

Public Conveniences Review Consultation Summary

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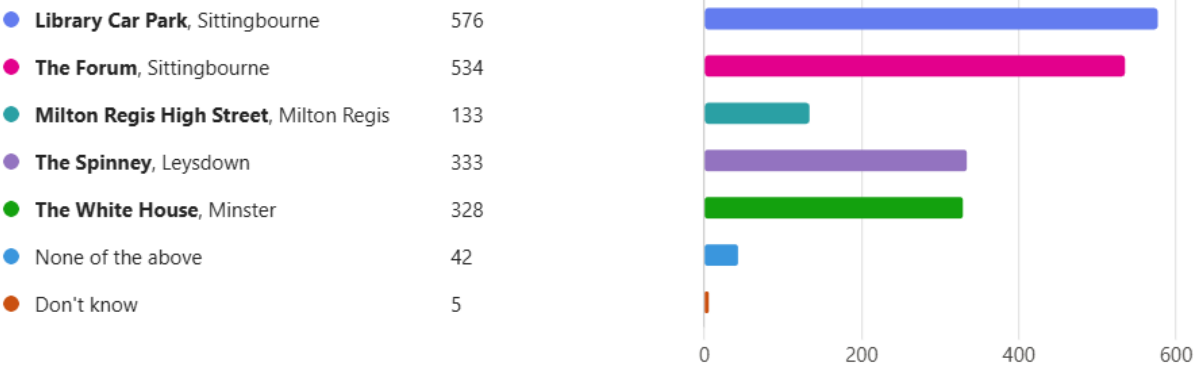
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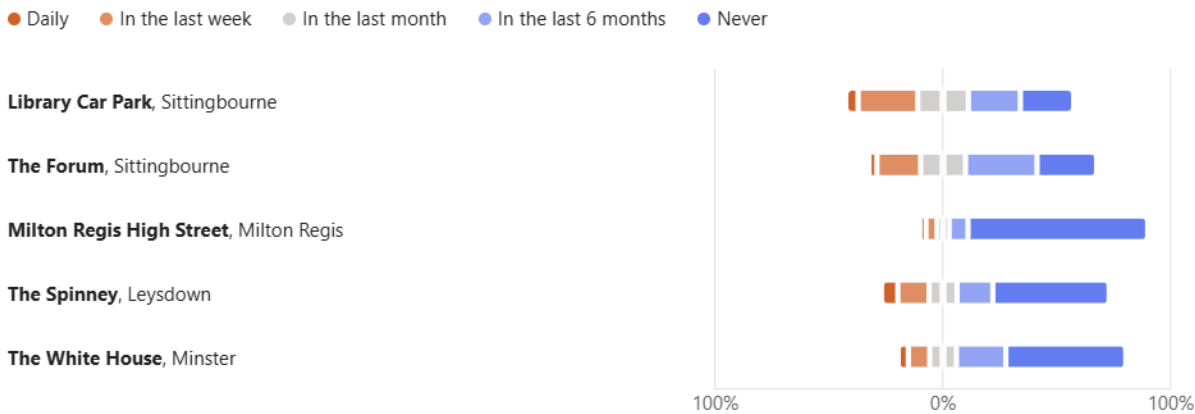
Public Toilet Facilities Consultation Results

