Changes to Toilets, Steet Cleaning and Enforcement Activity

To: Cabinet 7th July 2026

Report by:

Alistair Wilson – Assistant Director for Public Relam and Environment
Tel: 01223 458514 Email alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk

Yvonne O'Donnell – Strategic Environmental Health and Public Safety Lead
Tel: 01222 457951 Email: Yvonne.ODonnell@cambridge.gov.uk

Wards affected:
Toilets – Market

Street Cleaning – City

Enforcement Activity - City

Director Approval: Directors James Elms and Sam Scharf confirm that the report author has sought the advice of all appropriate colleagues and given due regard to that advice; that the equalities impacts and other implications of the recommended decisions have been assessed and accurately presented in the report; and that they are content for the report to be put to the Cabinet/Cabinet Member for decision.

1.	**Recommendations**
1.1	The Cabinet is recommended I. To approve the immediate reopening of as many individual toilets at Parkers Piece as feasible following condition and compliance checks. II. To request officers, bring a paper to 23rd September Cabinet setting out options for the future of Parker's Piece and Quayside toilets, including reopening and operating cost, payment options, and capital investment needed to meet any new accessibility requirements. III. That four temporary staff are recruited as soon as possible to provide additional street cleansing capacity at priority hotspots, including the city centre, and strengthening programmed cleansing activity across the city, to be organised into a new daily 12-7pm shift.

	IV. To agree that officers implement route optimisation and operational redesign informed by performance and REEN smart bin technology data to deliver efficiencies that can release existing cleaning capacity for priority hotspots. V. To agree that officers will bring a more detailed paper on longer-term staffing requirements once the additional temporary resource is in place and its impact can be assessed to feed into the budget setting process in late Autumn. VI. To agree to the recruitment of two additional temporary Public Realm Enforcement Officers (a permanent appointment would be made in September, which would replace one of the temporary posts) so that a team of 5 enforcement officers will be funded from July to the end of the financial year. VII. To agree that officers bring an evidence-based report to Cabinet in November/December setting out the impact of the additional capacity and other reforms to improve prevention and enforcement activity with advice on whether there is sufficient capacity or whether further resources are required. VIII. That the in-year revenue costs of these proposals are funded using the Transformation and Reinvestment Fund, anticipated to be up to £200k, and that the CFO has delegated authority to approve this. IX. That proposals are brought forward as part of the 2027/2028 Budget setting process so that future funding for the costs of toilet reopening, additional street cleaning and enforcement activity can be secured.
2.	**Purpose and reason for the report**
2.1	As a result of the political agreement between the Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups the following actions were agreed: • at a meeting on 7 July, the Cabinet will consider a report in support of the objectives of a budget amendment to implement Liberal Democrat proposals on reopening Parker’s Piece and Quayside toilets, and the resourcing of council delivery of street cleaning, and public realm enforcement, which would be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity in the current financial year. • In the interim, steps will be taken to hire additional staff on a temporary basis to increase street cleansing and public realm enforcement in the city centre during the busy summer months.

	This report provides recommendations on changes to Public Toilets, Street Cleansing, Public Safety and City Centre Enforcement as set out in the Liberal Democrat 2026 budget amendment.
3.	**Background and key issues**
3.1	The Liberal Democrat budget amendment was published in February 2026 with the expectation that the measures could be taken forward from the beginning of financial year 2026-2027. Officers provided advice to ensure that the proposals were legal and could be delivered. That advice did not include plans for how and when the proposals could be implemented. Officers have reviewed the operational, financial and practical implications of implementing the measures. This identified opportunities to deliver the agreed objectives in a sustainable and cost-effective way, building on wider service transformation and operational improvements. This report sets out the recommended approach to implementing the amendment. This includes a phased approach to public toilet reopening, targeted investment in additional street cleansing capacity and enhanced environmental enforcement arrangements. Together, these measures are intended to deliver visible improvements while ensuring implementation is affordable, deliverable and informed by evidence. Practical short-term action will be taken where possible, while further evidence-based reports to Cabinet will set out the longer-term operating model, staffing requirements, costs and compliance implications to maximise value for money and impact against objectives. This will help to ensure that once permanent changes are introduced, they are not subsequently reversed as cost pressures rise with the transition into a unitary authority. In year funding from the Transformation and Reinvestment Fund will be required to implement the recommendations. Subsequent advice will include budget bids as part of the 2027/2028 budget setting process. If the recommendations above are approved by Cabinet and implemented effectively the objectives of the political agreement would be met.

