

# 2017 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES STRATEGY

*Tendring*  
District Council







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# Introduction

This document sets out to provide a strategic review of public conveniences across the District of Tendring and to highlight options for future provision of these facilities that supports:

- A thriving local tourism sector
- Local town centres and businesses
- Healthy and active lifestyles of residents and particularly the most vulnerable
- Crime reduction initiatives

The overall vision behind this Review / Strategy is:



## “To Provide Accessible, Safe, High Quality Public Conveniences for Residents and Visitors Alike.”



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# About Tendring

The Tendring peninsular covers an area of 130 square miles and enjoys over 36 miles of coastline which includes award-winning sandy beaches, numerous coastal towns providing everything from the traditional pleasures of the seaside to maritime heritage, a variety of beautiful and picturesque villages and one of the busiest harbours in Europe.

The coastal geography is a significant asset both from a healthy lifestyle and a tourism perspective as well as an important attraction for new residents wanting to live in the district.

The District has a population of approximately 140,000 which is expected to rise to 158,000 by 2031 with one of the oldest average age populations in

“The District has a population of approximately 140,000 which is expected to rise to 158,000 by 2031”

Western Europe with 33% of residents being over 60 Years old.

Tendring attracts a large number of visitors particularly to its seaside towns and as a result demand for facilities peaks during the Easter and May Bank Holidays and at the height of the summer season from late July to the end of the first week in September.

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# The Strategy

## To Provide Accessible, Safe, High Quality Public Conveniences for Residents and Visitors Alike.

### Why provide public conveniences?

Public conveniences matter to everyone and meet a universal basic human need. However they are even more important to some sections of society; older people, and people with disabilities, families with young children and visitors to the district.

### Why Tendring provides public conveniences?

The Council's Corporate Plan prioritises the reduction of health inequalities and disadvantage. Tendring has one of the largest elderly populations in the UK and a high rate of people claiming mobility allowance or registering as disabled. Public conveniences support community independence and freedom and help to reduce social costs associated with people being isolated in their home.

In addition Tendring has a vibrant visitor economy and supports opportunities for economic growth

and prosperity along our coast and in relation to tourism.

At present publicly accessible toilet facilities from commercial sector providers in Tendring are not sufficient to meet existing demand. However, this strategy aims to meet current and future demand for high standard, modern facilities whilst reducing future reliance on public provision.



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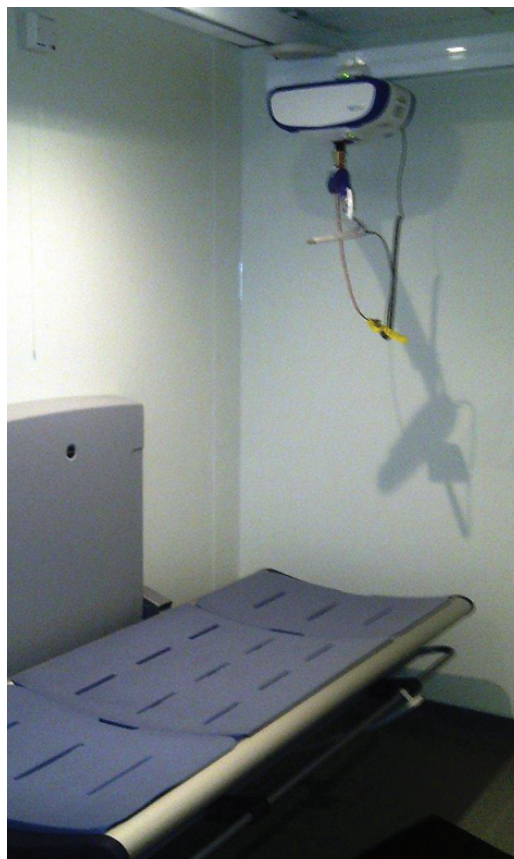
**“Investment in public toilet provision increases retail turnover, tourism visitor numbers and supports economic growth.”**



# Background

- The Public Health Act 1936 gives local authorities a power to provide public conveniences but it imposes no duty to do so.
- Tendring has traditionally provided public conveniences across the district in all urban areas, at each of the larger coastal resorts as well as some village locations.
- There are 40 public conveniences across Tendring provided directly by the District Council in addition to some public facilities within civic buildings, 28 of which have disabled facilities. There are also three state of the art Changing Place facilities.
- The public convenience service transferred from Environmental to the Seafront and Parking team in 2011 and to Public Realm in 2016 which reflects that in addition to social and public health benefits there is an increasingly important role to be played by public conveniences in supporting local town centres and the wider visitor economy.

## 4 Public Conveniences Strategy



# Costs & Investment

**£750,000 provision }**

Each year Tendring District Council spends in the region of £750,000 on the provision of public conveniences across the district.

