



Improving Public Access to Toilets

Guidance on Community Toilet Schemes and SatLav



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November 2008

Department for Communities and Local Government

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Foreword



In March this year we published *Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets – A Strategic Guide*. For the first time, the Guide set out from central Government’s perspective why access to good quality public toilets is something that we should all value – not just in terms of public health and sanitation, but because they help to create attractive, inclusive and welcoming places.

The Guide highlighted some excellent examples of councils developing innovative approaches to promote access to quality toilets in their areas. This Guidance provides more practical advice on two of those approaches – the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames’ Community Toilet Scheme, and Westminster City Council’s “SatLav” initiative. Approaches such as these show what local authorities and their partners can do if they think creatively about improving public access to toilets in their areas.

The state of our public toilets remains an issue of public interest, and is something that directly impacts on people’s everyday lives and well being. That’s why I welcomed the Communities and Local Government Select Committee’s inquiry into public toilet provision earlier this year, and presented evidence in writing and in person. Their report was published on 22 October and contains many positive comments about the advice given to local authorities and their partners in the Strategic Guide. I should like to thank the Committee for their support of the Strategic Guide and of this Guidance in particular.

I should also like to thank the environmental charity ENCAMS for their help in producing this Guidance, and the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames and Westminster City Council for their valuable support and advice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Andrews". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Baroness Andrews OBE
Communities and Local Government

Introduction

Communities and Local Government published its strategic guide, *Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets*, on 6 March 2008. Amongst other things, the guide highlighted some innovative approaches taken by local authorities to public toilet provision, although it did not prescribe what approaches they should take. Local authorities are the ones who are best placed to determine the mix of approaches most suitable to their area, and this guidance is intended to support them in making that decision.

Richmond-upon-Thames' Community Toilet Scheme and Westminster's "SatLav" initiative were two of the approaches that were highlighted in the strategic guide and this publication is in response to the guide's promise that this Department would "work with these areas to develop a practical toolkit for other partnerships that are interested in exploring these approaches."

About this guidance

This guidance is primarily intended for local authorities and partnerships wishing to explore the feasibility of setting up a Community Toilet Scheme. It provides an overview of the Community Toilet Scheme developed by the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, as well as a step-by-step guide on how to set up a similar scheme.

In addition, it includes a case study of the SatLav text messaging service operated by Westminster City Council, which makes use of mobile phone technology to help the public locate their closest accessible toilets. This guidance enables local councils to find out more about why and how Westminster developed this approach, and to consider whether a similar scheme could offer benefits in improving access to public toilets in their areas.

Who is the guidance intended for

It is intended for local authorities and their partners who want to improve access to public toilets in their area. It will be of particular interest to local leaders and policy makers such as executive councillors and local partnership board members who are responsible for shaping local service provision.

It will also be of interest to senior managers, local government officers and ward councillors who may be responsible for implementing similar schemes, or who are simply interested in exploring in more detail the innovative approaches that some local authorities are now taking towards public toilet provision.

Why is it needed

The strategic guide on *Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets* showed that the vast majority of people want greater access to better quality public toilets. It set out the case for public toilets and explained how “by working in partnership, and adapting a range of approaches to the needs of different areas, significant change for the better can be achieved.”

The strategic guide highlighted the importance of sharing knowledge about good practice and alternative approaches to provision as an important step in improving public access to toilets. This guidance is therefore intended to share in more detail the good practice of Richmond-upon-Thames and Westminster councils, stimulate other councils to think about what practical steps they might take in reviewing their own approaches to public toilet provision, and encourage greater partnership working in ensuring that people have better access to good quality public toilets.

Richmond's Community Toilet Scheme

Part 1: Overview

Richmond's Community Toilet Scheme allows members of the public to use the toilet facilities in a range of approved local businesses and other organisations during their opening hours. This service is made available for free and without any expectation that users will purchase goods or services. Participating premises undertake to keep their toilets safe, clean, hygienic, easily accessible, and well-stocked. In return, they receive an annual payment (currently £600 +VAT). The council also maintains public liability insurance.

A wide range of businesses and organisations participate in the scheme, including pubs, restaurants, cafes, community centres, retail stores, council offices, and supermarkets. The scheme is actively managed by the council to ensure that it encompasses a good geographical spread of facilities, as well as high standards of toilet provision and maintenance, access to toilets at all times of the day and well into the evening, the provision of accessible facilities for disabled people, and baby-change. Of the 75 partners currently in the Community Toilet Scheme:

- almost half have facilities for disabled people
- 22 have baby-change facilities
- 28 are available during the morning
- nearly all are available during the afternoon
- over three-quarters are available during the evening (some until past 12pm).

By providing greater access to toilets across the Borough the scheme is helping to address issues such as healthy living and social inclusion. Older people, parents and people with health problems are still able to maintain a more active lifestyle and confidently enjoy the local environment. A recent survey by Help the Aged¹ found that 52 per cent of respondents agreed that the lack of public toilets in their local area prevented them from going out as much as they would like. This is more than an inconvenience; older people who are restricted to their own homes are more likely to suffer from depression.

¹ Nowhere to go – *public toilet provision in the UK*, Help the Aged (2007)

The evidence also suggested that there are large numbers of people who are restricted in their movements to places within easy reach of toilets. Again there are serious implications to this, since it is known that physical activity is critical in later life to help older people remain independent in their own homes for longer. Previous research² has also found that the provision of toilets would encourage 94 per cent of 16–19 year olds to use urban green spaces more frequently. Similarly, access to toilets would encourage 87 per cent of disabled people to use green spaces more, and 81 per cent of 56–65 year olds to do so.

Since the Community Toilet Scheme began there have been occasional anecdotal reports of minor vandalism reported by participating members to their toilet facilities. Nevertheless, although participating premises have the right to refuse entry to their facilities in exceptional circumstances, as far as the council is aware this right has not yet had to be invoked.

The council operates a monitoring procedure to spot check each toilet complies with the scheme and meets cleanliness and other criteria. Members are also asked to sign up to a guidance sheet and specify that they will undertake, amongst other things, to keep the toilets clean and clutter free.

