

REPORT TITLE: Future Provision and Operation of Public Toilets at Parker's Piece and Quayside

To:

Cabinet 23rd September 2026

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Market and Petersfield

Director Approval: Director James Elms confirms 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	It is recommended that Cabinet: a) Notes the progress made since its decision of 7 July 2026, including the reopening of Parker's Piece public toilets following completion of the necessary condition, compliance and operational checks. b) Agrees that Parker's Piece public toilets continue to operate year-round, free of charge, while usage, operating costs, maintenance requirements and customer experience are monitored to inform the longer-term operating model. c) Agrees that Quayside public toilets move from seasonal to year-round operation from 1 October 2026, subject to confirmation by the Assistant Director – Public Realm and Environment and Chief Finance Officer that an appropriate and sustainable funding source has been identified. d) Agrees that Quayside operates daily from 9.00am to 8.00pm during British Summer Time and from 9.00am to 5.00pm during the winter period, with cleaning, opening and locking provided through the Council's contractual arrangements.

	e) Agrees that officers: i. progress the introduction of contactless payment at Quayside, subject to technical feasibility, accessibility, affordability and value for money; and ii. undertake a condition and feasibility assessment of Quayside and develop costed options for refurbishment in the short to medium term, with any additional capital requirement brought forward through the appropriate budget and decision-making process. f) Delegates authority to the Assistant Director – Public Realm and Environment, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, to determine the detailed access, charging, opening, cleaning, security and operational arrangements for Parker’s Piece and Quayside within approved budgets, including making reasonable adjustments to opening hours and monitoring usage, income, costs, accessibility, customer experience, maintenance demand and incidents.
2.	Purpose and reason for the report
2.1	On 7 July 2026, Cabinet considered a report on changes to public toilet provision, street cleansing and public realm enforcement activity. The report followed the 2026/27 budget amendment and subsequent political agreement relating to the reopening of Parker’s Piece and Quayside public toilets and additional resources for street cleansing and public realm enforcement. Cabinet agreed a phased and evidence-led approach. This included the immediate reopening of as many individual toilets at Parker’s Piece as was reasonably practicable following condition and compliance checks, together with a further report on the longer-term operation of Parker’s Piece and Quayside. This report provides the required update. It summarises progress since the July decision and recommends that Parker’s Piece continues to operate while usage and operating information is collected. It also recommends that Quayside moves from seasonal to year-round operation, recognising the strategic importance of the location and the public benefit of providing reliable toilet provision throughout the year. The report identifies the

	financial and operational implications of this approach and proposes continued monitoring to inform future service and investment decisions.
3.	Background and Key Issues
3.1	Parker's Piece Public Toilets Following Cabinet approval, officers commenced work to reopen Parker's Piece public toilets at the earliest practical opportunity. The facility had been closed and reopening therefore required assessment of the condition of the building and its services and confirmation that it could safely and appropriately be returned to public use. Work undertaken has included: • inspection and testing of plumbing infrastructure; • inspection of electrical installations and services; • assessment and completion of necessary repairs and reinstatement work; • external redecorations • establishment of cleaning and servicing arrangements; • review of access and security arrangements; • completion of water hygiene and legionella requirements; • consideration of accessibility requirements; and • assessment of the infrastructure required to support future payment arrangements. Officers from Public Realm and Property Services have worked with relevant contractors to accelerate the reopening programme. Existing contractual and supply arrangements have been used where appropriate to avoid unnecessary delay and the recommissioning programme noted above has been delivered at a cost of circa £4,000. Once the water hygiene testing certification was received the toilets were reopened on 14th August with all the 5 toilets (including one disabled) within the block being brought back into service. The toilets will operate from 8:00am to 8:00pm every day on the same cleaning rotas as previously. The immediate objective has been to restore a safe and usable public facility rather than undertake comprehensive refurbishment before reopening. This has allowed provision to be restored while giving the Council an opportunity to understand actual usage and

