

Parish and Town Councils

Your ref:

My ref: PCR/PC&TC1

Date: 21st January 2011

Dear Parish/Town Clerk

Public Convenience Review

Cornwall Council is carrying out a comprehensive review of the public convenience service that it delivers.

The provision of public conveniences, whilst important to many, is not something that Cornwall Council has a statutory requirement to do. In the face of reducing budgets and increased costs of running the 220 or so public conveniences in Cornwall, the Council will need to make some difficult decisions.

The challenge is to make £1m of public convenience service efficiencies within the next 4 years. This is the target that has been approved by Cornwall Council in its budget.

The Council believes that this can be achieved through more efficient management. This could include:

- altering the way the public conveniences are managed, for example by reducing the opening times to fit more closely with peak demand;
- introducing more efficient water and electricity management;
- delegating or devolving local public convenience management to parish councils or other organisations
- putting a charge in place and directly generating income for the Council or for a partner organisation which could take on the management of the public convenience;
- or simply closing some public conveniences where there is a strong rationale to do so.

Cornwall Council could do some, all or a mixture of these things depending on local circumstances. There may well be other solutions that need to be considered.

In order to be sure that the review is based on sound evidence, it would be very helpful to receive feedback from Parish and Town Councils on behalf of their residents. These Councils will have a better understanding of the public conveniences in their area and they may be able to suggest ways in which both authorities could, together,

identify public conveniences that are not essential or suggest a different way of managing them locally.

It would be very helpful therefore if at this stage of our information gathering, as part of the review process, your Council could offer an opinion on how the public conveniences in your area could be managed differently and how efficiencies might be made.

Would your Council, for instance, be willing to take on the responsibility for the management of some, or all, of the public conveniences in your parish under the Active Partnering scheme? Or to own and maintain conveniences that would otherwise be earmarked for closure? Your view on this might be dependant on whether Cornwall Council could ensure that they were brought up to a good standard of repair initially. Alternatively there could be local community organisations that you know which would be willing to take them on?

Cornwall Council recognises that this is a significant task and will have local repercussions and cause much concern. However we have very little choice and we need to see this as an opportunity to work together to ensure that we can retain as many public conveniences as possible for the benefit of local people and our visitors.

Please note that we are aware that local councils will by now have set their local precepts and will have limited ability to take on additional costs in 2011/12.

I look forward to hearing from you preferably by the 7th March.

Yours sincerely

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