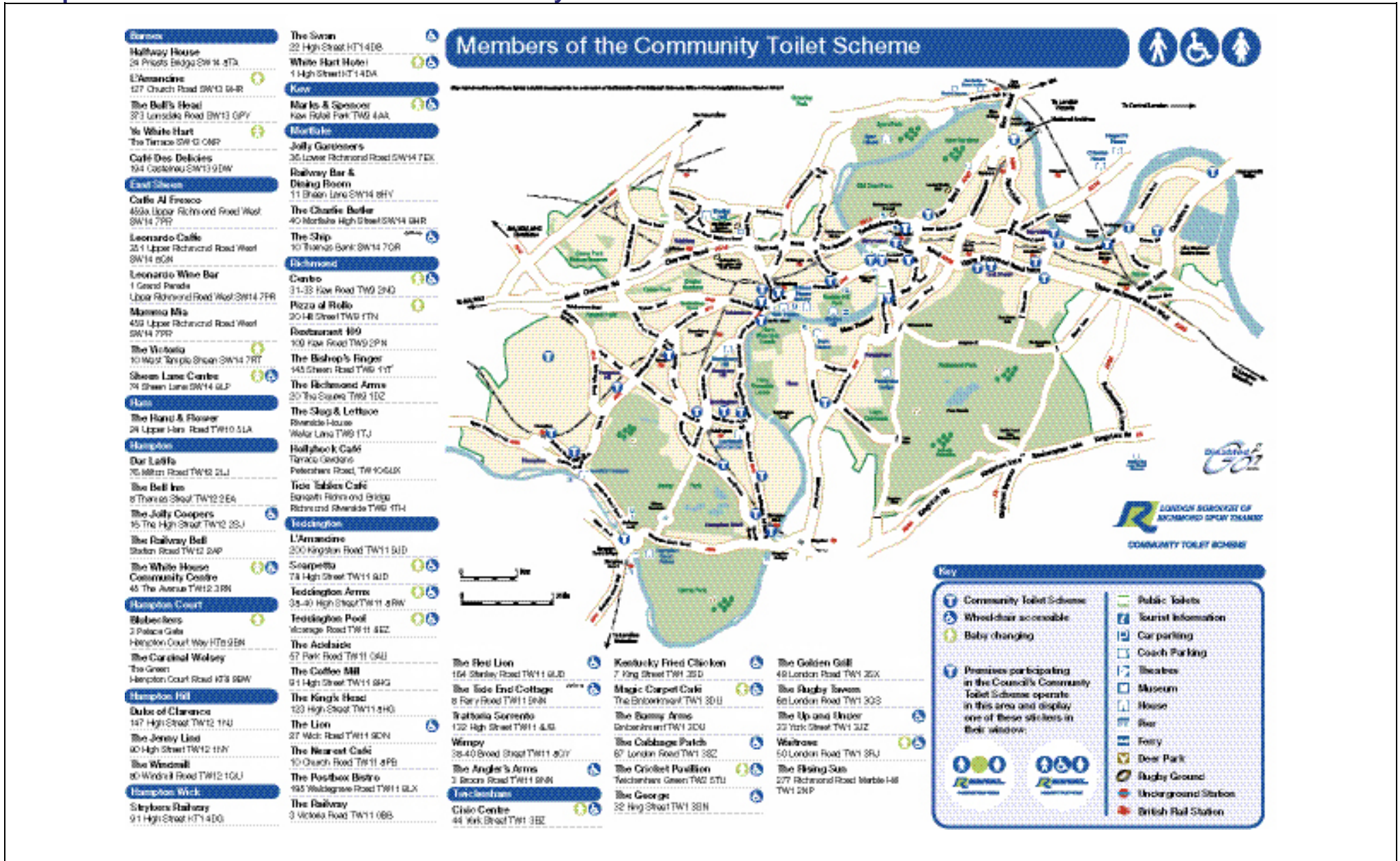
Participating businesses display prominent signs and admit members of the public to use their facilities. Directional street signage is positioned near to participating toilet scheme members. Community notice boards display A3 posters indicating the presence of the scheme in that area and how participating businesses can be identified.

A leaflet explaining how the Community Toilet Scheme works is available at libraries, sport centres, council buildings and other locations in the Borough. It includes a map and a list of participating premises. Members of the scheme are also listed on the council's website www.richmond.gov.uk/community_toilet_scheme and a local community website. Both of these sites are updated as new members join the scheme.

A3 posters and A5 leaflets about the Community Toilet Scheme were produced for display and distribution at prominent points across the Borough. A half-page advert was placed in the main local newspaper during the awareness campaign as well as in various newsletters and the VisitRichmond Guide and Twickenham Guide.

² *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces*, Department of Transport, Local Government & the Regions (2002)

A map of the members of Richmond's Community Toilet Scheme



Why the scheme came about

The London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames has a resident population of 182,000 and attracts around 4.5 million visitors a year. During the 1980s and 90s a number of public toilets had been closed in the Borough. This was because of the high costs involved in bringing the facilities up to a reasonable standard, a backlog of repairs and refurbishment, and the low levels of usage.

In the early 1990s, Richmond leased five Automatic Public Conveniences (APCs) across the Borough, which cost up to £85,000 a year to run. These supplemented the council's own provision in parks and other public places, but they proved unpopular with local people and usage was low – equating to an average of £8 per visit. The Council recognised that the combination of old style public conveniences and APCs would never cope adequately with demands of a modern society.

It had become apparent that value for money was not being achieved on certain forms of provision, often located in specific areas that the public were increasingly reluctant to use. The obvious lesson to be drawn from this was that resources should be spent on improving access to more flexible, not to mention popular, forms of toilet provision.

In the late 1990s, the council introduced a new partnership approach to the provision of public toilets. Two local pubs were invited to receive an annual income from the local authority, in return for offering their facilities free of charge to members of the public. Building on this, the Community Toilet Scheme was launched in 2004 with an additional 12 members. The scheme was re-launched in 2005 with a major expansion and improved signage. There are now 75 members signed up to the scheme with more in the pipeline.

The impact of the scheme

Richmond uses a citizen's panel – Richmond Viewpoint – to consult the Borough's residents on important issues. The panel is used in a variety of ways to undertake quantitative and qualitative research. It was recently used to discover how satisfied or dissatisfied residents were with the overall standard of public toilet provision within the Borough. The results showed that whilst almost one in four residents were dissatisfied with traditional public toilets in the Borough, only 6 per cent felt dissatisfied with the Community Toilet Scheme.

Local businesses have shown great interest in the Community Toilet Scheme, and the scheme continues to grow. Businesses report an increase in customer footfall and there is anecdotal evidence of increased trade.

“When I was first asked to join the Community Toilet Scheme I was sceptical. I now see it is a very good idea and have been happy to recommend it to other licensees in the Twickenham Pub Watch which I currently chair. The programme has been about getting local businesses like ourselves to work with the Council to improve the place for everyone – I certainly think it is working.”

Stuart Green

Manager of the Cabbage Patch public house, Twickenham

“Waitrose is part of the Richmond and Twickenham Community Toilet Scheme, which enables local businesses to work together with the council to make more clean, safe and accessible toilets to the public. We employ an outside agency to clean the toilets on a daily basis and our staff ensure that the facilities are maintained throughout the day. We pride ourselves on offering our customers a pleasant environment throughout the shop and believe the scheme can help ensure this is achieved.”

Katie Laine

Waitrose Department Manager, Twickenham

“Our store not only provides ladies and gents toilets but also offers dedicated facilities for the disabled and for parents who need to change their babies. These facilities are especially important because they are the only ones on offer to the public in the local retail park, which attracts a high proportion of families with children. The Community Toilet Scheme makes a welcome contribution to the cost of providing these high quality facilities but it also helps to encourage even more people to use our toilets, of which we are justifiably proud.”

Marks & Spencer, Kew Retail Park

“After some initial scepticism, Councillors and the wider community increasingly see the Community Toilet Scheme as an effective way of providing widespread provision of safe and pleasant, publicly accessible and well-managed toilets for more hours of the day and at a lower cost than the rapidly failing conventional approach. It also strengthens links between business and the rest of the community which is an integral part of the Community Plan. Individually tailored to the needs of each community we see this as an approach which could be applied across the country”

Councillor Martin Elengorn

Cabinet Member for Environment

Local people are now able to access a far greater number and range of toilets in the Borough, toilets that are clean and safe, located within managed buildings, and open where and when people need them.

“The Richmond Community Toilet Scheme plays a part in dealing with the concerns of older people about facing the local public toilet facilities.”

Mr Ron Cooper

Chairman of Richmond upon Thames for Older People

Value for money

Taking all costs into account, the Community Toilet Scheme is around £20,000 a year cheaper for the council to operate than the previous APC leasing arrangement. In place of the five APCs previously provided, local people now have access to 75 toilets. This ensures a standard of provision that the council could not hope to have provided on its own. The position regarding the remaining five on-street conventional public toilets is also being considered, as is the inclusion of facilities in parks and libraries in the scheme.

