



Dereham Town Plan Working Group
a joint working group of
Dereham Town Council and the aboutDereham Partnership



Report to Dereham Town Council

A Community Toilet Scheme for Dereham

Introduction

In the course of considering priorities for the proposed Town Plan, we have, not surprisingly, highlighted the need for more publicly available toilets.

We have decided that some things deserve immediate action and it does not need a Town Plan to tell us there is a problem with publicly available toilets in Dereham.

Background

Although there have been previous attempts to improve things, nothing has actually happened and there is still only one (most would say, very unsatisfactory) public toilet in Dereham.

In the past, it was generally felt that either the Town or District council should directly provide public toilets. However, some years ago Lynda Turner suggested a Community Toilet Scheme although nothing was agreed.

We are aware that many local councils have set up Community Toilet Schemes under which members of the public may use the toilet facilities in a range of approved local businesses and other organisations during their opening hours. Such schemes are designed to increase and enhance the Council's current toilet provision.

A Community Toilet Scheme for Dereham?

A Community Toilet Scheme would extend the public toilet availability within the town and contribute towards the health and social inclusion of residents and visitors alike. It would also support local businesses, economically, by making the town more accessible and allow visitors to increase their length of stay. The service would be free for the public to use. There would be no obligation to make a purchase at participating businesses.

Potential participants might include pubs, restaurants, cafes, community centres, shops, supermarkets, council offices, the library, the museum, the cinema. Businesses and organisations participating in the scheme would agree to keep their toilets clean, well maintained, safe and easily accessible. It is likely that an annual payment would be made to at least some of the participants (not supermarkets or public buildings) in return for allowing the public to use their facilities.

Although there are many Community Toilet Schemes, we have detailed information from Kendal.

Responsibilities

The Town Council would be responsible for ensuring that there was a range of facilities available, the standards of the facilities on offer and the hours of opening. The Council would have a monitoring procedure in place to ensure the facilities in the scheme are - and continue to be – suitable.

The businesses involved would have an agreement with the Council to keep the facilities well maintained, with spot checks carried out periodically. On the other hand, businesses would be able to refuse admission to their premises. Not every business would provide toilets for disabled people and baby changing areas but the Council would ensure that an adequate number of publicly accessible units are available and that they are clearly signposted.

Facilities will not, necessarily, be available at all times, although the scheme would ensure that facilities were available at all times of the day and sufficient cover during the evening and at weekends. The Town Council would promote the scheme by providing leaflets and maps in public buildings describing the Scheme and the location of participating businesses.

Businesses would display prominent window/door signs to indicate their involvement in the scheme. The Council would install suitable street signage to clearly indicate that the scheme is in operation and the location of facilities. Staff of participating businesses would have to be made aware of the Scheme and the need to ensure that the public has an unrestricted access

Published advice on setting up a scheme:

1. Conduct a feasibility study to gain the level of support for a scheme;
2. Obtain support/assurances from participating businesses / organisations;
3. Develop the practicalities of a scheme;
4. Publicise the Scheme;
5. Operate the Scheme;
6. Monitor and Evaluate the Scheme.

It is suggested that a Community Toilet Scheme will only be successful if:

- It is properly managed by the Council – and careful selection and monitoring of the selected sites is undertaken;
- It receives the full support of the Council at inception and with an agreed long-term contract and budget;
- The Council maintains its own adequate public toilet provision to cope with closures, holidays, in the evening and when there are events that might cause problems with increased demand;
- The Council promotes the Scheme.

It is similarly suggested that a Community Toilet Scheme will not be successful if:

- The Council were to close its own public toilets and expect the Community Toilet Scheme participants to take full responsibility for toilet demand;
- Participating shops and companies close and move away, only remain open during business hours or close for public holidays;
- Signage is poor;
- No additional toilet provision is made for specific events, festivals etc.

Setting up a scheme

The Town Council would have to decide whether it had appropriate staff resources to set up a scheme, whether it needed to appoint a consultant, whether aboutDereham might be able to assist with the task or, possibly, a combination of all of those.

The Town Council would have to consider the costs of such a scheme in terms of staffing and payments to participating organisations. It may be possible to gain funding towards the cost of establishing the scheme.

Once the scheme was established, aboutDereham would, of course, would be willing to help in promoting the scheme.

Recommendations

Dereham Town Council should:

1. Consider the benefits of a Community Toilet Scheme as a way of providing sufficient publicly available toilets in Dereham;
2. Agree a project to develop and set up a Community Toilet Scheme;
3. Agree how to resource the project;
4. Agree to fund the project and to budget for the costs of the scheme from 2022 onwards.

Acknowledgement: advice from 'A Matter of Urgency' published by Public Toilets UK,
www.facebook.com/ptukcampaign