4.	**Public Toilets** The 2026/27 Liberal Democrat budget amendment proposed: *“Reopening of Parker’s Piece toilets. Having been closed based on usage data which was heavily impacted by availability of access only by coins, prior to COVID-19 these public toilets were heavily used and clearly provided an important service. They will be reopened immediately, incurring the full cost of cleaning and maintenance which will be initially budgeted for two years. During this time, reader access for bank cards will be installed with the intention of defraying these costs partly or completely. A report to members will then be brought forward after a short bedding-in period to allow a decision on the future of the toilets from 2028-29 onwards.”* *“Bank card readers at public toilets. Cashless access is recognised as essential to the long-term viability of pay-to-enter public toilets in high footfall locations. This bid will provide for installation of bank card readers at Parker’s Piece and Quayside public toilets to enable access and support continued operation beyond 2027/28 on a financially sustainable basis.”* **Option 1** – Immediate reopening of Parker’s Piece and permanent reopening of Quayside in line with the proposed budget amendment. This option would seek to implement the budget amendment by reopening Parker’s Piece immediately and introducing contactless payment infrastructure at both Parker’s Piece and Quayside at the earliest opportunity. **Benefits:** • Delivers the visible intent of the political commitment quickly • Increases public toilet availability • May improve accessibility and customer satisfaction • Enables earlier testing of contactless charging assumptions **Risks and limitations:**

	• The funding assumptions in the original amendment were prepared at a high level and did not fully account for the wider cost of implementation, reinstatement and ongoing operation. • Reopening requires more than opening facilities and collecting income; works required may include electrical upgrades, communications connectivity, access control changes, refurbishment and compliance works, payment infrastructure, signage and integration with cleaning and maintenance operations. • Elements of closed facilities have been used operationally for spares and repairs across the wider network, which may increase reinstatement requirements. • Quayside presents additional complexity because of its seasonal operation, site constraints and the practical challenge of adapting a facility while open. • There remains uncertainty regarding whether charging income would fully offset additional operating expenditure. This option is **not recommended** at this stage because reinstatement costs are not yet known, and there are implementation and affordability risks which may result in future pressure to close or subsidise facilities if operating assumptions are not realised. **Option 2** – Maintain existing arrangements and continue current provision only This option would retain current arrangements, including seasonal operation at Quayside and closure of Parker's Piece, while continuing investment in retained facilities. **Benefits:** • Avoids additional capital and revenue expenditure. • Maintains focus on existing investment priorities and service sustainability. • Avoids operational disruption and implementation risk. **Risks and limitations:** • Does not deliver the agreed political commitment. • Misses' opportunity to test alternative charging and operating approaches.

	- Does not establish evidence on whether contactless access can improve viability. This option is **not recommended** because it would not support the agreed objectives. **Option 3** – Phased implementation and evidence-led reopening (Recommended) This option delivers the objectives of the political commitment through a phased programme of feasibility, adaptation and monitored reopening. Phase 1 - Immediate reopening of as many individual Parkers Piece toilets as practical and feasible - Detailed condition review and cost assessment - Evaluation of contactless charging and access arrangements - Review future operating requirements Phase 2 - Targeted capital investment and implementation - Review of demand, usage, income, operating costs and customer feedback **Benefits** - Delivers on the political commitment - Reduces implementation and affordability risk - Allows future decisions to be informed by operational evidence and charging options - Maintains flexibility to respond to future requirements relating to accessibility, customer expectations and facility design - Gathers evidence based needs for advice to set out future direction, need and demand Officers would bring a paper to 23 September Cabinet setting out options for the future of Parkers Piece and Quayside toilets, including reopening and operating cost, payment options, and investment needed to meet new accessibility requirement