**main costs**

The largest single cost is cleaning followed by general maintenance, with NNDR for buildings, salaries and utility charges the remaining significant costs of operating the service.

**admission fees }**

Connaught Avenue toilet in Frinton-on-Sea is attended and charges admission, all of the remaining conveniences are free of charge to users.

**£840,000 new builds**

Four new/replacement public conveniences were built in the five years up to 2010/2011; one in Connaught Avenue, Frinton, and three in Dovercourt, at a total cost of £840,000.

**refurbishment }**

A refurbishment to the Kiosk Field conveniences Frinton in 2012 introduced new showers servicing local beach users as well as replacing the old thatched roof.

**£300,000 accessible builds**

The Council received inward investment of over £300,000 to construct 3 Changing Place facilities in seafront areas at Clacton, Walton-on-the-Naze and Dovercourt between 2013 and 2015. These are specialist toilets and changing areas for people with severe mobility issues usually requiring the support of a carer.

**portfolio }**

All other public conveniences are located in buildings of varying age, quality and suitability and there is no currently agreed programme of reinvestment/refurbishment of public conveniences.

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# Challenges

A recent review of the Council's public conveniences has highlighted that whilst a few facilities meet the standard and vision for high quality facilities the majority fall well below that standard.

- Some public conveniences are busy, cost efficient, well designed assets positioned to serve the community and visitors to good effect. Conversely, some of the Council's public conveniences are now beyond economic repair and / or are very lightly used.
- Both the poor condition and their lack of use also make them prime targets for vandalism, drug taking and other criminal activity.
- The closure of public conveniences does not maximise potential saving from the closure. Empty buildings continue to attract NNDR costs.
- Closed facilities need to be converted to alternative uses and / or demolished, which requires investment.
- Public toilets attract anti-social behaviour increasing operating costs significantly both for cleaning, re supply of materials and maintenance.
- The age of many buildings is also a contributory factor to increasing maintenance and cleaning costs.
- Cleaning has recently been taken in-house presenting a new challenge of ensuring this delivers further cost savings to the Council as well as improved standards.
- Significant tourist influx during holiday periods leading to population increase in peak periods.

**The challenge for the Council is how to provide high quality facilities supporting local town centres, the visitor economy and the needs of residents of the District in an era of budgetary restraints against a backdrop of ageing buildings in locations that attract crime and anti-social behaviour.**

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### Public Conveniences Strategy



# Proposals

It should be noted that the Council is not the only provider of public conveniences. Supermarkets, restaurants, pubs and other visitor attractions also provide facilities, primarily for their customers. Some local authorities have been able to rely on this provision from commercial sector providers to reduce reliance on publicly owned and maintained facilities.

**“The Strategy: To Provide Accessible, Safe, High Quality Public Conveniences For Residents and Visitors Alike”**

## It is proposed to;

Continue a dialogue with partners in the commercial sector to encourage provision of high quality public toilets particularly at new development sites.



Close public conveniences that are a burden rather than serve the community - highlighted through low usage, disrepair, anti-social behaviour and/or police crime concerns.

**hours }**

Review opening hours of conveniences as a means of reducing the impact of crime, to lessen the requirement for closure and to reduce operating costs.



Seek capital funding and investment to meet the cost of additional new, accessible public conveniences at sites where demand is high and no provision currently exists.

**funding }**

Seek additional capital funding to support high quality refurbishments in key locations



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Seek capital and use of budget savings / surpluses to support refurbishment of existing provision in key locations or to relocate facilities where possible.

Image © SandraTrappen



Work with local town/parish councils and other groups to identify opportunities for local communities to assist the Council in running public conveniences or to look for alternative building uses where closures are made, prior to demolition.

Image Sheringham conveniences converted to house © easytignet

To reduce communal areas within public conveniences as a means of maximising toilet facilities whilst minimising opportunities for anti-social behaviour.

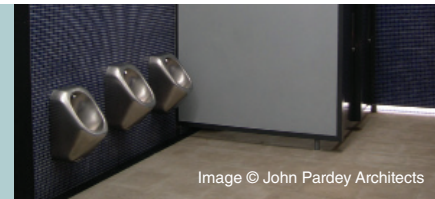


Image © John Pardey Architects



Image Lymington © John Pardey Architects

To produce designs and proposals for new and refurbished facilities based on the aims of this strategy and in particular to support improved accessibility, enhancing the Council's reputation.

Seek and consider income streams where possible from sponsorship, advertising, charging for facilities



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## Public Conveniences Strategy



# conclusions }

Produce a list of sites for public conveniences to include recommendations for refurbishments, closure, reduced opening times and sites where new facilities are recommended to meet the challenges highlighted and to support the aims and objectives contained within this strategic review.

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