Plans for the future

The next steps being considered for the Community Toilet Scheme include:

- improved street signage and window signage
- review of members to extend the scheme where there are gaps and to discontinue with the few that no longer meet requirements
- a revised leaflet about the scheme
- a second awareness campaign using the newly revised stickers and posters
- revised terms and conditions and a standard sheet with guidance
- a new billing system
- programmed monitoring/visits
- helping to develop the scheme further.

Richmond is also planning to look at how the aims and objectives of the Changing Places campaign can be accommodated into the Community Toilet Scheme programme. This campaign supports the needs of the thousands of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their carers, as well as many other disabled people, who cannot use standard accessible toilets. These toilets are different from standard disabled toilets, which sometimes don't meet the needs of all disabled people (or their carers), and contain three basic attributes: the right equipment, enough space, and a safe and clean environment. Further information on Changing Places is available at: www.changing-places.org/

Lessons learned

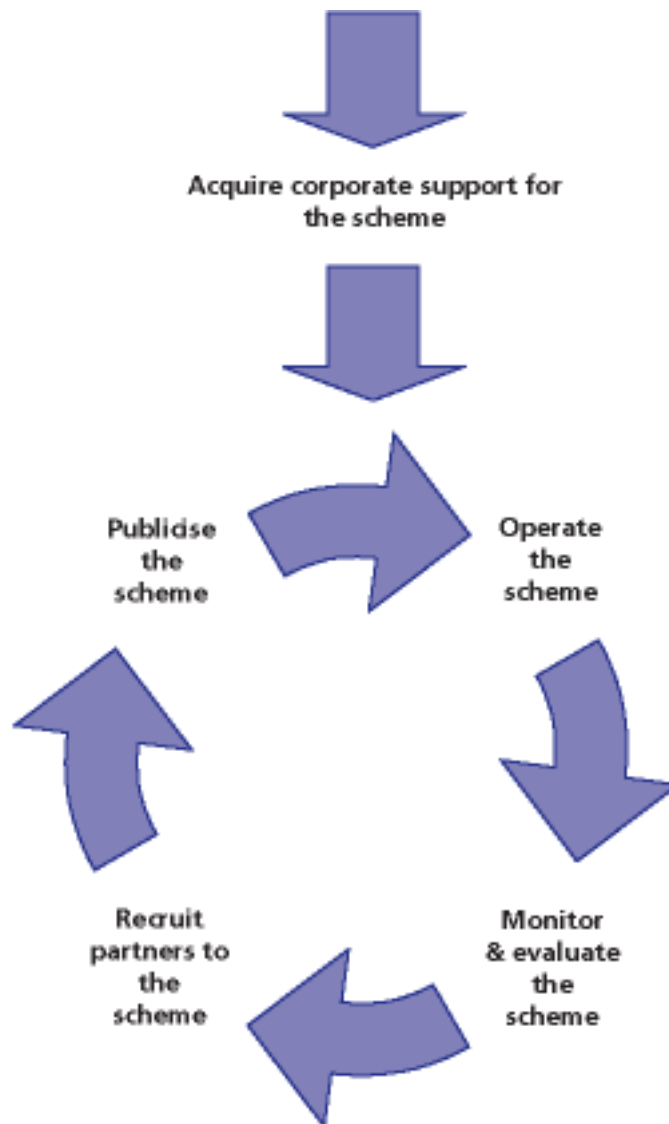
Various factors have helped to make the Community Toilet Scheme a success in Richmond:

- a dedicated council officer, with 'sales-based' targets to drive uptake among businesses, responsible for co-ordinating the scheme, engaging with stakeholders and building relationships
- 'corporate' buy-in at all levels of the council and consistent messaging across relevant departments
- an explicit partnership-based approach, led by the council, but managed in a way that responds to the differing needs and motivations of local businesses
- the creation of a strong brand image and marketing campaign, including window stickers for participating businesses that highlight the facilities on offer and which give people the confidence to use the facilities in the knowledge that they will be welcomed. In addition, on-street signage in tune with the local environment and street-scene, continuous community engagement and feedback, as well as leaflets, maps, and web-site material have all contributed to the scheme's success
- a Community Toilets Scheme is a flexible approach that can be scaled to suit the area it is operating in, be it large busy town centre with a multitude of shops or business with toilets the public can use, or a village or market town where even a small number of businesses taking part can make a real difference to people who visit
- the approach may not suit areas with very large numbers of visitors arriving at the same time (eg coach parties visiting a tourist attraction). In such areas Community Toilets Schemes in combination with other types of provision (eg a visitors' centre with toilets) might work better.

Part 2: A step-by-step guide to creating a Community Toilet Scheme

This section explains key stages for setting up a Community Toilet Scheme, from conducting an initial feasibility study through to monitoring and evaluating it. These are generic stages that are not necessarily the ones followed by Richmond but do reflect some of the steps Richmond took to establish their Community Toilet Scheme. Where relevant, additional information about what Richmond has done is included with the steps.

Conduct a feasibility study



Step 1: Conduct a feasibility study

Aim/objective

- To establish the feasibility of implementing a Community Toilet Scheme in your area.

Actions

- Undertake an audit to assess the current public toilet provision within your local authority's area including type, standards, location and charge if any. Map provision to see where toilets are and if they are located in areas of high footfall.
- Plan and conduct a consultation with local people, businesses and the voluntary and community sector (including ones working with the elderly, families and people with disabilities) to gauge support for the scheme in the context of wider actions to improve public access to toilets.
- Establish the budget that you will have for the set-up, publicising, running, and evaluation of the scheme. At the same time calculate the probable number of businesses required to make the scheme feasible and the annual payment (if any) that they will receive.
- Calculate the costs that will be incurred, including the cost of recruiting businesses, marketing the scheme, membership payments and regular inspections of the facilities of members.
- Establish the cost of your existing public provision and its future cost.

Outcomes

- A report based on robust data, which can be shared with the Executive.

Key points

- Although working with local community and voluntary sector groups is a valuable part of the consultation process, it should not be a substitute for directly contacting local people in order to gauge their priorities for public toilet provision.
- Low usage of existing public toilets is not necessarily a reflection of low demand. People are deterred from using facilities that are unhygienic, in poor condition and where inappropriate behaviour occurs. Moreover, evidence from various studies suggests that people increasingly prefer to use toilets in managed buildings such as shopping centres and public toilets which are supervised by full time attendants.
- Research by Richmond found that residents are far more likely to use traditional public toilets and community scheme toilets, and felt safer using them, in comparison to automatic public conveniences.

- Richmond found that the Community Toilet Scheme approach provided a more cost effective solution to public toilet provision in comparison to using automatic public conveniences, as well as providing the public with access to a greater number and range of toilets. However, set up and ongoing costs, and the benefits of a scheme will vary from area to area and will need to be assessed as part of the considerations whether to proceed with the Community Toilet Scheme or not.
- The Community Toilet Scheme provided a lower cost solution in Richmond but this won't necessarily be the case for all areas – different approaches to public toilet provision will be suited to different types of areas.
- Low usage of traditional public toilets can create an atmosphere of neglect, which discourages public use further and raises the likelihood of premises attracting anti-social behaviour, graffiti and criminal damage. This may lead to rising maintenance costs and falling levels of public use, creating an unsustainable situation.
- Well-maintained and signposted toilets, which are accessible to all, can contribute to local economies as they help create town and city centres where people want to spend their time and consequently their money.