	This option is **recommended** because it enables immediate reopening and establishes a process to assess and fund viable long-term service provision.
5	**Street Cleaning** The 2026/27 Liberal Democrat budget amendment proposed: *“Improvement of street cleaning services… a new two-person shift working 12:00–19:00 within the existing 7 day week shift rota will be added, involving appointment of 4 additional staff. Staff will be deployed across the city from 12:00–16:00 to support programmed bin cleaning, jet spraying, removal of fly tips and graffiti, and from 16:00–19:00 to provide an additional bin and cleaning round…”* This advice considers how the objectives of the budget amendment can be delivered in a way which improves visible service outcomes whilst maintaining affordability, supporting ongoing transformation activity and avoiding unnecessary long-term growth in the Council’s operating cost base. The advice reflects wider service transformation already underway, including deployment of REEN smart bin technology, route optimisation and operational redesign intended to improve productivity and target resources where they deliver greatest benefit for residents. **Option 1** – Implement the original budget amendment in full through immediate permanent recruitment and expansion of operational resource. This option would introduce additional permanent staffing resource in 2-4 months to deliver extended cleansing coverage and increased programmed activity. **Benefits** • permanent increase in operational capacity • visible increase in city centre presence • additional resilience for environmental maintenance activity

Risks and limitations

- 2-4 month recruitment and onboarding timescales may delay implementation
- creates recurring revenue growth before operational demand and deployment assumptions are fully understood
- could embed operating arrangements ahead of wider service optimisation reducing incentive to realise efficiencies through transformation activity

This option is **not recommended**.

Option 2 – Maintain current arrangements and continue optimisation activity only

This option would retain existing service arrangements and rely solely on route optimisation, operational redesign and REEN deployment to deliver improvements.

Benefits

- avoids additional expenditure
- allows operational redesign to mature

Risks and limitations:

- unlikely to deliver visible improvements as quickly
- does not fully deliver the budget amendment objectives

This option is **not recommended**.

Option 3 – Phased implementation combining immediate targeted investment and operational redesign (Recommended)

This option combines temporary and targeted additional operational capacity with route optimisation and operational redesign.

Phase 1

• immediate deployment of temporary staff to focus on city centre and high-footfall locations

	Phase 2 • refinement of rounds using REEN data • redeployment of permanent staff as they can be released though round optimisation Phase 3 • review of operational outcomes and longer-term resource requirements Benefits • delivers visible improvements quickly • supports financial sustainability • maintains flexibility • enables longer-term productivity gains This option is **recommended** because it delivers the objectives of the political commitment whilst maintaining operational resilience and supporting wider transformation activity. Subject to evidence of effectiveness, officers preferred long-term model is likely to be two additional permanent members of staff, supported by service efficiencies equivalent to 2 FTEs. Officers will bring a more detailed paper on longer-term staffing requirements once the additional temporary resource is in place and its impact can be assessed. This will need to be ready to feed into the budget setting process in late Autumn. **2026/27 staff and other operational costs estimated ~£125k**
6	**Enforcement Activity** The 2026/27 Liberal Democrat budget proposed: *"Since the recent restructuring the reduced number of Public Realm Enforcement Officers have become primarily reactive resource with field visits mainly being driven by service requests from colleagues and the public. The appointment of two additional officers will reinforce their collective capacity for a programmed preventative mode of operation across the city, including a strengthened presence at the pressure points of*

	the city centre and seasonal weekends. This will enable the council's agreed policies across a wide range of environmental anti-social behaviour to be more systematically monitored and deterred." The new public safety team has blended the former public realm enforcement team and former ASB team. There has been some repurposing of roles and management efficiencies. The integrated team has reduced duplication and built capacity to continue to fulfil the demands of the service required for both ASB and public realm enforcement. That includes reactive as well as proactive visibility of services. Previously there were some overlaps in enforcement activity and visibility when out patrolling. Current operational activity includes weekend patrols, City Centre enforcement activity and coordinated working across services. Operational pressures include street-life related ASB, illegal trading, charity collections, waste management issues, pavement licenses and A-board compliance. Process mapping work has identified opportunities to improve coordination across services and highlighted increasing reactive demand. This work continues to identify areas for further efficiencies. Alongside the public safety team, the Council benefits from wider resources for housing and public realm who also carry out proactive and reactive enforcement that are funded via the Housing Revenue Account. This includes caretaking of our large housing blocks and estates, education and enforcement regarding fire management (which includes fly-tipping and safe storage) and environmental improvements to support preventative management. This team consists of 5 officers. **Option 1: Maintain Existing Arrangements**: Continue operating within the current staffing establishment, primarily deploying resources based on service requests from colleagues and the public. **Benefits** • No additional cost • Maintains current operating arrangements

	• Allows further development of existing partnership working **Risk and Limitations** • Existing reactive pressures remain • Limited capacity for preventative or planned activity • Reduced flexibility during peak demand periods This option is **not recommended**. **Option 2: Implement proposed amendment**: To recruit two permanent roles within the Public Safety Team at a cost of £105,000 to the team budget per year. **Benefits** • Increased operational capacity • Greater ability to undertake planned and preventative enforcement activity • Additional visibility in city centre and hotspot locations • Capacity to support wider enforcement and educational activity **Risk and Limitations** • Additional ongoing revenue cost around £105k • 2-4 month recruitment and onboarding timescales • Lack of certainty regarding the redevelopment of the City Centre estate (Civic Quarter) and impact on enforcement activity This option is **not recommended**. **Option 3: Phased or trial approach:** Introduce 2 temporary enforcement officers immediately to focus on identified hotspot areas including the city centre while operational demand and service data continues to be reviewed. A permanent appointment is expected to be made in September, which would replace one of the temporary posts, as part of the trial period up until March 2027. **Risks** • Allows operational testing and review

	• Retains flexibility around future staffing and operational model • Lower cost at £65k **Risks and Limitations** • Shorter-term operating model • Reduced continuity compared to permanent staffing arrangements • Potential difficulty in recruiting temporary staff This option is recommended as it will provide an opportunity for immediate resource to deployed into the City Centre whilst the service finalises processes across the team which could release internal capacity. This will also allow agility depending on Civic Quarter decisions later in 2026 which may impact critical spaces in the city centre. The Public Realm Enforcement team currently has four posts, including one vacancy. A temporary member of staff will be appointed to cover that vacancy, and a further temporary post will be added, taking the team to five officers. The additional capacity will run until March 2027. A permanent appointment is expected to be made in September, which would replace one of the temporary posts. **Cost: estimated £65k**
6.	**Corporate plan and Council Vision**
6.1	The proposals support delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and Council Vision by maintaining high-quality, accessible public services and a clean, welcoming public realm. They contribute to a sustainable and inclusive city by improving the resident and visitor experience based on an evidence-based approach to ensure services remain financially sustainable. The recommendations also support the Council's ambition to be a well-run organisation by using evidence, operational learning and technology to improve service delivery, and deliver better value for money while maintaining flexibility to respond to future demand.
7.	**Consultation, engagement and communication**

7.1	The proposals have been developed through operational review, previous budget decisions, performance information and engagement with relevant Council services and members. They reflect operational experience, customer feedback, financial considerations and the need to balance service quality, accessibility and long-term sustainability. Implementation will be supported by continued engagement with members, staff, Trade Unions and key stakeholders, alongside clear communication with residents and service users as changes are introduced and impacts monitored.
8.	**Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact**
8.1	**Public Toilets** The proposals are intended to deliver a sustainable, accessible and financially viable public toilet service that supports the Council's agreed policy objectives. Success will be measured through operational performance, customer feedback and ongoing review to inform future investment decisions. **Street Cleaning** The proposals are intended to improve environmental quality through more effective deployment of resources while supporting long-term service transformation and financial sustainability. Success will be monitored through operational performance, visible standards and resident feedback. **Enforcement** The proposals are intended to strengthen the Council's ability to respond proportionately to environmental offences and anti-social behaviour through a more effective and targeted enforcement approach. Success will be monitored through enforcement activity, compliance levels and resident feedback.
8.	**Implications**

