



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol  
**MERTHYR TUDFUL**  
**MERTHYR TYDFIL**  
County Borough Council

# Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

## Local Toilet Strategy Interim Progress Review

September 2021



Pan welwch yr arwydd hwn,  
mae'n golygu bod croeso  
ichi ddefnyddio'r toiled

When you see this sign,  
it means you are welcome  
to use the toilet

## **Executive Summary**

Toilets for public use matter to everybody who goes “away from home”. They are, however, even more important to certain groups within society, including older people, people with disabilities, people with particular needs (including certain medical problems), women, children and young people and their families. These groups can be disproportionately affected by poor provision. A lack of publicly available toilets can have wide ranging impacts such as contributing to increased social isolation and inactivity, as well as affecting people’s ability to maintain independence and dignity.

Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017: Provision of Toilets came into force on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 and places a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilet strategy for its area.

Local authorities in Wales have the responsibility to:

- assess the need for toilet provision for their communities.
- plan to meet those needs.
- produce a local toilets strategy; and
- review the strategy, update and publicise revisions.

Although the Welsh Government, Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, Part 8 focuses on ‘Provision of Toilets’, the provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is a discretionary function of local authorities who have the power under section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936 to provide public conveniences. There is no duty for local authorities to provide public toilets directly. In considering the provision and maintenance of toilets for public use, the Council has to balance a competing local demand for a broad range of public services. Therefore, the Council has taken a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed by the local population.

Following 2 public consultation exercises in September 2018 and March 2019, the results of which are summarised at Appendix 1, the Council published its local toilet strategy in April 2019. The overarching aim of this strategy is to provide or facilitate the provision of clean, safe, accessible and sustainable toilets for residents and visitors

to the County Borough at locations where the need for such facilities has been identified.

There is a requirement for the strategy to be periodically reviewed every 2 years commencing from when the Council last published, or 2 years from the date of the last post-election review of the strategy. Publication of the review is required within 6 months. This review has been produced to fulfil this requirement and covers the 2-year period from 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019 to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021. It has however also been updated prior to the scheduled publication date in October 2021 to include reference to the opening of the new bus interchange in June 2021 and the reopening of toilet facilities in the parks as part of the Covid recovery plan.

The review assesses progress against the Council's proposals to try to increase the level of publicly available toilet provision within the Borough. Progress has obviously been affected by the Covid pandemic, as front-line work to contain the spread of the virus has taken precedence over many other strategic objectives. However, there have been some important improvements in signposting publicly available toilets with inclusion on a national toilet map on the Lle website and we are in the process of upgrading our interactive Visit Merthyr web page to include publicly available toilets. The opening of the new bus interchange, which incorporates toilet facilities, represents a significant milestone in our progress against the strategy. The opening has improved the availability of clean, safe toilets in the Town ward which had previously been identified as a hot spot for lack of provision.

## **Background**

The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 required each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilets strategy for its area by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019. In line with the statutory guidance Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, set out a strategy to address the need for toilets in the community to try to improve both the standards and availability of publicly accessible toilets. The local Toilet Strategy was published on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

Following the initial publication, the Local Authority is required to conduct a review of progress against the proposals contained in the strategy in accordance with statutory timescales. The interim progress statement must cover a two-year period beginning on the last published strategy date (“the statement period”) and must be published within six months from the last day of the two-year period.

This interim review covers the two-year period between the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 and 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021; however, it has been updated prior to the 6-month publication date to reference the opening of the new bus interchange which took place in June 2021 and the reopening of the park toilets as part of the Covid recovery plan.

## **Introduction**

Wherever people go, outside of their own homes, they depend on toilet facilities for the enjoyment of their visit. Visitors to Merthyr Tydfil, who may be some distance from their homes, also depend on provision to accessible toilets.

The provision of public conveniences has implications for public and individual health, transportation, crime prevention, urban design, economic and cultural development and social equity and accessibility. It is an important factor in delivering a ‘people friendly’ environment for everyone who goes to shopping centres, leisure and entertainment venues, sports facilities, parks and green spaces, everyone who moves about on foot, or bicycle, car, van, lorry or public transport, whether for work or pleasure.

Toilets for public use matter to everybody who goes “away from home”. They are, however, even more important to certain groups within society, including older people, people with disabilities, people with particular needs (including certain medical problems), women, children and young people and their families. These groups can be disproportionately affected by poor provision; for example, poor provision is understood to have particular negative impacts on older people, as some may be less likely to leave their homes without having confidence that adequate facilities will be available to them. This can contribute to increased social isolation and inactivity, as well as affecting people’s ability to maintain independence and dignity in later life.

Consequently, the provision of toilets accessible to the public provides the infrastructure necessary to facilitate the enjoyment of the County Borough by visitors and residents alike. Well managed and maintained toilets can make a significant impact upon the comfort of individuals and families who visit public spaces in the area, and their perception of Merthyr Tydfil as a desirable place to visit.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It aims to make public bodies think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. It means as a Council we must do things in a sustainable way.

In making decisions as a Council, we need to make sure we take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in the future.

To make sure we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals. Together they provide a shared vision for public bodies to work towards.

The Act puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' which tells us as a Council how to go about meeting our duty under that Act.

The principle is made up of five ways of working that public bodies should follow when carrying out sustainable development. These are:

- looking to the long term so we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- taking an integrated approach.
- working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions.
- involving a diversity of the population in the decisions affecting them
- acting to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse.

The Council has applied these principles in developing and reviewing its local toilet strategy and they have been included in our integrated impact assessment.

## **Aim of the Strategy**

The overarching aim of our local toilet strategy is the provision of clean, safe, accessible and sustainable toilets for residents and visitors to the County Borough at locations where the need for such facilities has been identified.

## **What progress has been made to improve access to toilet facilities since we published our local toilet strategy?**

Although the Welsh Government, Public Health (Wales) Act 2017, Part 8 focuses on 'Provision of Toilets', the provision and maintenance of toilets in public places is a discretionary function of local authorities who have the power under section 87 of the

Public Health Act 1936 to provide public conveniences. There is no duty for local authorities to provide public toilets directly. In considering the provision and maintenance of toilets for public use, the Council has to balance a competing local demand for a broad range of public services. Therefore, the Council has taken a strategic view on how facilities can be provided and accessed by the local population.

When we published our strategy in April 2019 the Council had suffered from years of austerity and this was viewed as a significant challenge going forward. However, no one could have predicted a global pandemic that would have such an enormous impact on the way we have had to live our lives, and this too has impacted on our progress.

At the time the strategy was published the Council committed to the following actions to mitigate the gaps between what toileting provision was available and the identified need:

### **Provide facilities suitable for the location**

*Review provision of publicly available toilets at key transport interchanges and key entry points including the bus and train station stations located in the Town centre. This has been identified as the area where the greatest needs gap exists. It is proposed that new public toilets will be provided that will be owned and managed by the Council. Use of the toilets will incur a charge to aid with sustainable upkeep and reduce antisocial behaviour. The toilets will be located in the proposed new bus station development which is part of a wider programme of town centre regeneration. Consideration to be given to location of the new toilets bearing in mind the BTA recommendation that people should not have to walk more than 500m to a toilet facility.*

The strategy committed to review provision of publicly available toilets at key transport interchanges and key entry points including the bus and train station stations located in the town centre. The needs assessment and public consultation process, summarised in Annex 1, identified this as the area where the greatest needs gap existed. When we published our strategy there was already a proposal to provide new public toilets, to be owned and managed by the Council, as part of the relocation of the existing bus station.

Utilising funding, totalling 12 million pounds obtained from the Welsh Government's Local Transport Fund, a new bus interchange has been successfully constructed and opened on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2021. The interchange includes publicly available toilet facilities incorporating baby changing in male, female, unisex and disabled cubicles. The facilities are unmanned, but to dissuade anti-social behaviour there is CCTV monitoring at the entrance and there is also a charge of 20p to use the toilets. A security guard mans the premise out of normal hours. Completion of this project represents a significant milestone in bringing about an increase in clean, safe publicly available toilet provision in the town centre.

However, there is still more to do. At the time of the review there is no physical signage outside of the bus interchange to direct members of the public to the new toilet facilities. Lack of physical signage in the town centre was identified as an issue by the public in our consultation. We recognise this is particularly important for those who are uncomfortable using, or do not have access to mobile technology. As part of the ongoing wider town centre regeneration programme physical signage will be incorporated.

Although outside of the review period it is also worth noting that on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 Transport for Wales submitted a Prior Notification application to the Planning Department for the erection of a toilet cubical located on the railway station platform. At the time of writing this document, the cubical has not been constructed.

### **Clean, well maintained and safe**

*An undertaking that all toilets in Merthyr Tydfil Council County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust (Wellbeing@Merthyr) buildings will be open and signposted for public use. (except for schools, care homes and other buildings where the facilities are in sensitive areas not accessible to the public). The Council will review cleansing operations and standards on a periodic basis to ensure the most efficient and effective provision within allocated resources. The Council will continue to work with the Police, Community Safety and residents, community groups and others to ensure that the facilities are as safe as possible.*

An undertaking was given that all toilets in Merthyr Tydfil Council County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust buildings would be open and signposted for public use. (except for schools, care homes and other buildings where the facilities are in sensitive areas not accessible to the public).

Following publication of our strategy in April 2019 this undertaking was fulfilled. Council and Leisure Trust toilet facilities were open and signposted for public use by inclusion on the national toilet map and by displaying the national toilet sticker logo at entrance points. However, during the review period the Covid 19 pandemic hit and had a significant impact on the availability of toilet facilities within these buildings, many of which were closed for prolonged periods to comply with Covid 19 restrictions. As we undergo recovery the facilities are gradually reopening and becoming available for public use once again.

An undertaking was also given to review cleansing operations and standards on a periodic basis to ensure the most efficient and effective provision within allocated resources.

The Covid Pandemic prevented opening of the public toilets in the County Borough's parks for extended periods due to issues associated with cleansing and public safety.

Although outside of the formal review period, Cyfarthfa Park toilets were re-opened in June 2021 with all other park facilities reopening in July 2021.

A private cleansing contractor has been employed to clean and sanitise the Cyfarthfa park toilets which have the largest footfall and, where a lack of cleanliness had been identified as an issue by the public consultations. There was a delay in re-opening the Parc Taf Bargoed toilets due to difficulties recruiting a park warden. However, a new warden has now been recruited whose duties include the cleaning of the toilet facilities.

The Council undertook to continue to work with the Police, Community Safety and residents, community groups and others to ensure that the facilities are as safe as possible.

It was noted in our strategy that development of the night-time economy and changes in demographics and human activity in town centres means they are increasingly becoming leisure and entertainment hubs rather than predominantly centres for retail/commercial trade. Night-time economy growth has unfortunately led to an increase in alcohol-related anti-social behaviour acts which includes 'street fouling'. We recognised that to avoid urination and fouling in public places publicly accessible facilities need to be in close proximity to key night-time gathering points such as taxi ranks, car parks, railway/bus stations and bus stops.

In the town centre, there continues to be reliance on toilets provided in licensed premises during the evening with the new toilets at the bus interchange closing at 6.30pm. There are still no facilities publicly available at the train station. However, on a positive note a Safer Streets perception survey conducted in August 2020 did not identify human fouling or public urination as an issue. However, it is accepted that the survey, undertaken during the pandemic, may not have captured some behaviours as people would not be socialising as they would normally do. In addition, our street cleansing crews have not noted any significant issues during the review period.

Working in partnership with South Wales Police Merthyr Tydfil's Community Safety Partnership secured £500,000 funding for the town ward. The funding has been used in part to upgrade its CCTV infrastructure and will continue to monitor public space areas. This will hopefully discourage anti-social behaviour. Should incidents of human fouling or urinating in public spaces be identified we will be better placed to act under anti-social behaviour legislation.



## **Sustainable provision within the budget available.**

*The Council is committed to sustainability in its own operations, including the provision of toilet facilities, as well as across the district more widely through climate change and carbon management plans. Going forward sustainability will be factored into all new Council developments.*

The Council has carried out this action and factored carbon reduction and minimising our environmental impact into all new developments including the new bus interchange. Practical actions to achieve this aim include the installation of technologies such as:

- LED Energy efficient lighting
- Intelligent Lighting Controls
- Various Water saving devices such as low flow taps, occupancy sensors linked to toilets that switch off water when not in use.
- Low Energy Hand dryers

## **To provide accessible information via mapping of toilet provision.**

*Improve awareness and information available on toilet provision in the County Borough by updating information on the Lle open access data repository with WG and also updating the Dewis website. A link will be provided from the Merthyr Tydfil Council website.*

The strategy undertook to improve awareness and information available on toilets available for public use in the County Borough by mapping toilet provision.

To assist local authorities with the publicising of information on the location of toilets, and help the public identify the provision of toilets for public use, both locally and nationally, the Welsh Government committed to producing a national map of toilets.

This map was produced within existing Welsh Government mapping infrastructure, via the Lle website. The website generates all-Wales maps based on the datasets provided by local authorities which can be configured to focus on either the national picture, or on more local areas. The data included in the Lle map is available as an open data service accessible to everyone in Welsh and English.

The weblink to the all-Wales toilet map in both Welsh and English is below:

<https://gov.wales/toilets>

<https://llyw.cymru/toiledau>

The public are able to see and search the data as it appears on the Lle website, to see the whole of Wales or to look at particular areas.

The map is searchable, each red spot at the all-Wales level covers one or more toilets depending on the density of provision. As you zoom in to the map, the red dots separate out to individual facilities. Clicking on any of the dots brings up a panel that contains the information about each toilet.

One of the key challenges for any mapping exercise is keeping the information up to date. This is true of the Lle website which relies on the Local Authorities to update data, similarly mobile phone Apps that rely on feedback from the public to keep information up to date.

We acknowledge that this is an area where we have not put in place a robust mechanism to regularly review and update the data. There are 2 reasons for this: firstly a general lack of capacity to be able to undertake the task; and secondly the Covid 19 pandemic. The pandemic has necessitated the diversion of resources, but also public buildings and businesses have been closed, or access restricted at different stages of the pandemic making it impossible to keep up with the changes.

To further improve ease of access to local toilet information we are in the process of upgrading our Visit Merthyr interactive web pages. We hope this will be a more user-friendly experience for visitors where information about the town, including publicly available toilet provision can be found in one place.

The current pages can be found at:

<https://www.visitmerthyr.co.uk/map-page/>

The interactive map will have one legend to the side of the map so that the user can turn on and off which layers of information that they are specifically interested in.

**Easily found facilities with good direction signage and individual facility information signs.**

*Not everybody has access to the internet or mobile technology, particularly the older generation. The provision of physical signposts to direct the public to available toilets in areas associated with transportation hubs e.g., indoor market and the new bus station is seen as important. Display of the toilet logo using stickers displayed at entrances at all Council, Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust, Cwm Taf Health Board, community facilities and businesses that have agreed to being mapped will help to promote awareness about the locations of publicly available toilets.*

The strategy recognised that not everybody has access to the internet or mobile technology, particularly the older generation. Having listened to our residents and visitors, the provision of physical signage to direct the public to available toilets in

areas, especially those associated with transportation hubs remains an outstanding action that needs to be addressed.

A team of urban designers, commercial property experts and engineering specialists providing transport advice have drawn up a 15-year Town Centre Masterplan. The 'Placemaking' Plan as it is known envisages that by 2035, the town centre will have high quality residential, office, leisure and retail, new plazas, green spaces and 'an active riverside'. It says the aim is to create a centre 'with inviting streets, squares and routes, where people feel safe, welcomed and uplifted'. As an integral part of this plan physical directional signage will be provided, which will include publicly available toilets.

In addition, the nationally recognised Toilet Scheme has provided the means to advertise provision of toilets for public use in a consistent way. The toilet logo can be used as signage, for example displayed in windows of premises that have consented to allow their toilet facilities to be used by the public.

The Council has adopted and publicised the toilet logo as part of their awareness raising of toilets for public use. Toilet logo stickers have been distributed for display at entrances/in windows at all Council, Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board, community facilities and businesses that agreed to being mapped to help promote awareness about the locations of publicly available toilets.