3.2	operational requirements before determining the appropriate scale of longer-term investment. Initial Operating Period The reopening of Parker’s Piece should be regarded as the first stage of establishing its longer-term operating model. Officers will monitor the operation of both Parker’s Piece and Quayside following implementation of the arrangements recommended in this report. Monitoring will be used to assess performance, manage costs and identify any required operational changes. It will not delay the introduction of year-round opening at Quayside. During the initial operating period, officers will monitor: • facility usage; • cleaning requirements; • operating and utility costs; • maintenance demand; • incidents of vandalism or misuse; • customer feedback and complaints; • accessibility issues identified through operation; and • reliability and availability of the facility. This evidence will help establish whether further capital investment is justified and inform decisions about the appropriate future standard and configuration of the facility. Although operational evidence will continue to be collected at Parker’s Piece, the proposal for year-round opening at Quayside reflects a wider policy judgment about accessibility, city-centre provision, visitor demand and the availability of facilities throughout the year.
4.	Future Operating Model
4.1	The evidence currently available indicates that Parker’s Piece and Quayside have different physical characteristics and operating cost profiles. However, both sites occupy strategically important locations and contribute to the availability and geographic coverage of public toilet provision in and around the city centre. Parker’s Piece reopened in August 2026 and should remain operational while officers monitor usage, cost, maintenance requirements and customer experience. Quayside serves a busy city-centre and riverside location used by residents, visitors, customers of nearby businesses, river users and people travelling through the area.

4.2	Although demand is expected to be greatest during the main tourism season, the city centre and riverside remain active throughout the year. Seasonal closure removes public provision from this location for a significant part of the year and may particularly affect people who need reliable access to toilet facilities. Officers therefore recommend that Quayside moves to year-round operation. This will create additional recurring expenditure, but it will provide a consistent and more accessible service and remove uncertainty for users about seasonal opening arrangements. Usage, cost, income, maintenance demand, customer feedback and incidents will continue to be monitored. This evidence will inform detailed operational management, future budget planning and any subsequent decisions about refurbishment or service configuration. Contactless Payment The 2026/27 budget amendment identified contactless access as an important element of the proposed operating arrangements for Parker's Piece and Quayside. The introduction of year-round opening at Quayside should not be dependent upon contactless infrastructure being installed. The facility should initially operate using the existing access arrangements, with contactless payment introduced when a technically suitable, accessible and value-for-money solution is available. Officers have therefore considered the requirements associated with introducing contactless payment, including: • access-control equipment; • payment terminals; • power and communications connectivity; • transaction and system charges; • ongoing maintenance and support; • reliability and arrangements in the event of system failure; and • accessibility for different groups of users. Experience from the Council's other facilities, including Silver Street, provides an opportunity to inform a technical and operational approach but existing facilities will potentially require a bespoke solution for retrofitting at each site rather incorporating payment mechanisms into any new build design. Contactless charging may also provide a contribution towards operating costs and will provide useful information about facility usage. However, there is currently insufficient
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4.3	evidence to assume that charging income alone will fully recover the operating, maintenance and lifecycle costs of either facility. The business case for payment infrastructure should therefore be based upon whole-life value for money rather than an assumption that either facility will become self-financing. Accessibility and Future Investment The immediate reopening of Parker's Piece has appropriately concentrated on returning the existing facility to safe and operational use. Any future substantial refurbishment provides an opportunity to consider the facility more comprehensively, including accessibility, internal layout, cubicle provision, baby-changing provision, privacy and dignity and the needs of a diverse range of users. Officers recommend that major capital investment is not committed until sufficient operational evidence is available to determine the appropriate scale and nature of improvements. This will reduce the risk of undertaking significant refurbishment before future requirements and usage are sufficiently understood. Year-round opening at Quayside will improve the consistency and geographic availability of public toilet provision, particularly for people who may need to plan journeys around access to suitable facilities. The existing facilities must nevertheless continue to be assessed for accessibility. Year-round operation does not remove the need to consider future improvements to access, internal configuration, signage, baby-changing provision, privacy and dignity.
5.	Quayside Public Toilets
5.1	Quayside public toilets currently operate seasonally during the main tourism and river-use period, from [insert current opening date] until the end of British Summer Time. During this period, the toilets are open daily from 9.00am to 8.00pm. Subject to Cabinet approval, the facility will move directly to year-round operation from the end of the current seasonal period. For 2026, the winter operating arrangements would therefore begin on 25 October 2026, when British Summer Time ends. During the winter period, the proposed opening hours are 9.00am to 5.00pm daily. The facility would return to its longer opening hours of 9.00am to 8.00pm daily when British Summer Time begins. This provides a consistent year-round service while reflecting reduced daylight hours, expected patterns of demand and the operational and community-safety considerations associated with later evening opening during winter. Authority should be delegated to the Assistant Director – Public Realm and Environment to make minor adjustments to opening hours where operational experience, usage, community-safety considerations or seasonal conditions

demonstrate that this is appropriate, provided that the facility continues to operate throughout the year and any changes can be accommodated within the approved budget.

Cleaning, daily opening, locking and associated routine servicing will be delivered through the Council's existing contractual arrangements. The contract requirements and associated costs will be adjusted to cover the additional winter operating period and the proposed winter opening hours.

Before the winter operating period begins, Property Services and Public Realm officers will confirm whether any additional measures are required to support safe and reliable winter operation. This will include consideration of:

- frost protection and the resilience of external pipework;
- heating and ventilation requirements;
- internal and external lighting;
- water hygiene and legionella controls;
- drainage and slip risks during cold weather;
- building security;
- preventative maintenance and emergency call-out arrangements; and
- the suitability of access and locking arrangements during reduced daylight hours.

Any essential works required to enable winter opening will be completed before the seasonal transition. If those assessments identify material capital expenditure beyond existing approved budgets, this will be reported and approval sought through the appropriate financial process. Minor operational or maintenance works will be managed within the approved provision where practicable.

Current indicative information suggests that the combined operating, maintenance, rent and rates costs associated with Quayside are approximately £4,000–£5,000 per month. Moving to year-round operation is therefore expected to create an additional recurring revenue requirement, although the precise amount will depend upon the agreed winter cleaning specification, contractual costs, utility consumption and any additional maintenance requirements.

Officers will monitor winter usage, cleaning requirements, incidents, maintenance demand, customer feedback and operating costs. This information will be used to refine the detailed operating arrangements and inform future budget planning, rather than to determine whether the facility should remain open throughout the year.

5.2

Condition and future refurbishment

The move to year-round operation will increase use of the Quayside facility and place additional demands on the building, fixtures, services and cleaning arrangements. Although the toilets can continue to operate in their current form, officers consider that

	refurbishment should be considered in the short to medium term to ensure that the facility remains safe, reliable, accessible and appropriate for this prominent city-centre location. Year-round opening should not be delayed while the longer-term refurbishment options are considered, provided that the facility remains safe and operational. Essential compliance and maintenance works will continue to be addressed as they arise. Once the assessment has been completed, officers will develop a costed and prioritised refurbishment proposal. Any works requiring capital investment beyond existing approved budgets will be brought forward through the Council's capital and budget-setting process. The timing of any refurbishment will need to be coordinated carefully to minimise disruption and, where practicable, avoid closure during periods of highest demand.
6.	Wider Public Toilet Network
6.1	Parker's Piece and Quayside form part of a wider network of public toilet provision across Cambridge and should not be considered entirely in isolation. The Council has continued to invest in retained public toilet facilities, including refurbishment and improvement works at Chesterton Recreation Ground, Coleridge Recreation Ground, Jesus Green, Drummer Street, Cherry Hinton Hall and Nightingale Recreation Ground. The Council has also been progressing improved provision for people with more complex accessibility requirements, including Changing Places provision. The decision to operate Quayside throughout the year represents an enhancement to the existing network and creates an ongoing revenue commitment. This must be managed alongside the Council's responsibilities for maintaining and improving its other retained facilities. Future investment decisions should take account of: • geographic coverage and alternative nearby provision; • levels and patterns of demand; • accessibility and equality considerations; • building and asset condition; • cleaning and maintenance requirements; • opportunities to improve customer experience; and

	• whole-life capital and revenue costs. Year-round operation at Quayside, together with the continued operation of Parker's Piece, will improve the consistency and geographic coverage of provision in and around the city centre. Evidence from both sites will inform future consideration of opening hours, charging, refurbishment priorities and the wider public toilet network.
7.	Corporate plan
7.1	Year-round operation at Quayside supports an inclusive and accessible city by providing reliable public toilet provision throughout the year at a strategically important city-centre and riverside location. It supports residents, visitors, local businesses and the visitor economy and particularly benefits people who require ready access to toilet facilities. The proposal creates an additional recurring cost. Financial sustainability will therefore be supported through an identified revenue budget, proportionate operating arrangements, continued cost and usage monitoring, and the investigation of contactless charging as a contribution towards expenditure. Monitoring will enable the Council to test whether the service is operating efficiently and to make evidence-led adjustments to opening hours, cleaning arrangements and future investment.
8.	Consultation, engagement and communication
8.1	The proposal for year-round opening reflects the importance placed on the availability of public toilets by residents, visitors and city-centre stakeholders. Before implementation, officers will engage with the Council's Equalities team, the cleaning and maintenance providers, the building landlord where applicable, nearby businesses and other relevant stakeholders regarding the detailed operating arrangements. Communications will clearly set out the opening date, daily opening hours, accessibility arrangements, any charges and the arrangements for reporting faults or cleanliness concerns. Development of the proposals within this report has been informed through previous budget development activity, operational review work and engagement undertaken across Council services.