8.1	**Relevant risks**
	Delivery of the recommendations is dependent on achieving visible improvement whilst maintaining affordability and supporting wider service transformation. Key risks include: • implementation creating recurring cost pressures before service needs and longer-term efficiencies are realised; • visible improvements not being delivered quickly enough to meet expectations; • operational changes creating unintended pressure elsewhere in the city; • delays to implementation due to workforce or mobilisation requirements. These risks will be mitigated through the recommended phased implementation approach, targeted deployment, operational monitoring and review points prior to any permanent changes in service capacity.
	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
8.2	The recommendations have been developed to maintain operational flexibility ahead of Local Government Reorganisation to avoid creating unnecessary long-term dependency on permanent structural growth before future service integration discussions.
	Financial Implications
8.3	The recommended options will be funded from the Council's Transformation and Reinvestment Fund at a cost of up to £200k. Additional funding for public toilet reinstatement and operation to be confirmed following completion of the necessary surveys and cost assessments.
	Legal Implications

8.4	Implementation may require temporary changes to deployment arrangements and limited additional operational capacity during mobilisation. The recommended approach prioritises redesign and optimisation before consideration of permanent staffing growth in line with the Council's Best Value statutory duties. Any workforce implications will be managed through normal Council procesess and engagement arrangements.
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
8.5	**Public Toilets** The UK Supreme Court has clarified the interpretation of "sex" for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has subsequently published a draft Code of Practice and guidance to reflect that judgment. At the time of writing, the draft Code of Practice has not been approved by Parliament and is therefore not yet in force. Cambridge City Council is a signatory to the Cambridgeshire-wide Equality Pledge which states: "We believe in the dignity of all people and their right to respect and equality of opportunity. We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that diversity brings to our community. Our aspiration is for Cambridge and the wider region to be safe, welcoming and inclusive." The council recognises that the updated Code has prompted discussion and concerns from communities about how public services balance the rights, needs and dignity of different groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. The council remains committed to providing services that are lawful, accessible, safe and respectful for everyone who uses them. Future investment decisions should take account of accessibility requirements, resident expectations and any relevant changes in the legal or policy framework relating to public toilet provision.

	Street Cleaning Cleaner, safer and more accessible public spaces benefit all residents, visitors and businesses, with particular benefits for older people, disabled people and those who rely most on public spaces. Equality impacts will continue to be considered as part of implementation, and an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken where required. **Public Realm Enforcement** Increased visible presence in public spaces, particularly in high-pressure areas, may improve perceptions of safety across all communities. A proactive approach reduces dependence on individuals reporting issues, benefiting those who may face barriers to engagement (e.g. digital exclusion, language barriers). Better management of environmental issues (e.g. littering, obstruction) supports accessibility for disabled people and those with mobility needs. Proactive engagement in the city centre will support vulnerable people such as street life to be signposted to relevant services There is a risk that increased enforcement activity could disproportionately affect certain groups (e.g. young people, minority communities, or vulnerable individuals) if not carefully managed. Increased presence in city-centre "pressure points" may lead to concerns about over-surveillance or bias.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
8.6	The proposals support a more targeted approach to service delivery through route optimisation and smarter deployment of operational activity. Improved efficiency and reduced unnecessary servicing activity may support reduced operational mileage and more effective use of resources.
	Procurement Implications

8.7	Implementation is expected to be delivered primarily through existing operational arrangements. Where additional equipment, temporary resource or supporting services are required, procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with Council procedures.
	Community Safety Implications
8.8	Maintaining cleaner and well-presented public spaces supports confidence in the public realm and contributes positively to perceptions of safety and environmental quality
	Consultation and Communication Implications
8.9	Implementation will require communication with staff, Members and residents regarding expectations, delivery arrangements and monitoring of outcomes
	If you have a query on the report please contact Alistair Wilson, Assistant Director for Environment and Public Realm, 01223 458514, alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk