

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
30th April 2014**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor John Powell, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environmental Health

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Gareth Ratcliffe

Following the BBC article Wales' public toilet help 'to be made law' and also the call by the leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats Kirsty Williams for public conveniences to be included in the Welsh Government's proposed Public Health Bill, can the portfolio holder give an update on this and the possible impact on the decision to hand over public conveniences to community councils?

The Welsh Government has launched its White Paper "Listening to you: Your health matters" seeking views on proposals to address a number of public health issues through a Public Health Bill. The closing date for responses to the consultation is 24 June 2014.

Section 5 of the White Paper, titled "Building community assets for health" includes reference to toilets for public use. The proposal is to place a duty on local authorities to develop a strategy on the provision of and access to toilets for public use in their area. The strategy would be based on local need and would have to be reviewed on a regular basis.

The consultation paper makes reference to a range of potential toilets including those provided by the local authority as well as those available for public use within other public buildings. This could presumably include those operated by Welsh Government, health providers and other publicly funded organisations. Reference is also made to the potential use of private facilities such as those already supported through the existing Communities Toilet Grant Scheme funded by Welsh Government.

Whilst the paper makes reference to the Welsh Government Grant Scheme, there is no indication of any additional funding to support either the ongoing costs of developing and maintaining a strategy or of supporting any additional costs of implementing it.

The paper does make reference to possible options including community involvement; charging and the use of planning powers to provide publically accessible toilets within new developments.

This council remains committed to supporting the provision of public toilets during these difficult financial times. The proposals we put forward last year were not dissimilar to the ideas put forward in the consultation paper. Clearly I will need to consider how we should move forward with our proposals but the key factor remains one of affordability. The proposal as it stands will increase administrative costs for the council but with no commitment to any additional funding from Welsh Government.

I see no reason why we cannot continue our discussions with Town and Community Councils as well as other organisations during this year as planned. This will help us to develop our strategy in line with the proposals in the White Paper.