Everyone

1. Which, if any, of the following public toilets have you previously used?



2. Which, if any, of the following public toilets do you use regularly?



3. Was the toilet in acceptable condition on your last visit?

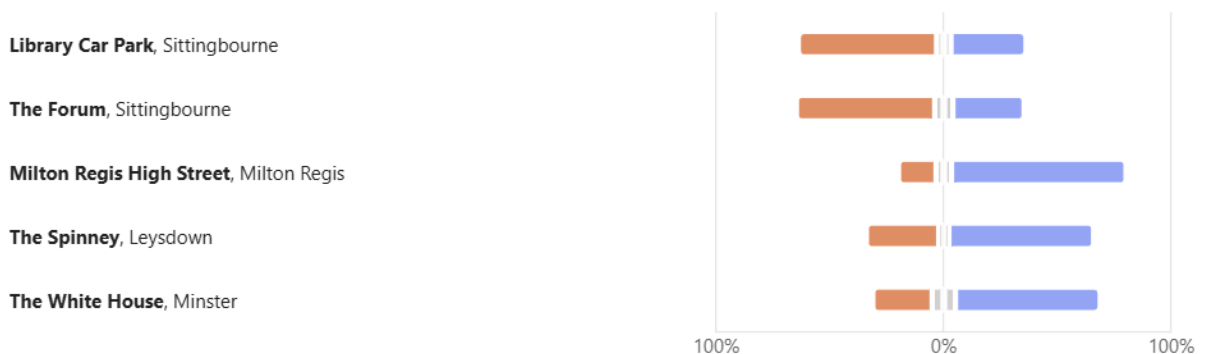


4. If no, please explain?

Theme	Example
<u>Cleanliness failures:</u> Persistent reports of dirty, smelly conditions that deter use	"Dirty and in need of cleaning"
<u>Closed/locked or limited access:</u> Facilities reported as closed/locked or restricted	"Forum ones were closed and on the previous visit so dirty I went to the library ones"
<u>Missing supplies:</u> Missing basics (toilet roll, soap) and faulty taps/hand-wash units	"No loo roll, not sure it had been cleaned in months. Water trickled out of tap and no soap."
<u>Outdated/poor condition:</u> Blocks are deemed to be old/run-down; calls for refurbishment or modern units	"Very old fashioned but when in need useable"

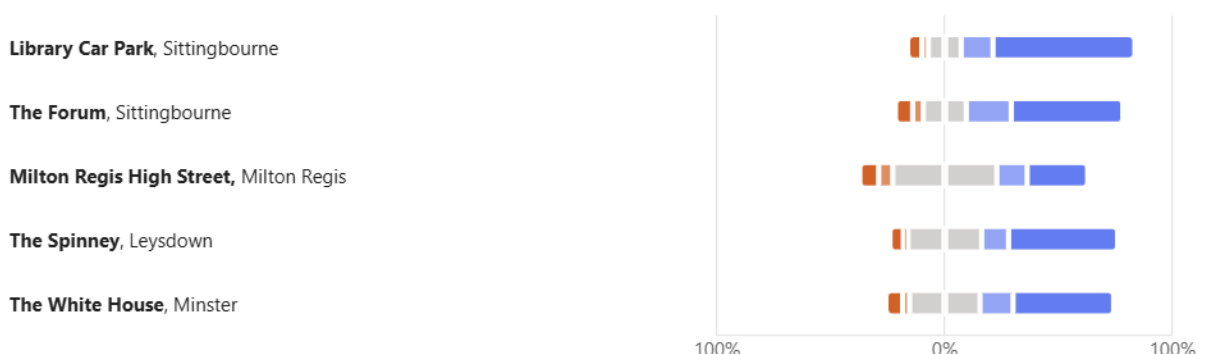
5. In order to meet your specific needs, are the following public toilets accessible?

● Yes ● No ● N/A



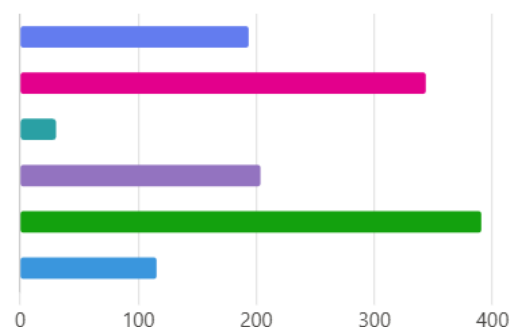
6. I consider the following public toilets to be important?

● Strongly disagree (1) ● Disagree (2) ● Neutral (3) ● Agree (4) ● Strongly agree (5)



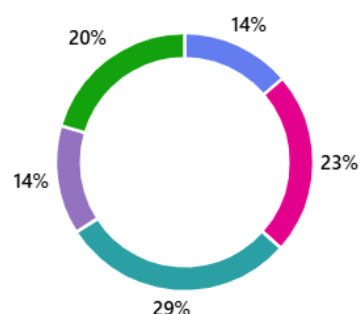
7. Would the closure of any of the facilities impact your daily life due to any of the following?

● A long term physical or mental ill-health / disability	193
● Long standing illness or condition (such as Crohn's disease, urinary incontinence,...)	343
● Pregnancy	30
● Caring for children	203
● Problems related to ageing	390
● No impact	115



8. In your opinion, acknowledging closures have to happen, which of the below public toilets should be closed?

● Library Car Park , Sittingbourne	155
● The Forum , Sittingbourne	257
● Milton Regis High Street , Milton Regis	330
● The Spinney , Leysdown	154
● The White House , Minster	230

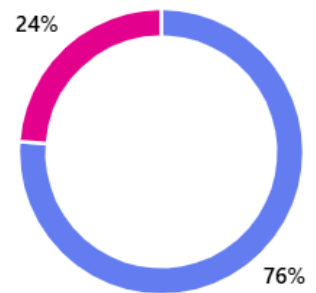


9. Please tell us why you chose those public toilets?

Theme	Example
Forum toilets: Forum block viewed as substandard or redundant given nearby business/cinema toilets	"The forum ones are always dirty smells never no toilet roll in there most times plus I always use the cinema ones as there cleaner and in better condition"
White House: Leas alternatives; White House closed/awkward access/expensive	"Cleaner toilets have been provided not too far away from the white house toilets. As previously mentioned the library toilets constantly look dated and like they aren't maintained at all"
Milton Regis: low footfall/awareness	"There is not that much in milton to attract people and use the toilets"
Leysdown: Tourism & coastline	"Leysdown has two toilets. The spinney toliet is outdated and not cleaned properly. The other toliet in leysdown has an attendant is used so much more"

10. Would you like to see more businesses allow the public to use their facilities free of charge during their operating hours?

● Yes 616
● No 193



11. Are there reasons why Town or Parish Councils or other appropriate local organisations should not manage the public toilets in their respective areas?

Theme	Example
No reason: No reason identified	"No"
Cost: Devolving to parishes shifts costs.	"Yes, we pay our council tax to Swale Borough Council for this service. The Town and Parish Councils have very limited resources and being tiny they cannot make economies of scale so it will cost us, the council tax payers, more in the long run."
Borough responsibility & public health: Toilets should remain a borough duty for public health/ equality/ access.	"There is no excuse for these toilets NOT to be managed by Swale Borough Council or the Town Council for use by the public (who are also the people who vote for their Council)..."
Scepticism: Others expressed uncertainty.	"Not sure 😞"

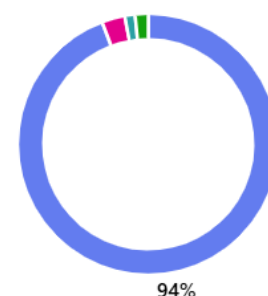
12. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the future of public toilets?

Theme	Example
<u>Keep toilets open:</u> There were several comments that suggested keeping all toilets open.	"They are essential for me as I use them regularly."
<u>Tourism & place vitality:</u> Sheppey/beaches require facilities for visitors and hygiene were suggested.	"Without public toilets NONE of our beaches can be designated bathing areas."
<u>Operational improvements:</u> Seasonal hours, attendants/CCTV, signage, modern pods; and small fees were among the suggestions.	"I support removing as many as possible that are under used. How much would people be happy to pay to keep them open for such small handful of people. Many businesses would be happy for the public to use their toilets, but as a business owner myself, you would need to compensate them some how. Being honest, the impact on trade is nil. They will not get new customers using the toilet, so you need to stop thinking that it is a benefit in itself. A very small relief on business rates would suffice and is used elsewhere in the UK. Additionally, if you close them, the building need to be disposed of or demolished. If you leave them closed and looking derelict, it will contribute to why parts of Sheppey and Sittingbourne look lie some shanty town. As an example, the ones in Leysdown, please close them, but you need to then knock the building down and replace it with a flower bed or something. Alternatively, the ones in Minster and Sheppey, you could start charging a very small fee to use them. Look at toilets in Europe hotspots, only a handful are free. However, with a charge, they are better kept and not a burden on the taxpayer. OR, if charging is not an option, you could mothball those ones over winter so that they are only open in the peak times of Summer for tourists. I can guarantee all the £000k is going on repairs for vandalism in the winter when one user a day would be classed as busy. I fully support bathrooms for public use, if anything I would support more. But nobody in their right mind thinks £4 per user is taxpayer money well spent. The council needs to find a solution that delivers value. Swale council is always a million years behind other councils, so I would recommend you look at what other councils have been up to over recent years. Any plans should be run past Reform UK, as our current council of

