RECOMMENDATIONS

1) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Principal Engineer in consultation with the Deputy Leader to conduct a consultation with all Town and Parish Councils for their possible adoption of conveniences in Chesham, Great Missenden, Prestwood, Chalfont St Peter, Little Chalfont, and Chalfont St Giles.

2) That £225,000 be transferred from the provisional capital sum to the approved and committed capital programme for a programme of refurbishment of Conveniences adopted by Town and Parish Councils if the local Town or Parish Council agrees to adopt the facilities maintenance and operation.

3) That Cabinet delegate authority to the Principal Engineer in consultation with the Deputy Leader to instigate a Public Conveniences cleansing contract tendering process facilitating continued use and operation, following termination of the current cleansing contract pending possible transfer of facilities to Town and Parish Councils.

4) That the cleansing contract run for a period of 2 years with a possible extension of 1 year while the short to medium-term adoption of each site is developed in conjunction with the Town and Parish Councils.

Relationship to Council Objectives

1. Efficient and effective customer focused services
2. Safe healthy and cohesive communities
3. Conserve the environment and promote sustainability

Implications

(i) This is a key decision and is on the forward plan.
This is within the Policy Framework.

Financial Implications

1) The majority of the Councils’ public conveniences are in a poor state of repair. Town and Parish Councils appear to be concerned about the liability of maintaining such facilities and may be more likely to consider adopting conveniences where they have been refurbished.

2) Whether the conveniences are adopted or not the Council needs to carry out a refurbishment programme to keep the cost of maintenance and cleaning to an optimal level. The estimated cost of a refurbishment programme is £225,000 and could be carried out over 2 years.

3) If Town and Parish Councils can be encouraged to adopt public conveniences and subsequently carry out cleansing the cost of refurbishment is likely to be recouped in 3-4 years.

4) In Old Amersham the opportunity to work in partnership with a local businesses will be explored with a view to making a small payment for making existing private facilities open to the public. If successful this will allow the closure of the existing facility in the Amersham Old Town Car Park to be considered.

5) A new contract for the cleaning of facilities needs to be procured to maintain services pending the outcome of discussions with the private sector and Town and Parish Councils. The contract will need to be structured to allow individual conveniences to be removed from the contract once any new arrangements come into effect unless arrangements are made between the District and Town/Parish Councils for their funding of the operation.

Risk Implications

The new refuse and street cleansing contract makes no provision for cleansing of public conveniences; a way forward needs to be agreed to ensure facilities remain operational or possible alternatives are in place.

Equalities Implications

Equality implications will be considered as the preferred option(s) are detailed on a location by location basis.

Sustainability Implications

Reviewing the provision of public conveniences and their operation should be beneficial to the Council’s environmental impact.

Background
1 There is no statutory obligation for the Council to provide public conveniences but many people do believe it is a “Council responsibility”. It has been suggested that if a Town hosts a market such facilities are statutory. This is not correct.

2 This review has been raised with Members for three main reasons:-

   i) The current condition and cost of maintaining the existing facilities.

   ii) The need to review the cleansing operation prior to termination of the current cleansing contract.

   iii) Budget constraints.

3 The provision of clean, safe and accessible public conveniences is a very emotive topic, especially as it impacts in the main, on those with medical conditions and those with young children. Providing the facility is in a clean and useable condition, such amenities support the overall comfort and attraction of visiting a town/village centre.

4 Baby changing facilitates are not provided at any of the current facilities.

5 There are currently eight facilities in the District and a summary of their overall operation including further considerations is detailed in Appendix.

6 The 2010/11 Outturn for this function was £117k with 0.86 FTE Officer support.

7 The 2011/12 budget for this function is £125k including 0.84 FTE Officer support. The current cleansing contract fee, the energy, water and general rates are not all accounted for on a facility by facility basis so are averaged out over all sites at £15,625.

8 It is fair to report that although well used at times, all of the facilities suffer from some form of anti-social behaviour.

9 Average annual repairs of all sites over the past 5 years have been £5k.

10 The Council is required to make significant budget savings. Following detailed consideration of this issue by the Community & Environment Committee on the 13 September 2011 and the Corporate Asset Management Group on the 28 February 2012 where options such as; closure of sites, local loo schemes, refurbishment and transfer of responsibility were considered, it is recommended that:
i) The short to medium-term operation of the existing facilities should continue with the exception of the Dovecot public conveniences.

ii) Officers to invite Town and Parish Councils to secure continued operation and maintenance of the facilities on the basis that the District Council carries out a refurbishment prior to adoption.

iii) Officers to explore alternatives such as a local loo scheme, for the Dovecot public convenience

iv) Funding of the refurbishment of conveniences to be programmed to coincide with the adoption of facilities by Town and Parish Councils and possible cleansing contract arrangements.

Background papers: None