Additional information

- Richmond consulted with local organisations, a citizen's panel, and focus groups to gain feedback on its Community Toilet Scheme.

Tips

- Although it is not an approach employed by Richmond, extra payments for premises offering toilets that fulfil the Changing Places criteria could be considered as part of a strategy for widening the type of facilities that the public can access under the scheme.
- Although it is not an approach currently employed by Richmond, offering incentives to premises located in areas where demand is likely to be particularly high (eg areas which attract large numbers of families) but access to toilets is limited, could be considered as a strategy for helping to meet high demand in areas where provision of toilets is limited.

Step 2: Acquire corporate support for the scheme

Aim/objective

- To raise awareness about the scheme, including its potential implications and impact, across your council.
- To secure buy-in and support from across your council for the Community Toilet Scheme.

Actions

- Disseminate the feasibility study report completed as part of step one, or else a list of the scheme's potential costs and benefits, to executive and non-executive members and any relevant council officers. The report/list should cover financial and non-financial benefits, and draw on previous research studies and also the experience of Richmond.

Outcomes

- A high-level of awareness about the scheme amongst all members, particularly those with executive responsibilities, and other relevant council officers.
- Awareness amongst other council service areas of the potential implications and impact of the scheme.
- Input and involvement from all relevant council departments and their partners.
- Formal approval to proceed with the scheme.

Key points

- It is good practice to ensure that there is a demonstrable commitment from the highest levels in the council, as well as corporate commitment, to better provision of public toilets.

Additional information

- Communities and Local Government's *Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets: A Strategic Guide* outlines some of the key points as to why councils need to consider a new approach to public toilet provision. The strategic guide can be downloaded from:
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/publicaccesstoilets

Step 3: Recruiting partners to join the scheme

Aim/objective

- To recruit a good spread of members with premises located in the busiest areas, where the need for toilet facilities will be highest among the public.
- To enlist as many premises as possible with fully accessible facilities for people with disabilities and families, including premises that have wheelchair access and baby changing facilities.

Actions

- Consider the role of a dedicated marketing officer (if there are sufficient resources) to drive the programme during its early stages.
- Identify and target potential members on an area-by-area basis.
- Send a personal letter ahead of a telephone call. If interest exists, arrange a visit to discuss membership.
- Prepare a list of advantages for members participating in the scheme, eg outline how it can help attract customers by bringing more people to the area and encourage them to stay longer. Personalise the “pitch” to the nature of the business – eg for a pub, suggest that a large, positive impact could be made if just one in five people using the toilet return later with their family to have a meal.
- Approach a range of premises from both the public and private sector, as well as council-run toilets in town halls, leisure centres, libraries and other suitable premises.

Outcomes

- The creation of a comprehensive network of premises, which comprise different types of premises and facilities covering areas of high demand.

Key points

- Community Toilet Schemes are most effective when a critical mass of participating premises is achieved. Effective promotion and marketing of the scheme’s benefit can help accelerate the recruitment process during the early stages can help the scheme make rapid progress.
- Public toilets should be located in key areas such as town centres, parks and leisure areas, tourist spots, along main routes into towns and cities and strategic spots in suburban areas. Provision should be located so it fits in with the way the area is actually used economically and socially.
- Some people may be put off from using the facilities in certain premises, such as pubs. The aim should therefore be to ensure that a mixture of types of premises is available to the public in each area.

Additional information

- Richmond recruited a dedicated marketing officer to drive the programme over a period of six months. The officer liaised with council street teams, the police, the business community and the local media to build effective partnerships and working relationships.

Tips

- Consider alternative methods for gaining members, such as pursuing positive letting policies in areas of high demand for public toilets. For example, in appropriate circumstances – such as leasing a council building for use as a community café – a clause might be included allowing non-paying customers to use the toilet facilities.
- Business Improvement Districts³ (BID) and Town Centre Partnerships may be able to help with recruiting partners. The managing committee of these partnerships should be able to approach their members on your behalf with details of the scheme and the potential benefits it offers.
- An assessment matrix could be used to determine the number and type of providers in each geographical area.
- It is worth stressing at an early stage that businesses retain the right to bar admission of any person to their premises/toilets – and this is covered in the terms and conditions. This can help to avoid misconceptions early on in the process.

³ BIDs are voluntary, business-led partnerships operating with a statutory framework where local businesses can decide by ballot to pay a levy for additional services. They enable businesses to take the initiative by prioritising and commissioning a range of services, building on existing public provision, to improve the local trading environment.

Step 4: Publicising the scheme

Aim/objective

- To ensure that both local residents and visitors are aware of the service and understand how it works.
- To encourage support for the scheme.

Actions

- Identify the best methods for publicising the scheme.
- Consider how to counter possible scepticism among ward councillors and the wider public.
- Decide on which publicity materials to use for the scheme eg leaflets, maps, tourist information guides.
- Order any publicity materials required and identify suitable locations for their distribution, eg libraries, sports centres, council buildings and transport interchanges.
- Prepare press releases for the media.
- Organise a publicity launch and media interviews.
- Plan future evaluations to assess the level of public awareness and use of the scheme.

Outcomes

- A high level of awareness and use of the scheme among local people and visitors.

Key points

- Public toilets are used by everyone and the nature of the scheme is likely to generate a high level of local press interest. Consider strategies and actions that will exploit this interest to the full.

Additional information

- Richmond produced A3 posters and A5 leaflets about the Community Toilet Scheme for display and distribution at prominent points across the Borough. A half-page advert was placed in various newspapers and local tourist information guides.
- In Richmond a steady stream of positive stories were given to the media about the scheme. The campaign involved press releases, briefing journalists and media tours.

Tips

- Within premises, the toilets should be clearly signed so that the public do not need to ask staff where they are located.
- Encourage members to display prominent signs in the line of sight for passing pedestrians. Consider using directional street signage positioned close to the premises of participating members.
- Initial market research data could be used to help decide the best methods and locations for publicising the scheme.
- Consider a wide-range of publicity arrangements, eg window and on-street signage/branding, leaflets, notices, adverts, and web-based information. In order to manage costs, it is worth considering taking an incremental approach towards publicity. As the scheme starts to grow more signage and publicity events could then be arranged.
- Richmond is planning to produce 'snap maps': credit card-sized maps listing the participating members of the scheme.

Step 5: Operating the scheme

Aim/objective

- To create an efficient framework for operating the Community Toilet Scheme.

Actions

- Produce a document outlining the terms and conditions of the scheme to be signed by your council and participating businesses.
- Arrange public liability insurance for members' premises.
- Organise regular inspections of the premises to ensure they meet the required standards in hygiene, safety and access.
- Put in place a procedure for paying fees to members eg through a self-billing agreement.
- Consider producing operational guidelines for members covering subjects such as signage, access, cleaning, staff awareness and disabled facilities.

Outcomes

- An efficiently managed Community Toilet Scheme.

Key points

- Councils and their partners have a range of powers enabling them to improve public access to toilets, but these powers have not been used to their full potential in many areas.

Additional information

- Richmond operates a self-billing agreement⁴ to simplify the payment procedure to members of its Community Toilet Scheme (see Appendix 2: *Template Documents*).
- Richmond uses a 'member statement' that is signed by participating businesses and outlines what they agree to undertake (see Appendix 2: *Template Documents*). The statement also confirms the facilities that are offered at the member's premises.
- Richmond specifies the rights guaranteed to both the council and members in its terms and conditions document (see Appendix 2: *Template Documents*). This outlines the key legal and financial terms and conditions of the relationship between the council and the business.
- Richmond provides members of the scheme with operational guidance notes. This guidance outlines what is expected of the members and their facilities in relation to signage, access, cleaning, staff awareness and disabled facilities.

⁴ Self-billing is an arrangement between a supplier and a customer in which the customer prepares the supplier's invoice and forwards a copy to the supplier with the payment.

- Richmond intends to use its Local Development Framework where appropriate to encourage the provision of publicly accessible toilets in new developments or where changes of use are proposed.

Tips

- Encourage members to ensure that 'front-line' staff are aware of scheme membership and what it involves.
- Ensure members are aware that the public require a reasonably unobstructed route to the toilet and for the toilets to be free of stored items. This will especially apply to premises that offer disabled toilet facilities.
- In addition to regular cleansing, encourage members to carry out regular reviews of cleaning schedules to cater for any increased footfall. Recommend the display of cleaning rotas and regular checks on the toilets.
- It is worth stressing early on that businesses retain the right to bar admission of any person to their premises/toilets – and this is covered in the terms and conditions. However, emphasise the fact that no participant in the Richmond scheme has so far had to invoke this. This could help to avoid misconceptions from the outset for new members.

Step 6: Monitoring and evaluating the scheme

Aim/objective

- To ensure members' facilities meet the required standards.
- To ascertain whether the scheme is providing value for money and improving the level of public satisfaction with toilet provision in your area.
- To create a framework for ensuring the continual improvement of the scheme.

Actions

Create a monitoring program to help measure:

- The cleanliness, hygiene, safety and accessibility of members' facilities.
- The level of usage of members' facilities.
- The level of user satisfaction with the scheme.
- The impact of the scheme on environmental problems such as public urination.
- The financial cost of the scheme.

Create an evaluation framework that will:

- Establish the value for money of the scheme.
- Identify areas where improvements can be made to the scheme.

Outcomes

- The creation of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that will help to ensure the effectiveness of the scheme, as well as its continual improvement.

Key points

- Monitoring and evaluation of the scheme should allow weaknesses to be identified, improvements to be made, better planning and allocation of resources, as well as providing demonstrable evidence of public satisfaction with local public toilet provision.

Additional information

- Richmond has started to issue fixed penalty notices for the offence of street urination. It is intended that in the future receipts will be used to help measure the effectiveness of the Community Toilet Scheme.
- Richmond conducts surveys with its citizen's panel to find out how satisfied residents are with the Community Toilet Scheme, as well the other traditional public toilets it provides.

Tip

- Richmond is planning to incorporate the monitoring of members' premises into the work of its existing street scene enforcement staff.
- Consider measurements that encompass both outputs (eg costs and statistics) and outcomes (eg changes in opinions and perceptions).
- The monitoring system should allow the identification of any facilities that fail to meet the necessary standards and remove members from the scheme if necessary.
-

Westminster's SatLav: A case study

Overview

Westminster City Council enhanced its existing toilet scheme by exploiting mobile technology to help members of the public locate their nearest public toilet. The service means that anyone within the boundaries of the Borough can use their mobile telephone to receive a text message informing them where their three closest toilets are. This message also includes the opening times of these facilities.

Example of text message received by subscribers in Westminster:

"Yr nearest toilets:
Broad Sanctuary
0900-1800, Cardinal Pl 0800-
2000 Mon-Fri
0800-1800 Sat
1100-1700 Sun.
Leicester Sq &
Covent Gdn toilets
open 24hrs

Using the service

People in the London Borough of Westminster can simply text TOILET to a five digit number and in return they will receive a text message. This message costs the subscriber 25p plus the network standard rate of their mobile provider. The scheme was launched in November 2007 and received 3,000 texts in its first month, largely due to the considerable attention the service attracted on its launch. Since then demand for the service has remained steady at around 400 texts a month. This demand has been achieved without any further marketing of the scheme.

Westminster maintains a database of toilets. This covers the public conveniences operated by the Greater London Authority as well as those of its partners in the private sector, including Marks & Spencer, Debenhams, John Lewis, House of Fraser, and the Cardinal Place shopping centre in Victoria.

The service is available to anyone with a mobile phone using a domestic network provider but subscribers on foreign networks cannot access the service.

How the service works

The scheme is operational in all parts of the London Borough of Westminster and locates the position of the user through a triangulation method. A location lookup is performed based on the cell-ID of the serving mobile network and the location of the subscriber is then passed to the service provider's system, which matches it against a pre-loaded database. The system then generates the text message which is sent to the user.

Operating the service

Westminster City Council agreed a contract with an interactive mobile services provider to operate the service for them. The council does not provide any of the staff or technology itself.

Westminster keep the database of participating premises up to date by simply sending their service provider notification of any changes in a spreadsheet format. The service provider is then responsible for updating the database.

The cost of Westminster's contract with their mobile services provider is approximately £21,000 a year. Its relatively small cost and straightforward nature meant that the council did not have to tender the service in the Official Journal of the European Union nor follow the competitive dialogue procedure⁵. The council originally considered two service providers offering different types of service. The one they rejected would have restricted the service to users with web-enabled mobile phones only.

How accurate is the service?

The service is accurate to approximately 200 metres in urban areas but in rural areas this can increase to two kilometres. It is therefore probably better suited to urban areas, especially ones with a 24 hour economy.

What are the legal implications of the service?

There are no significant legal implications arising from the service. The information that is held is strictly limited to the mobile number of the person using the service, as well as the toilets that were closest to their location when they subscribed to the service. This information is only accessible to the service provider and two employees of Westminster City Council.

Are there any implications in relation to equal opportunities legislation?

Not all of the sites on the database have facilities that are accessible to all members of the public. By sending users information on their *three* nearest toilets the council believes that the service makes a reasonable attempt to provide users with disabilities with at least one facility that is likely to be accessible to them, and therefore fulfils their requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act.

⁵ The competitive dialogue procedure is for use in the award of complex contracts. Contracts can be considered as particularly complex where contracting authorities:

- are not objectively able to define the technical means capable of satisfying their needs or objectives, and/or
- are not objectively able to specify the legal and/or financial make-up of a project



Why the scheme came about

The original idea for SatLAV came from a female student living in Clapham Junction. Hers was the winning entry in an innovation competition run by Westminster City Council. Inspiration for the service was rooted in her own experiences of being out in London with friends and sometimes feeling guilty at ducking into fast food restaurants and department stores purely to use their toilets. She commented:

“I started remembering where Westminster’s services were and always found them perfectly adequate but lots of people were wary of them or didn’t know about them. I thought a text service would be really useful for people on the move.”

By employing the latest mobile technology Westminster saw an opportunity to make local residents’ and visitors’ lives easier. Having recently invested £300,000 in a refurbishment of its public toilets, the council also recognised that the service would help people make the most of the award-winning toilet provision on offer.

Additionally, Westminster City Council sees SatLAV as a measure to help reduce the estimated 10,000 gallons (45,460 litres) of urine that end up on its alleyways and side streets each year. In order to tackle this hygiene problem, the council already provides temporary urinals at weekends. However, SatLAV provides an additional means for helping reduce the significant problem of street urination.

The impact of the scheme

No separate research has yet been conducted to evaluate how useful the service has been to users or the impact it has had on the usage of public toilets in Westminster. However, the council uses a Geographical Information System (GIS) to map usage of the scheme. The council's corporate GIS team provide maps showing the locations of users when texting the service, and the month in which they did so (see Annex C). They also provide maps showing the locations of the toilets which were texted back to users, again with the corresponding month. This provides the council with an accurate picture of where and when users have used the service. For example, from these maps it can be seen that the service attracts considerable usage around major retail areas such as Oxford Street and Regent Street. The service consistently attracts around 400 requests per month, and the council is currently looking at new ways to promote the service in the future.