	wets are incompetent and would see £4 per user as money well spent. Well if that is the case, they can give their councillor allowance to keep them operating.”
<u>Human need & medical dependency:</u> Essential for elderly/disabled and conditions (IBS, Crohn’s, incontinence).	“People who are old or disabled need close public toilets especially at public places like the beach , closure will force people to relieve themselves in other places like alleyways ect.”

13. In what role are you responding to this survey?

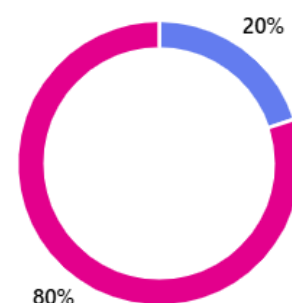
● Swale resident	756
● Swale visitor	23
● Representative of a VCS/charity/community group	10
● Representative of a business or private sector organisation	0
● Other	13



Representative of a VCS/charity/community group

14. Would you consider exploring the opportunity to take responsibility for a public convenience to prevent its closure?

● Yes	2
● No	8
● Maybe	0



15. Please provide the name of your organisation, contact details and how you intend to maintain the public toilet?

Redacted

Representative of a business or private sector organisation

16. Are you interested in the Community Toilet Scheme and would like further information?

Yes	0
No	0

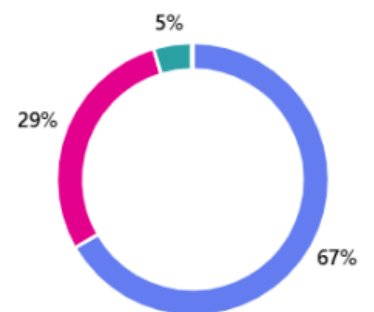
17. Please provide the name of your organisation and contact details?

N/A

Swale resident / visitor

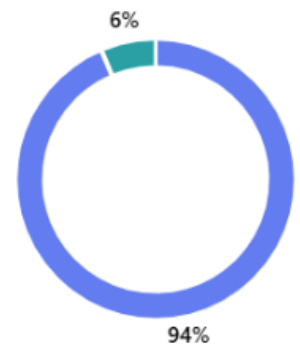
18. How would you describe yourself?

Female	516
Male	222
Prefer not to say	35
Other	1



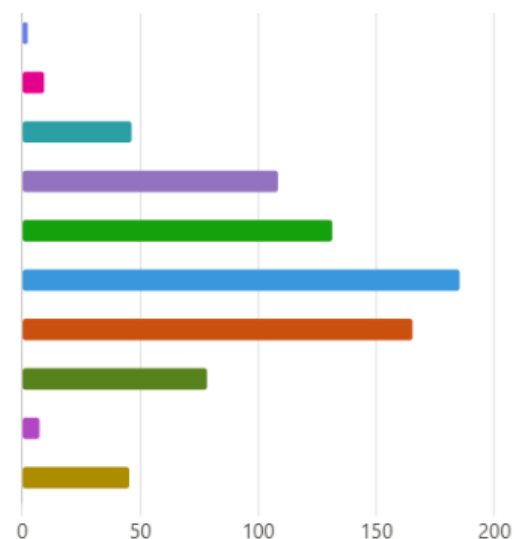
19. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

Yes	717
No	1
Prefer not to say	48



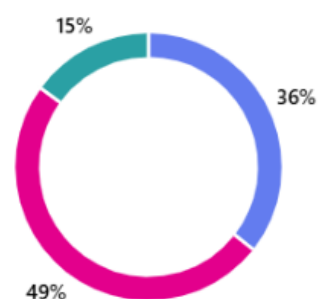
20. What was your age on your last birthday?

17 years old or under	2
18-24	9
25-34	46
35-44	108
45-54	131
55-64	185
65-74	165
75-84	78
85 or above	7
Prefer not to say	45

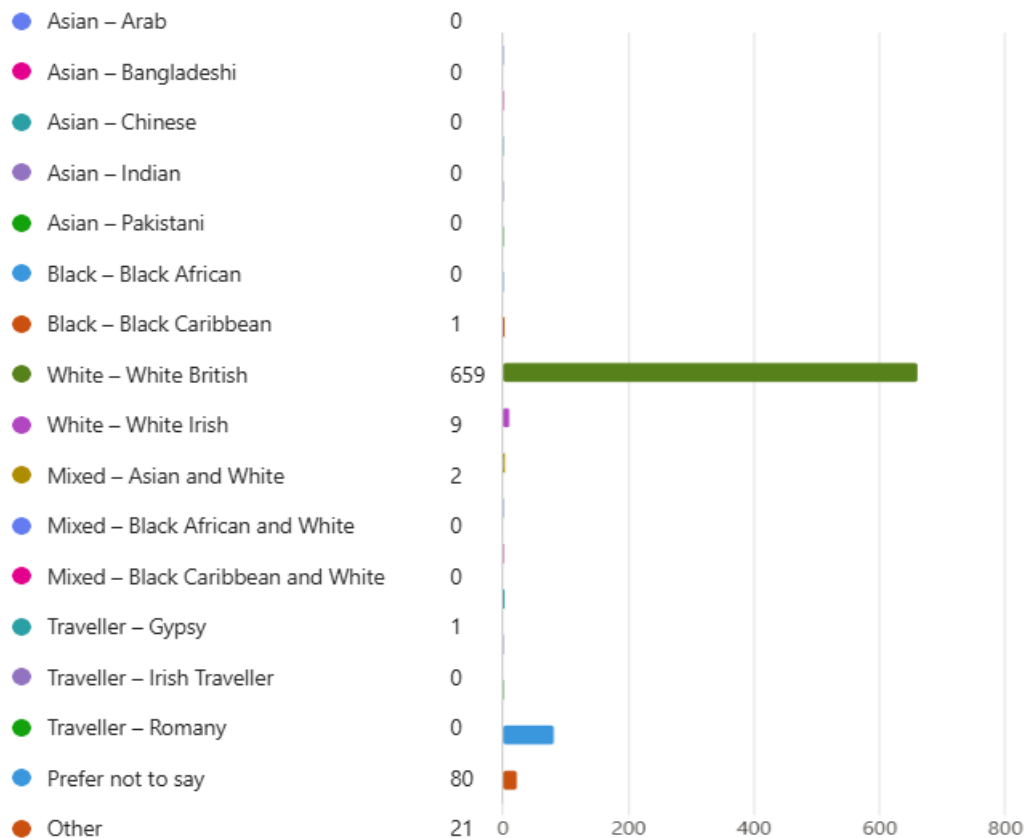


21. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

Yes	276
No	383
Prefer not to say	116

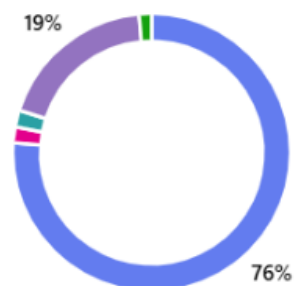


22. What is your ethnic group?



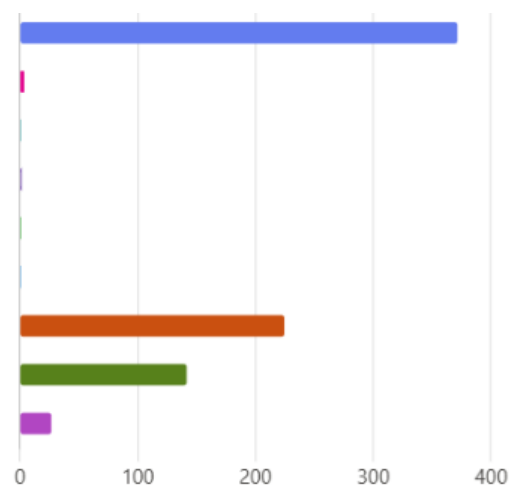
23. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual (straight)	580
Bisexual	14
Gay man or Lesbian	15
Prefer not to say	142
Other	11