### **Maximise availability through partnership and commercial provision.**

*Continue to work with local businesses to promote use of their toilet facilities. Explore possible ways to financially incentivise businesses to open their toilets up to the public in areas where gaps in provision have been identified by the needs assessment. Explore options to increase local toilet provision through sponsorship, advertising and partnership working.*

Primarily because of the Covid 19 pandemic limited progress has been made on this action point.

In the current financial climate, the Council has no plans to offer direct financial incentives to businesses to provide toilets open to the public. However, inclusion of businesses on promotional tourist information is a viable option. Specifically in relation to the Taff Trail there has been some engagement with business and Parkwood Outdoors Dolygaer have consented to be mapped as a "tea and toilet" stop that will be included on promotional tourist literature as well as the Visit Merthyr interactive web pages.

### **Liaise and work with Town and Community Councils to provide toilets in as many locations as possible.**

*Explore opportunities to increase the provision of publicly accessible toilets in key rural locations along the Taff Trail by working with community groups.*

There has been some engagement with the Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council who have suggested that we liaise with Merthyr Valley Homes (MVH) who operate a community centre in Trelewis. Community facilities in Bedlinog are open on a booking only basis. An action going forward is to engage with MVH to ascertain whether they would be willing to have the centre included on the national toilet map and Visit Merthyr interactive web page.

### **Letting policies**

*Although there are currently no Council owned commercial town centre properties available consideration could be given to the introduction of a clause in future Council leasing agreements. The clause would require suitable business like a shop or café, to include public access to toilet facilities. This would need to be balanced against any potential backlash such as a decrease in rental income or that the requirement could conceivably deter prospective tenants from taking a lease.*

As an ongoing action, our Estates team have committed to consider the potential to include the provision of public toilets when negotiating leases. However, it is acknowledged that the opportunities will be few and far between and the practicalities may be difficult to overcome in some circumstances.

### **Provision of adequate toilet facilities by the promoters/organisers at one-off events**

*Toilet facilities for people attending special, one-off outdoor events need to be considered, whether through temporary installations or using existing facilities at or near the event location, by agreement with the Council. The Events Safety Advisory Group provides guidance for event organisers and including the use of land for events in the open, including highways under the direct control of the Council. Advice and guidance on temporary toilet facilities is provided as part of a consistent, proactive and integrated approach to the provision of support services and regulatory functions for events and a sound financial framework for this support, as well as ensuring compliance with Health & Safety standards. The Event Safety Advisory Group will continue to work with event organisers to ensure they provide adequate toilet facilities for people attending. Smaller temporary events organised at short notice are more challenging, but the Council will work with organisers to try to secure adequate toilet provision.*

Our Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) continues to meet regularly to discuss proposed events and to provide advice and guidance to organisers. As society starts to recover from the Covid 19 pandemic and the number of events increases, the group has been tasked with looking at the Covid risk assessments produced by the organisers. This has meant that the group is meeting more frequently to discuss a broader range of events than would be the case pre pandemic.

## **Green spaces.**

*Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council recognises that there are strong links applicable to the need for toilet facilities in parks including play areas and more informal green spaces such as the country parks. Popular attractions such as Cyfarthfa Park and Parc Taf Bargoed attract tourists and residents and include children's play areas. It is unlikely that there will be other facilities close by which people can use, whilst enjoying the park therefore the Council will strive to maintain toilet provision in these areas and explore ways that might allow for extended opening hours. For example- Once the Parc Taf Bargoed Hydro Project is revenue producing and lease obligations fully complied with it may be possible to permit the current warden post to be fully funded from the Project. This could provide the release of funds from current park warden budgets to provide additional facilities e.g., baby changing and additional opening hours*

Unfortunately funding from the Hydro scheme has not been realised and no additional staffing for extended hours is possible now.

The Council still funds the warden and opening hours are restricted due to staffing limitations.

## **Tackling homelessness.**

*Explore options for providing facilities for the rough sleepers to reduce the amount of human fouling in the town centre and along the Taff Trail.*

The problem of human fouling has improved in these areas and there are no identifiable issues at present in relation to rough sleepers. The Covid 19 pandemic has resulted in a reduction in the number of rough sleepers because of changes in the requirements for Councils to provide accommodation for homeless persons. Under the current legislation all those presenting as homeless are provided temporary accommodation with appropriate facilities. Should this change and individuals revert to rough sleeping, out of hours toilet provision would be an issue in terms of amenity access.

## **Legal powers.**

*Powers may be used to ensure that public toilets are provided and maintained for public use in relevant commercial premises. The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 section 20 allows a local authority to require any business classed as a place of entertainment or selling food and drink to the public for consumption on the premises, to provide public toilets. These powers will be exercised where possible.*

This is an ongoing action. Sufficiency of toilet facilities is considered as part of every routine food safety inspection.

## **Consideration will be given to including local toilet provision in the Community Infrastructure Levy.**

*Community Infrastructure Levy enables the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council to raise funds from developers undertaking certain new building projects in their area. The funds can be used for a wide range of infrastructure costs, such as education, highways etc., that is needed because of new housing for example. This may be one way to secure funding for future public toilet provision within or near new developments, on a need and demand-driven basis and depending on the prioritisation between new infrastructure needs.*

The Council has considered including public toilet provision on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) list of Infrastructure but given the relatively small amounts of CIL we receive, and the likelihood of other items on the list being higher priority for the Council (schools, highway improvements for example), it has been decided that it would not be beneficial to include public toilets on the list at this time.

## **What is customer feedback telling us?**

As part of this interim review, we have looked at customer complaints and compliments to inform our progress. This involved obtaining information from our Corporate Complaints Officer, Corporate Communications, and individual departments responsible for cleansing and enforcement. The feedback relates to toilet provision generally.

During the review period, the Council received four complaints and there were a further five posts on social media. The complaints related to:

- the lack of toilet provision in the town centre **(3)**, which has since been improved with the opening of the new bus interchange.
- the temporary closure of the toilet facilities in the parks because of the Covid pandemic **(2)**, which have now reopened.
- poor cleanliness of the toilets in a local supermarket **(1)**.
- lack of hot water in the toilet facilities in a local supermarket **(1)**; and
- a licenced premise with no disabled toilets **(2)**. This was investigated and found to be due to the buildings listed status restricting alterations.

## **What happens next?**

Bearing in mind the enormous impact of the Covid 19 pandemic over a prolonged period the Council has still made important progress in achieving the proposed actions contained in the local toilet strategy. In addition, the strategy remains relevant and there is no need to revise it currently.

What we need to do next is to build on our successes to date and concentrate on progressing any outstanding and ongoing actions which have been identified.

### **Specific Follow up Actions:**

#### **To provide accessible information via mapping of toilet provision.**

- Ongoing ownership of signposting to make sure the national toilet map on the Lle website is kept as up to date as possible.
- Completion of the upgrade of the Visit Merthyr interactive map to include publicly available toilets.

The aim is to complete these actions by the date of publication of the review.

#### **Easily found facilities with good direction signage and individual facility information signs.**

- Ensure that provision of directional signage to publicly available toilets is included and delivered as an integral part of the “Placemaking Plan 2019-2035”.

#### **Maximise availability through partnership and commercial provision.**

- Continue to try to maximise availability of toilets available for public use through partnership and commercial provision. At every opportunity encourage participation e.g., at the point of licensing applications, new businesses registrations, lease agreements etc.

#### **Tackling homelessness**

Keep under review the duty to provide accommodation for homeless persons implemented during the pandemic and the potential impact the removal of this duty may have.

### **Date of next review**

The statutory guidance requires that the “LA must also review the local toilet strategy within a year of each ordinary election for its area”. The next election date in Wales is Thursday 5 May 2022 so the latest date for review is 4 May 2023. If no changes are made to the strategy following the post-election review, then the Council must publish an interim progress statement covering a two-year period commencing from the date of the last election.

## Conclusions

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the Council's ability to deliver its strategic objectives and the local toilet strategy is no exception. More than ever success of any strategy is about working in partnership to get the most from scarce resources.

We learnt from our needs assessment and public consultation exercises that the gap between what was needed and what was on offer was significant, particularly in the town centre.

To achieve the aim of providing clean, safe, accessible, and sustainable toilets for residents and visitors to the County Borough at locations where the need for such facilities had been identified, we proposed a series of actions that we could take forward over a 2-year period.

As a starting point, the proposals included mapping all publicly available toilets. Another key proposal was to improve the availability of publicly available toilets in the town centre by increasing our own toilet portfolio linked to the regeneration of the bus station. In addition, we undertook to explore ways we could work in collaboration with and private sector/voluntary sectors to improve provision at all locations where need was been identified.

During the 2-year review period, all the publicly available toilet facilities have been signposted and mapped on the Lle national toilet map, so that residents and visitors will know where to find them, when they are open and what facilities are available. We are also updating our Visit Merthyr interactive web pages to include toilets open for public use. The completion of the new bus interchange, which opened in June 2021 brings about a significant improvement in toilet provision at a major entry point to the town centre.

The strategy remains relevant, and the focus now is to build on the existing proposals until the next statutory post-election review is undertaken.



## Appendix 1

### Summary of responses to needs assessment consultation

Consultation took place from 3rd to 28th September 2018. The survey was available online via Smart Survey and people were signposted to the survey via MTCBC's Facebook page, Twitter page and corporate website. Paper copies were also provided to the 50+ forum by the Supporting People Coordinator.

**438** people accessed the survey online, however only **149** surveys were completed.

Key findings:

- **131** respondents were residents of Merthyr Tydfil
- **83** responses were relating specifically to the Town Ward
- Cyfarthfa Park was listed as the attraction visited most often, followed by Parc Taf Bargoed
- The majority of respondents felt that the toilet provision was either inadequate or no facilities were available
- **93.3%** of respondents disagreed that there were enough facilities
- **90%** of respondents felt like there was not enough information on where facilities are located
- **84.6%** of respondents don't like using toilets in shops or restaurants because they feel like they need to buy something
- **85.2%** of respondents felt that toilets should be free to use

Demographic:

- **74.5%** of respondents were age between 36-64 years old
- **68.46%** were female
- **86.58%** were of white ethnicity
- **36.17%** of respondents either had a disability or long-term health problem

## Summary of responses to the 12-week public consultation

### The consultation process.

A 12-week consultation took place from Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018 until Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

The survey was available online via Smart Survey and people were signposted to the survey via MTCBC's Facebook page, Twitter page and corporate website.

Paper copies were available at Council Reception desks in the Civic Centre and Unit 5 buildings.

The survey was also sent by email to all staff and Councillors and to various stakeholders and local and national organisations, including VAMT, the 50+ Forum, Shelter Cymru, Safer Merthyr Tydfil, Crohns & Colitis UK, Helping Hands and Disability Sport Merthyr.

**457** people accessed the survey online. **84** surveys were completed. We feel that the relatively low completion ratio (18.38%) was due to the fact that people were asked to read the Draft Strategy at the beginning of the survey in order to answer the following questions:

1. Please indicate your interest in this consultation (Please tick all that apply):
2. Does the summary of the needs assessment accurately reflect toilet provision within Merthyr Tydfil County Borough?
3. In your opinion, has the strategy missed an opportunity to increase awareness of toilet provision in Merthyr Tydfil?
4. In your opinion, has the strategy missed an opportunity to increase toilet provision in Merthyr Tydfil?
5. Do you have any comments on how the Council intends to improve access to toilet provision over the next 2 years?
6. Do you have any other comments that you feel are relevant in developing a local toilet strategy for Merthyr Tydfil?