The innovative nature of the scheme also caused considerable media interest. When it was first launched significant amounts of free publicity were generated. Stories about the scheme were broadcasted on BBC London TV, LBC, ITV London, as well as Capital Radio and the Today Programme on Radio 4.

The launch of the service also generated numerous stories in the local and national press, including the London Evening Standard, The Times, Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Sun, London Metro, thelondonpaper and London Lite. It even gained the attention of the international media, with stories written about it in the International Herald Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, The National Post (Canada), The Province (Vancouver), The Mercury (South Africa), United Press International and Reuters Africa. Online publications that picked up on it included consumerist.com, gizmodo.com, engadget.com, reghardware.co.uk and spiegel.de.

Some of the headlines generated in these publications included:

Lavatories by text (The Times)

Never be caught short with sat-lav (Daily Express)

Caught short in town? Never fear, Satlav is here (Daily Express)

SatLav to end problem of being caught short (The Guardian)

Text service ends loo agony (thelondonpaper)

Washroom-finding in London now just a cellphone text message away (The National Post – Canada)

SMS answer to call of nature (themercury.co.za)

'SatLav' Texts Londoners Looking for Loos (PC Magazine.com)

Value for money

Cost of the service

All the funding for SatLav comes from existing Westminster budgets. The costs break down into two main areas:

1) *Annual running costs of the system*

These cover the costs agreed with Westminster's mobile services provider for shortcode rental, the use of their database use and the use of their software. Currently, these annual running costs come to around £22,000.

2) *Text credits*

In addition to the annual running costs, the council also purchases 'bundles' of credits from their mobile services provider. These cover the cost of sending text messages to users of the service. Each credit equates to one SMS text message. The council has been able to make some savings on these costs by purchasing larger 'bundles' of credits than when it first launched the service. Based on the quantities it currently purchases, each credit costs 7.5p, equating to an annual cost of £360 a year. Since the SatLav service still does not pay for itself, these savings have not been passed onto to users in the form of cheaper texts.

Westminster City Council does not need to employ any additional staff to help administer the service.

Economies of scale

The costs could potentially be reduced further if a number of local authorities were to join together to purchase credits jointly from a mobile services provider, and perhaps also use the same administration personnel. Moreover, if there was sufficient demand for a national scheme to be operated the savings likely to accrue would be even greater for individual councils.

Lessons and advice for other local authorities

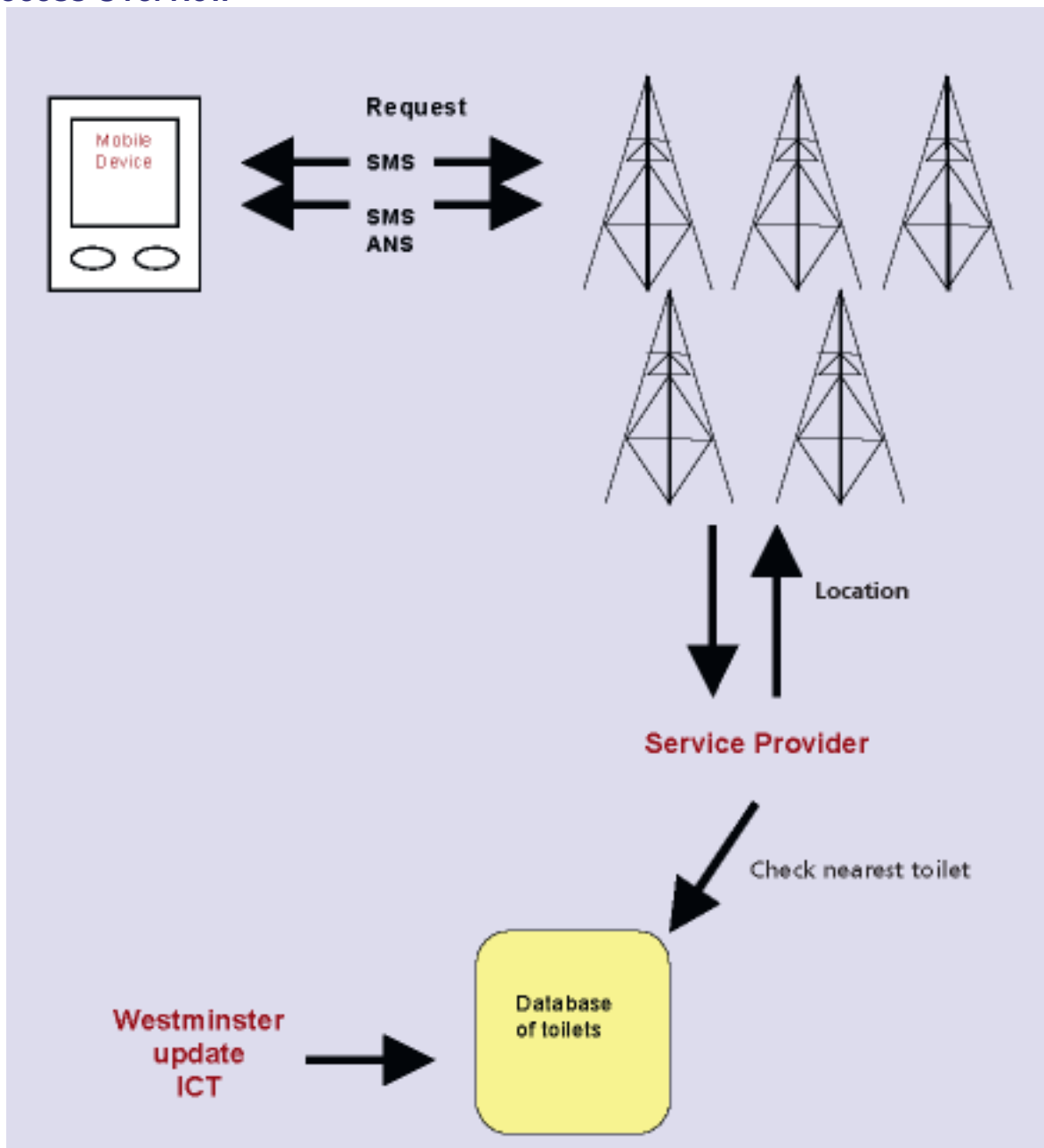
- The SatLav name and logo has been registered, therefore any other local authorities wanting to use them would need to negotiate with Westminster City Council.
- The technicalities behind the service are straightforward but developing the framework for rolling out the service in other areas requires careful consideration. A nationally recognised name, logo and telephone number would be likely to help with take up of the service. Conversely, a patchwork of names, logos and telephone numbers for similar services in different parts of the country could potentially create a more confusing picture for the public and hinder attempts to create a nationally recognised service.

-

The service could be introduced in most areas but it is probably best suited to urban areas with substantial night time economies. Its accuracy is also likely to be lower in more rural areas, where the need for such as service is already likely to be less than in more densely populated areas.

If considering whether or not to operate a SatLav type scheme in your area it is obviously worth taking into account whether the expected demand is likely to justify the expense. Westminster is a densely populated area attracting large numbers of workers and tourists and demand for the service averages between 400-500 users a month (although this is achieved with fairly minimal promotional activities). Demand for a similar service in many other areas could therefore be reasonably expected to be lower than this.

Process Overview



Appendix 1: Useful resources

British Toilet Association

www.britloos.co.uk/

Changing Places

www.changing-places.org

Department for Transport

www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/access/

Help the Aged

www.helptheaged.org.uk

Improving Public Access to Better Quality Toilets

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/publicaccesstoilets

Richmond's Community Toilet Scheme

www.richmond.gov.uk/press_office/business_pride/community_toilet_scheme.htm

Westminster's SatLav

www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/streetcareandcleaning/satlav.cfm

World Toilet Organisation

www.worldtoilet.org

Appendix 2: Template documents

Terms and Conditions

Member Statement

Self-Billing Agreement

PUBLIC USE OF PRIVATE TOILET FACILITIES AGREEMENT

THIS IS AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COUNCIL and THE SERVICE PROVIDER with regard to the public having use of the Toilets provided by the Service Provider at the Property during normal opening hours in return for an annual payment by the Council SUBJECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS SET OUT OVERLEAF

COMMENCEMENT DATE

SERVICE PROVIDER Name of Company

(Please print)

Address

.....

.....

Telephone number

THE OWNER (if applicable) (Name)

The Freeholder at the Service Provider's Property Name, address and telephone number

THE PROPERTY The toilet facilities at the Service Providers

Property

COUNCIL <name and address of the council>

LICENSE PERIOD For the term of one year from the Commencement Date and thereafter from year to year until determined in accordance with this Agreement

ANNUAL SUM <annual fee paid to members (£)>

COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME AREA An initiative designed to increase the availability of toilet facilities within <area covered by council> to the mutual benefit of the general public and traders

The Service Provider (with consent of the Owner (if applicable) and the Council agree to the terms and conditions set out in this Agreement.

SIGNED BY (Signature)
(Print Name)

For and on behalf of the Service provider in the presence of:-

SIGNED BY DATE
(The Council's Duly Authorised Officer)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME

1. RIGHTS GUARANTEED

In consideration of the payment by the Council to the Service Provider of the Annual Sum:–

- 1.1 The Council for the benefit of the general public shall be permitted unobstructed access to and use of the Toilets through the Property during the opening hours of the Service Provider's Property during the License Period.
- 1.2 The Service Provider/Proprietor retains the right in exceptional circumstances to refuse a member of the general public admission to their premises and/or use of their toilet facilities.
- 1.3 The Council shall erect and maintain at its own expense advertising signs designed and manufactured by the Council (in keeping with current signage) in locations agreed with the Service Provider.
- 1.4 The Council shall have the right to carry out inspections of the Toilets with the Service Provider.

2. ANNUAL SUM

In consideration of the conditions on the part of the Service Provider contained the Council shall pay to the Service Provider the Annual sum.

The annual sum shall be payable by the Council.

3. COUNCIL COVENANTS

The Council agrees with the Service Provider as follows:–

That the Council will indemnify the Service Provider against all the Council's legal liability and costs arising out of or in connection with this license.

That the Council will during the duration of this license effect and thereafter maintain public liability insurance at a level of at least £2,000,000 (two million pounds) for any one event or series of related events.

4. SERVICE PROVIDER'S COVENANTS

The Service Provider agrees with the Council as follows:–

To display at least one sign showing its membership of the scheme on such window(s) or door(s) of its property to be agreed with the Council so as to be clearly visible to the public.

The Toilets shall be maintained in a safe, clean and hygienic condition, with clutter free access AND shall be adequately provided with bins, and sanitary bins, toilet rolls, soap and hand dryers/hand towels by the Service Provider.

Neither the Service Provider nor its employees shall in any circumstances hold itself or themselves out as being a servant or agent of the Council or as being authorised to enter into any contract or in any other way bind the Council to performance variation release or discharge of any obligation.

5. DETERMINATION

This license may be determined immediately and absolutely upon:–

Any breach of the terms of this License; and/or

Non-payment of the Annual Sum; and/or

Either party at any time giving the other party at least (1 month) prior written notice to expire at any time.

The Council shall be reimbursed the Annual Sum on a pro rata basis on termination of the license, e.g. if the license expires 6 months after the commencement date, or subsequent anniversary, half of the Annual Sum shall be repaid. Repayment shall be made within 28 days of the expiry date;

But without prejudice to any right of action which may have accrued to either party.

6. ASSIGNMENT

This license is personal to the Council and shall not be assigned by the Council to any other person.

7. VAT

The Council shall pay VAT on the annual sum and any other payment due under this License where it is properly payable

COMMUNITY TOILET SCHEME – MEMBER STATEMENT**PREMISES: (Name and Address)**.....**PERSON RESPONSIBLE NAME & SIGNATURE (Owner/manager)****DATE OF SIGNING****I UNDERTAKE TO:**

1. Provide a reasonably unobstructed route of access to the premises (and provision for wheelchair access if accessible toilet facilities are offered).
2. Provide clear and uncluttered access to all toilets within the premises.
3. Provide directional signage to the toilets on the interior of the property.
4. Display signage to the toilets (including opening times) on the exterior of the property
5. Ensure the toilets are clean and well stocked with hand towels/hand drier, soap, toilet paper, sanitary bins, etc.
6. Ensure the toilets are clear of storage and unobstructed, in accessible toilets please ensure bins and other floor furniture does not obstruct the transfer space.
7. Ensure there is a clear and adequate cleaning regime (ideally, with a notice displaying what that is).
8. Ensure all staff are aware of the implications of scheme membership.

I CAN CONFIRM THE FOLLOWING FACILITIES ARE OFFERED AT THESE PREMISES:

Separate accommodation for male and females								YES / NO
Does the accessible toilet comply with specific building and Disability Discrimination Act guidelines								YES / NO
Baby Changing Facilities								YES / NO
No. of Male Cubicles	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6+	
No. of Urinals	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6+	
No. of Female Cubicles	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6+	
Nos. of Disabled/Accessible Toilets (if offered)	<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6+	

COMMENTS & ADDITIONAL FEATURES: e.g. recent or impending refurbishment

Community Toilet Scheme Self-Billing Agreement

This is an Agreement to a self-billing procedure between

Customer Name: <name of council> **VAT Number:**

Supplier Name: **VAT Number:**

The self-biller (<name of council>) agrees:

1. To issue self-billed invoices for all supplies made to them by the self-billee (the supplier) until either party gives notice as per the terms and conditions between the customer and supplier as dated
.....
2. To complete self-billed invoices showing the supplier's name, address and VAT registration number, together with all other details which constitute a full VAT invoice.
3. To make a new self-billing agreement in the event that their VAT registration changes.
4. To inform the supplier if the issue of self-billed invoices will be outsourced to a third party.

The self-billee (your business) agrees:

1. To accept invoices raised by the self-biller on their behalf until either party gives notice as per the terms and conditions between the customer and supplier as dated
.....
2. Not to raise sales invoices for the transactions covered by the agreement.
3. To notify the customer if they
 - change their VAT registration number
 - cease to be VAT registered; or
 - sell their business, or part of their business or if the name of the tenant/landlord changes – this may make the terms and conditions null and void.

Signed by:

Signed by:

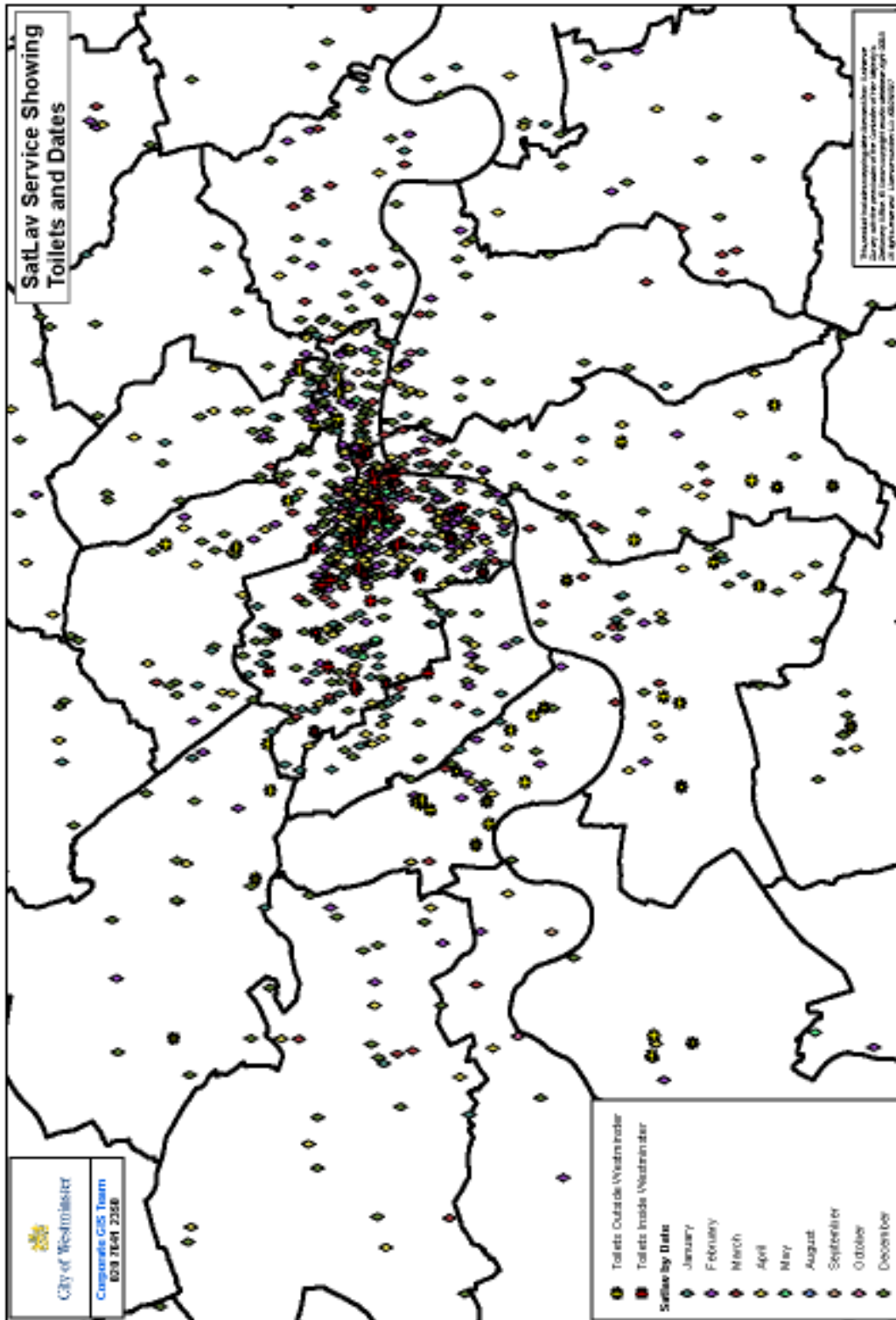
On behalf of:

On behalf of:

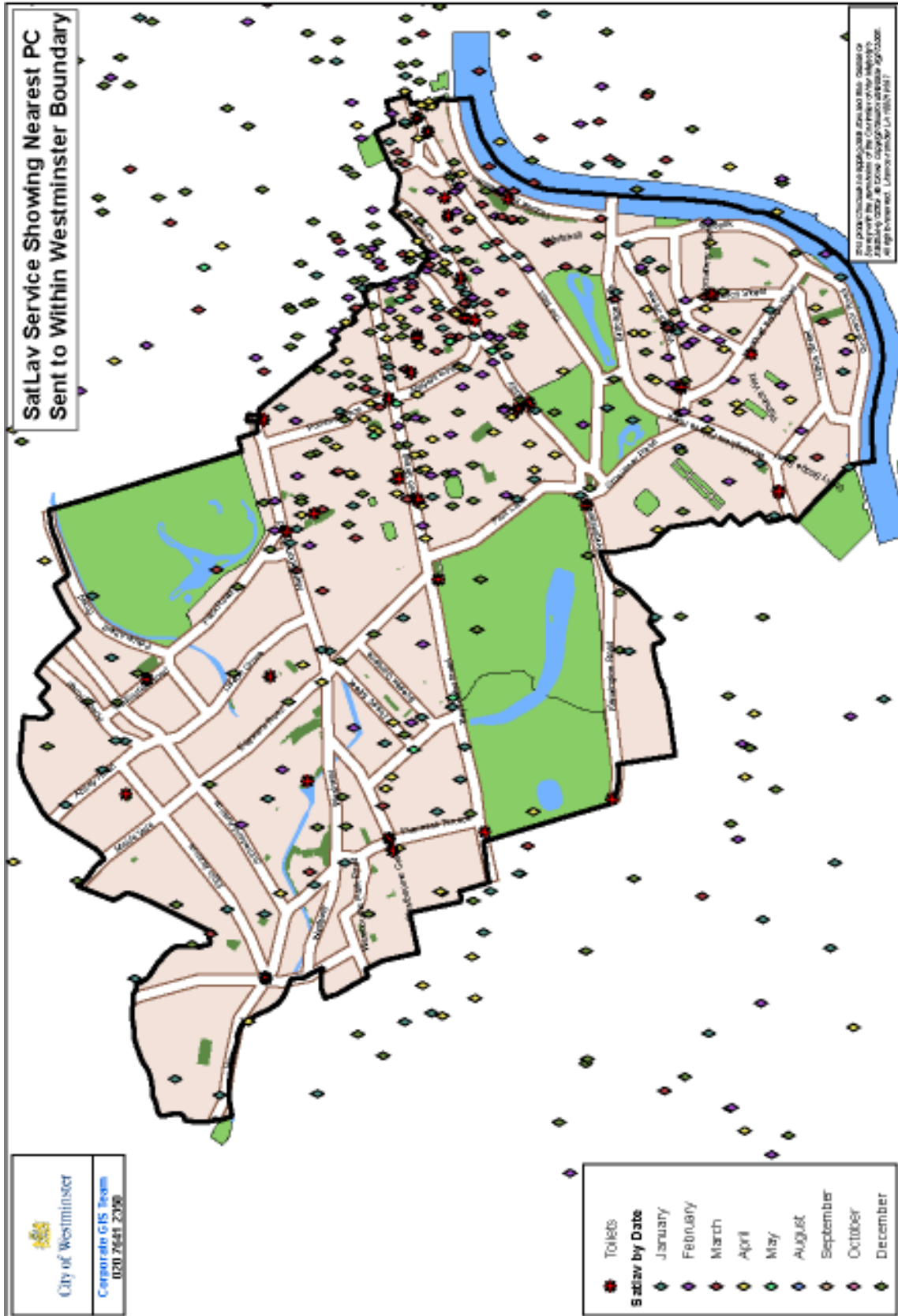
Date:

Date:

Appendix 3: Maps showing location and month when the SatLav service has been used



Maps provided courtesy of Westminster City Council



Maps provided courtesy of Westminister City Council

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