	The approach proposed in this report draws upon: • previous budget decisions and associated service reviews relating to public toilet provision; • operational experience from management of the existing public toilet network; • customer feedback and usage information where available; • learning from recent investment and operational changes at retained sites, including Silver Street and the Grand Arcade. • consideration of accessibility and equality impacts associated with public toilet availability; • internal engagement with operational services, Property Services, Finance, Equalities and Legal colleagues. Work undertaken to date has highlighted that decisions regarding toilet provision are influenced by a combination of demand, customer experience, affordability, asset condition, accessibility requirements and deliverability. Further engagement will be required during implementation including: • communications with residents and users regarding any reopening arrangements; • engagement with accessibility and equalities colleagues on future design assumptions; • operational engagement regarding cleaning, maintenance and inspection arrangements; • member engagement on delivery options and monitoring.
9.	Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact
9.1	The recommendations are intended to deliver the commitment to improve public toilet provision while ensuring that future arrangements are operationally and financially sustainable. The principal anticipated outcomes are: • continued availability of public toilet provision at Parker's Piece; • year-round availability of public toilet provision at Quayside;

	• development of modern contactless payment arrangements where these are technically feasible and represent value for money; • improved information about usage, customer demand and operating costs; • better evidence to inform future capital investment decisions; and • effective management and monitoring of the additional permanent revenue commitment. • greater certainty for residents and visitors; • improved year-round geographic coverage; • reduced barriers for people requiring reliable access to toilets; • support for the city-centre and riverside visitor economy; • reduced risk of inappropriate urination associated with the absence of nearby facilities; • improved information about winter demand and operating requirements. Accessible and reliable public toilet provision can be particularly important to disabled people, older people, pregnant women, families with young children, carers and people with medical or other needs which make ready access to toilet facilities important. The proposed monitoring period will enable officers to assess whether the arrangements are delivering the intended benefits. Performance information will include, where available: • facility usage; • customer feedback; • accessibility issues; • operating costs and income; • cleanliness; • complaints; • maintenance demand; and • reliability and availability.
10.	Implications

10.1	Financial Risk
	The 2026/27 budget amendment identified £25,000 revenue funding associated with reopening Parker's Piece and £25,000 capital funding to introduce bank card readers at Parker's Piece and Quayside. Officer review has identified that reopening and operating public toilets involves both capital and recurring revenue expenditure. Potential capital expenditure includes: • refurbishment and reinstatement work; • electrical upgrades; • payment and access-control infrastructure; • communications connectivity; • signage; and • compliance and accessibility improvements. Current indicative information suggests that Quayside costs approximately £4,000–£5,000 per month to operate, including cleaning, maintenance, rent and rates. If the current seasonal period covers approximately six months, year-round operation will create an estimated additional annual revenue requirement of £24,000–£30,000. This estimate should be confirmed against the proposed opening hours, cleaning specification, utility costs and contractual arrangements. The cleaning cost accounts for approximately two thirds of the cost with the other ancillary items making up the remaining third. There may also be one-off costs associated with recommissioning the facility for winter operation, lighting, heating or frost protection, security, signage and any changes to access arrangements. These costs should be quantified before implementation. Contactless charging may generate income, but there is insufficient evidence to assume that this will meet the full cost of operation. The financial assessment should therefore avoid including unverified charging income as a guaranteed saving. The additional cost of year-round operation will be met from [funding source]. A budget of £30,000 will be required in 2026/27, reflecting the implementation date, followed by ongoing annual provision of £60,000 from 2027/28. Actual expenditure and income will be monitored and reported through the Council's established budget-monitoring arrangements. Any material variance or requirement for additional investment will be addressed through the appropriate financial process. Any proposal to extend Quayside to year-round operation, undertake significant refurbishment or otherwise create additional permanent revenue expenditure would

	require an identified funding source and appropriate approval through the Council's financial and budgetary processes. The longer-term operating model should seek to minimise additional pressure on the General Fund and should be considered alongside the Council's wider Medium-Term Financial Strategy and future arrangements associated with Local Government Reorganisation.
	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
10.2	Year-round operation will create an ongoing service and financial commitment that may transfer into the arrangements established through Local Government Reorganisation. However, the proposed service uses an existing Council facility and established operational arrangements and does not require the creation of a significant new organisational structure. Usage, cost, contractual and asset information will be maintained to support due diligence and service planning through the transition. Where practicable, procurement and contractual arrangements will retain sufficient flexibility to respond to future organisational requirements.
	Legal Implications
10.3	The Council must ensure that the operation and future development of its public toilet facilities comply with relevant statutory requirements, including health and safety, building and accessibility requirements and the Equality Act 2010. The recommendations do not commit the Council to a particular future design or configuration of either facility. This is deliberate and allows any significant future refurbishment to take account of prevailing legal requirements, relevant statutory guidance and appropriate legal and equalities advice at the point detailed proposals are developed. Any contractual or procurement arrangements associated with payment systems, access-control equipment or significant future works will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and other applicable legal requirements. Any changes to the cleaning, maintenance, security or property arrangements will need to comply with the relevant contractual, procurement and property requirements.

	Officers should also confirm whether the Council's lease or occupation arrangements for Quayside permit year-round operation and whether landlord consent is required for payment or access-control equipment
	Equalities and socio-economic Implications
10.4	Access to suitable public toilets can have a disproportionate impact on some groups, including disabled people, older people, pregnant women, families with young children, carers and people with medical conditions which require more frequent access to toilet facilities. The reopening of Parker's Piece and introduction of year-round operation at Quay side therefore have positive equality implications by increasing the availability and geographic coverage of public toilet provision. Future refurbishment and investment decisions will need to consider accessibility, privacy, dignity and the appropriate range and configuration of facilities. They will also need to take account of the Equality Act 2010, prevailing statutory guidance and relevant legal advice. The recommended phased approach enables the Council to continue improving provision without unnecessarily delaying operational improvements, while retaining sufficient flexibility for future design decisions to respond to legal requirements, equalities assessment, operational experience and customer evidence. Year-round operation is expected to have a positive equality impact by removing the period during which the facility is unavailable. This is likely to be particularly beneficial to disabled people, older people, pregnant women, carers, families with young children and people with medical conditions requiring frequent or urgent toilet access. Any charging arrangement could, however, create a financial or practical barrier for some users. The detailed design must therefore consider access for people who do not have a contactless bank card or suitable payment device, as well as the operation of accessible facilities and any applicable concessionary arrangements.
	Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications
10.5	Year-round operation is expected to result in a modest increase in water and energy consumption, cleaning materials, consumables, waste and servicing journeys compared with seasonal operation. Where practicable, low-consumption fittings, energy-efficient

	lighting, environmentally preferable cleaning products and efficient servicing arrangements will be used to mitigate these impacts. Providing an available public facility throughout the year may also reduce incidents of inappropriate urination and the associated cleansing and environmental impacts.
	Procurement Implications
10.6	Procurement requirements will depend upon the preferred technical solution for contactless payment and the extent of any future capital works. Officers will seek to make appropriate use of existing contractual and procurement arrangements where these provide value for money and are compliant with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Any procurement required for payment infrastructure, access-control systems or future refurbishment will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procurement requirements and within approved budgets. The move to year-round operation will require a variation to existing cleaning, unlocking, inspection and maintenance arrangements. Contractual arrangements should provide sufficient flexibility to vary cleaning frequency and opening hours in response to actual demand while maintaining appropriate service standards.
	Community Safety Implications
10.7	Public toilets can experience vandalism, anti-social behaviour and misuse, particularly where facilities are unattended or operate for extended hours. The detailed operating arrangements for Parker's Piece and Quayside will therefore continue to take account of opening hours, access arrangements, inspection and cleaning frequencies, security, reporting arrangements and the design of any future access-control system. Usage and incident information gathered during operation will help officers determine w Year-round opening will extend the period during which the facility is available and may increase exposure to vandalism, rough sleeping, drug-related activity, anti-social behaviour or misuse. These risks will be managed through appropriate opening hours,

	lighting, access controls, cleaning and inspection frequencies, fault-reporting arrangements and liaison with relevant community safety and enforcement services. Officers should review whether the proposed 4.00pm closing time remains appropriate throughout winter and retain delegated authority to adjust hours where evidence demonstrates a significant operational or community-safety concern. Whether any changes to the operating arrangements are required.
11.	Background documents Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
11.1	• Report to Cabinet on the 6th of July 2026 • The 2026/27 budget decision or amendment; • Previous Equality Impact Assessment • EHRC guidance
12.	Appendices
12.1	None
	To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Alistair Wilson, City Services, alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk