranking for future implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

That having considered all matters raised in the report:

- 1. The review of public toilets be received.**
- 2. The modular toilet design as proposed be adopted.**
- 3. The Vogeltown Park and Clifton Park toilets be permanently closed.**
- 4. The upgrade programme to ensure accessibility continue as funding permits.**
- 5. Improvements to cleaning of the men's toilets, particularly James Lane and Moturoa be investigated and costed.**
- 6. Lighting levels and vegetation clearance be given attention at all areas noted as being of concern.**
- 7. The following toilets be considered for relocation to more strategic and visual parts of the parks:**
 - Burgess Park**
 - Pukekura Park Pavilion Womens**
 - Pukekura Park Playground**
 - Lake Rotomanu****as part of the ongoing renewals programme as funding permits.**
- 8. Signage to all toilets be improved and consistent.**
- 9. Ways of providing soap in all toilets be explored that are vandal resistant and cost effective.**
- 10. Hand basins be installed in the Corbett Park toilets.**
- 11. The cleaning regime be examined and improved levels of service costed.**
- 12. Opening hours of toilets, particularly in some reserves, be reviewed.**

13. The following be adopted as the priority for new toilets, installation to proceed as finance permits:
 - 1) Okato CBD
 - 2) Westown CBD
 - 3) Bell Block CBD
 - 4) Rogan St
 - 5) Oakura CBD
 - 6) Waiwhakaiho Rivermouth
 - 7) East End Reserve (Buller St)
14. The following be the priority for replacement, to proceed as finance permits:
 - 1) Pukekura Park Playground
 - 2) Fitzroy CBD
 - 3) Lake Mangamahoe
 - 4) Pukekura Park Pavillion Womens'
15. The priority for new toilets be reviewed at three yearly intervals.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Background

In the 2003 NRB¹ public survey of Council services, public toilets featured highly in terms of community perception as being important and a desire was expressed for an increase level of service.

Officers are currently undertaking a detailed asset planning exercise for Council owned and managed parks and reserves. In view of the large estate and magnitude of facilities areas of the operation are being tackled in priority of need. Given the high profile of the public toilets they have been scheduled early in the programme.

Review

The review included the following methodology;

- Mapping of public toilet provision in the District, Council and others
- Devising a grading system to assess Council toilets based upon;
 - Availability
 - Accessibility
 - Cleanliness
 - Safety
 - Signage
 - Ambiance
- Survey of the usage patterns
- Execution and effectiveness of cleaning regime.

The study was carried out over the summer period as this is believed to be the highest use period, particularly on reserves.

A summary of the findings is attached to this report (Appendix A). A copy of the data collected during the review is available in the Councillors' Room and can be viewed at the Council Offices.

¹ National Research Bureau Report, New Plymouth District Council Communitrack Survey, May/June 2003

Key points summarised from the study are:

- Benchmarking results against similar Councils indicated that availability (times open to the public) of toilets ranked favourably.
- Compared to benchmarked authorities, New Plymouth is low in the ratio of toilets per capita.
- Modular toilets provide advantages such as security, ease of cleaning, ambiance and cost effectiveness.
- Entrances to toilets should be highly visible with minimal vegetation blocking views in and out.
- Ancillary services such as provision of hand washing facilities and signage was found to be poor.
- Cleaning regimes and practices are below those stated as good practice and low compared with benchmarked authorities.
- Casual use public toilets in sports grounds would more effectively be controlled by clubs who lease the ground and open only while supervision is present.

Next generation modular toilets

The traditional form of public toilet facility has been the toilet block where a number of toilets are situated in a single building with some internal partitioning.

These have the disadvantage in a number of areas such as cleaning, odour retention, vandalism, user safety and aesthetics.

The increasingly preferred design is the modular toilet. These have the advantages of:

- Being safe in that the user is the only person in the facility.
- Can be sited singly or in multiple units depending upon need.
- Easy to clean and maintain.
- Cost effective to provide, particularly when several new ones are concurrently installed.

Two banks of modular toilets were designed and installed during the Foreshore walkway development at the Wind Wand and Kawaroa car parks. These have proved popular and are in keeping with the clean and modern design of those areas. This design was the recipient of an architectural award.

The Council has a programme for development of new toilet facilities and the replacement of ageing facilities this year and, financial resources being available, in future years.

To continue the progress in service provision by the use of a modular toilet, the design of a singular modular toilet has been undertaken that incorporates the benefits of the current design and the lessons learnt from the Foreshore and Kawaroa toilets to create an improved facility.

The design and impressions of the finished toilet are attached. It seeks to make the following improvements:

- Increased floor ventilation and overall internal air flow.
- Removal of electrical services to improve vandal resistance
- A metal or hard wood timber frame to suit the area in which it is situated.
- Updated fittings.

An artist's impression and plan are attached (Appendices B1, B2, B3 & B4)

Implementation of modular design

In 2000 the Council adopted a Public Toilet Strategy (Appendix C). Contained within this strategy was a list of new and renewed toilet facilities. This list has been refined and ranked for future implementation. The basis for this refinement has been observations by Council officers and public comment.

Two public toilets from this list are currently in the process of being commissioned in this financial year through the parks augmentation budget. Dependant upon the tender prices it is intended to commission a third if there is sufficient funding.

It is intended that this list is followed in this order as funds become available in either the respective augmentation or renewal budgets for public toilets. As the public toilet review is applied to the Asset Management Plan the overall strategy for augmentation and renewal of public toilets will be further developed. This may give a requirement to further extend and refine the list.

Ranking list

Rank	Location	Augmentation	Renewal
1	Centennial Park (Commissioned 03/04)	/	
2	Battiscombe Terrace (Commissioned 03/04)	/	
3	Okato CBD	/	
4	Westown CBD	/	
5	Bell Block CBD	/	
6	Pukekura Park (Playground)		/
7	Rogan St	/	
8	Oakura CBD	/	
9	Fitzroy CBD		/
10	Waiwhakahio Rivermouth	/	
11	East End Reserve (Buller St)	/	
12	Lake Mangamahoe		/

STRATEGIC IMPACT

Public toilets are of a benefit to the local community, improving 'Quality of Life' and are especially sought by visitors thus promoting 'District Growth'.

SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

The significance in terms of public's perception of Council services is high. Across the gambit of Council services it would otherwise be put in the low category.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The key Council policy that applies to this service is the 2000 Public Toilet Strategy highlighted earlier in this report and attached as Appendix C.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The replacement, upgrading and creation of new public toilets are financed through depreciation and augmentation capital expenditure funding as allowed for in the LTCCP.

For each new addition there is a need to provide operational expenditure funding for cleaning, maintenance and depreciation.

The review highlights areas of cleaning and maintenance that may be considered appropriate for an increased level of service and with this an increased level of resourcing.

VIEWS OF THOSE AFFECTED

The NRB survey indicated that this is perceived as an important service by the community

TANGATA WHENUA CONSIDERATIONS

There are no specific tangata whenua considerations in relation to this area of service

CONSULTATION

No specific consultation has taken place other than through the NRB survey.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Local Government Act 2002 requires the Council to undertake a Water and Sanitary Services Assessment by 30 June 2005. This review includes the provision of public toilets. Once adopted, this report will be included in the broader Sanitary Services Review.

PUBLICITY AND TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

It has been highlighted that the success of these facilities is dependant upon them being well publicised and easy to locate.

APPENDICES

(Attached in a separate document)

Appendix A: Public Toilet Review – January 2004

Appendix B: Plan and impressions of next generation public toilets

Appendix C: 2001 Public Toilet Strategy