



Case Study

Feasibility Study

March 2022

SLCC
For Local Council Professionals®



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Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)

Founded in 1972, SLCC has gone from strength to strength, starting with just 50 members, and now representing clerks to over 5,000 councils in England and Wales.

As the professional body for local council clerks and senior council employees, we ensure that our members are equipped with the necessary knowledge, training, and skills to thrive within their role and best support their council and community.

SLCC is a vibrant member focused organisation which helps local council officers to develop and grow professionally and so be able to better serve their councils and the communities they support.



Local Council Consultancy (LCC)

To further the service provided, LCC was launched in late 2018 by SLCC as an additional capability to its advisory and membership services. It draws on the wide and deep expertise of SLCC and seeks to provide councils with a value for money, sector-leading consultancy service.

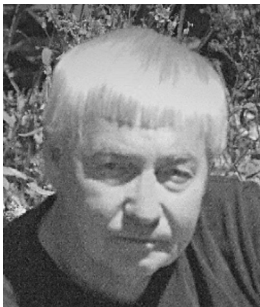
LCC operates on a **'profit-for purpose' basis, reinvesting all surpluses to further the development of professional clerks and, through them, the development of the whole sector.**

LCC services are delivered by our team of associates and Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualified clerks who are grounded in core public service values, a number of whom have worked in principal authorities and are now in the town and parish council sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Butt, Associate Consultant at LCC, explains how a feasibility study enabled Weston-Super-Mare Town Council to decide on the future of public toilet provision at one of their most popular parks.

PROJECT BRIEF

1. The Town Council asked that a wide range of options be considered and ranked according to their feasibility
2. Factors such as the ongoing vandalism, and general misuse of the facility, should be kept in mind in the study
3. Representatives of a wide range of user groups should be consulted

PUBLIC TOILETS FEASIBILITY STUDY

The facility at the entrance to Grove Park in Weston-super-Mare was one of several toilets adopted by the town council to prevent their closure by North Somerset Council as a budget-reduction measure.

There had been a history of vandalism and misuse which necessitated costly repairs and meant the facility was often out of action, sometimes during the peak of the holiday season. The mechanisms operating the toilets were unreliable and frequently broke down.

Grove Park has a range of amenities including play areas, a bandstand, a sensory garden, and Jill's Garden' in memory of the TV presenter Jill Dando, who was born in the town. It is a popular area for residents and tourists alike.



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Discussions with park users and community groups, both in-person during visits to the park and remotely, showed the strength of feeling in the town. Although local councils do not have a legal duty to provide public toilets, many felt that the town council should make provision.

Disability groups and parents of young children said that their enjoyment of the park was limited by the frequent lack of toilets.



ANALYSING THE OPTIONS

- The options ranged from complete removal, to rebuilding on site, or relocation. A community toilet scheme was also considered, partnering with the nearby entertainment, cultural, and catering facilities
- It was noted that the higher standards of cleanliness and maintenance of toilets in motorway services, bars, and restaurants as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic had raised the public's expectations of council-owned toilets
- The repeal in April 2021 of the Non-Domestic Rating (Public Lavatories) Bill or 'toilet tax' meant a reduction in the cost of providing public toilets amenities such as the café, where it was less likely to be misused and where it would be more accessible. Although this was the mostly costly option, it was accepted unanimously by Weston-super-Mare Town Council, as it was agreed that less expensive options would provide only short-term solutions
- A further recommendation that the town council should seek closer co-operation with North Somerset Council, which manages the park, was also accepted. Councillors from both authorities are already working together to enable the relocation to move forward as soon as finances permit

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Continuing to maintain and repair the facilities was not a responsible use of public money, and a new building in the same location would still be vulnerable to vandalism and misuse
- The recommended option was a brand-new toilet block inside the park, near to other amenities such as the café, where it was less likely to be misused and where it would be more accessible. Although this was the mostly costly option, it was accepted unanimously by Weston-super-Mare Town Council, as it was agreed that less expensive options would provide only short-term solutions
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CUSTOMER FEEDBACK



"The LCC report and approach were extremely helpful in making sure that local partners considered all the relevant issues and asked the right questions on the future of our public toilet provision. It has proved the catalyst for a renewed vision and encouraged us to work together to deliver a long-term solution."

Councillor Mike Bell

Liberal Democrat Councillor for Weston-super-Mare Central Ward
and Deputy Leader of North Somerset Council



"Stephen Butt's report was very thoroughly researched, well presented, and has been accepted by the town council as the way forward. I would heartily recommend LCC as a way to find the right consultant for whatever specialist advice and support your council needs."

Malcolm Nicholson LLB DMS CiLCA PSLCC

Town Clerk, Weston-super-Mare Town Council

To find out more visit www.localcouncilconsultancy.co.uk
or email consultancy@localcouncilconsultancy.co.uk

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