If you feel that your response to this survey has been influenced (positively or negatively) because of any of the following: your ethnic origin, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality or responsibility for any dependents, please give details:

## Results of the consultation

### Key findings:

- **90.48%** of respondents were residents of Merthyr Tydfil
- **61.90%** of respondents were of the opinion that the summary of the needs assessment accurately reflects toilet provision in Merthyr Tydfil
- **71.43%** of respondents were of the opinion that the strategy missed an opportunity to increase toilet provision in Merthyr Tydfil. Some comments regarding this were as follows:
  - *There should never have been such a gap in the provision of public toilets at the existing bus station. The toilets are still there but not accessible. The new bus station is a long way away from being started, if ever.*
  - *Potentially businesses could be offered a percentage reduction in business rates if they were willing to offer free toilet provision. The restrictions on disabled/m/f toilets should be lifted on small businesses who offer this facility.*
  - *WE need to increase good quality toilets at Car Parks and shopping and Transport areas*
  - *Toilet provision was reduced many years ago - more are needed, especially in the town centre.*
  - *It's difficult to increase toilet provision as that would require either reopening the bus station toilets or building new facilities. The financial pressure on the Council is greater now than years ago.*
  - *More should be done to engage local businesses to open their facilities to the public. Small grants or incentives should be considered*
  - *As local businesses don't seem to want to engage in opening up their provision to members of the public and as there is a reluctance by members of the public to use business facilities, there should be some sort of publicly funded provision,*
  - *It makes a great show of the fact that there will be several toilets in the new bus station but fails to mention that they will only be accessible whilst the building is open which doesn't even cover the full operating hours of the station.*
  - *With the new trains to Cardiff not having toilets on them, ALL stations along the line must have toilet provision as standard. There also needs to be provision throughout the café/pub district in the Town Centre for regular toilet stops. This needs to be public provision.*

There were **32** comments in response to Question 5 (Do you have any comments on how the Council intends to improve access to toilet provision over the next 2 years?), a selection of which can be seen below:

- *Upgrading the facilities should start immediately. It is very difficult sometimes when having travelled to Merthyr from down the valley in order to travel further afield to be able to access toilet facilities and still catch buses. There was a lot of money wasted converting the bus station toilets and then expecting the cafe workers to clean them, considering the amount of people who would need to use them.*
- *They need a toilet block like what they had by the bus stop for people to use, which in turn creates jobs cleaning and maintaining the toilets.*
- *There may be community groups that would be interested in running a community facility - not sure this is in there.*
- *Bring back public toilets to the bus station even if we need to pay 30p to use them*
- *Pay workers to maintain and take care of these facilities. Employment for local people and useable amenities for visitors and locals.*
- *Comments are that people are not using town centre shops etc. because of the undesirable people hanging around the town yes this has an impact but this is in every town but the toilet facilities in Merthyr & surrounding area are terrible.*
- *Public toilets needed in Pentrebach retail park. Had to leave my shopping and drive to co-op as my child needed to go. No facilities available.*
- *REAL sign posting is essential.*
- *Improvement could be made by refecton of other towns and cities globally, where access has been successful based on their local strategy.*
- *Many places also provide clean and modern provision by way of giving people the right to pay ie: money, card.*
- *It's essential for an ageing society to gain access to clean and safe toilet facilities along with the many other minority groups of people noted.*
- *More consideration needs to be made to toilet provision especially on a weekend and after normal working hours. The provision needs to be manned/monitored to prevent their misuse which in turn will prevent them the public needs the facility using them. .*
- *Work together with local businesses to allow public to use their facilities if they have them would be beneficial. Better signage to public facilities would be good.*
- *You acknowledge there are insufficient toilets in the areas of the borough but there is no mention of outside the town area, what about the other wards?*
- *I think the websites will be attractive to the young but you must include basic signs also as there will be a large proportion of elderly that cannot use the internet*
- *Greater use of facilities in existing business and commercial premises, perhaps with inducement through rates or other authority funding*
- *The bus station should have toilets that stay open out of shopping hours.*

Some additional comments were as follows:

- *Signage pointing towards toilets is a feature in many town centres and tourist attractions which helps both locals and visitors alike. Another feature in well visited towns and tourist attractions is the provision of a number of provision of maps at gateways/main thoroughfares with you are here showing places of interest including toilets.*
- *The strategy focuses too much on web site/internet access when addressing how it will " advertise" locations of toilet facilities and assumes that many people have access to phones and internet.*
- *It seems that it may improve awareness of local facilities.*
- *There are many large retailers who are happy for you to pop in and use their facilities and this isn't recognised in the provision list.*

Demographic of respondents:

- **54.76%** were age 51+
- **60.71%** were female
- **40.47%** either had a disability or long-term illness or health problem