24. How would you describe your religious beliefs?

Christian	371
Buddhist	3
Hindu	0
Jewish	1
Muslim	0
Sikh	0
No religion	224
Prefer not to say	141
Other	26



Letters

Comment from Swale website

I read with concern that you had plans to close not one but both loos in Sittingbourne High Street. Do you think this is wise? There are people who need to have easy access to a toilet. Are you trying to put people off visiting our town, with high parking charges and no loos.

We used to pay a penny to visit the toilets, would it not be better to charge 20p or so. I know money is tight but we do not have a large shop who would have a toilet. Unlike our other shopping area who have toilets in M&S and Dunelm. Please think carefully before closing both toilets.

Dear Sirs,

Although I do not live in Swale, I do all my shopping in Sittingbourne, Faversham or Sheerness; usually the former.

I am most concerned that Swale B.C. is planning to close both public lavatories in the town centre. This will be another nail in the coffin of the High Street. Whilst men can relieve themselves in any secluded alley, it is far more difficult for women to do so.

If cuts are to be made, I suggest the lavatory

near The Forum ² could go. It is in a dark, shady spot and inside it is unpleasant. Coupled with which, the washing facilities are placed too high on the wall for them to be used comfortably by short adults or by children. The lavatories in Central Avenue are in a bright, well-used area and are not forbidding. Also, they are in much better condition than the others.

It is essential to have public lavatories in town centres, not everyone wishes to visit pubs, cafes or restaurants.

Why not charge for the use of these necessary facilities? I would gladly pay £1 and there could be a secure coin-collecting

facility at the ³entrance, with a set of gates, as per the railways. An Oyster Card system could be useful for frequent users of the lavatories. These could be "topped-up" at independent shops in town.

People should be prepared to pay for public lavatories.

Incidentally, the best lavatories in Swale are in Rose Street, Shearness. The attendant keeps them spotless and always supplied with paper.

Yours faithfully

Petitions

Not to close Central Avenue or Forum toilets (Sittingbourne)

Signatures obtained:

245

Reconsider proposal to close or transfer ownership of the public toilets on the Spinney. As the toilets are a vital public service, which serves the residents and holiday makers of Leysdown alike and their closure will severely impact the local community.

Signatures obtained:

124

Community Groups Responses

Swale's Seniors Forum

6th August 2025

Dear Mr Bowen

The aims of the Swale Seniors Forum are to promote the welfare and well being of Seniors in the Borough of Swale and to represent the views of Seniors in Swale.

Until recent times, Swale Council recognised such matters to the extent that it appointed one of its Councillors to the role of Older Peoples' Champion. For reasons unknown to this Forum, that role appears to have fallen into abeyance and the older generation no longer has a formal voice in Council.

It is with both horror and dismay that the Forum has heard of the proposals of the Council to close several public toilets in the Borough, the most notable of which as far as the Forum is concerned, are those at the Library car park in Sittingbourne and the Forum, Sittingbourne.

It was Cicero in Roman times who stated that "The health of the people is the highest law" and since those times, that maxim has often guided governance and indeed the Courts when examining matters that serve the public good and help to reconcile conflict when societal needs are involved – and that maintains today.

A feature of a Good Society is to provide for peoples' basic needs and there are few things more basic than access to public toilets – a matter most crucial to people with a range of vulnerabilities not least the elderly and the disabled. A denial of that feature prevents people from, amongst other things, going shopping, socialising and leading a normal life.

We all need to use toilets when we are away from our homes or simply moving from place to place, a matter which becomes more urgent if you are a person who suffers from medical conditions that require immediate access to a toilet. That matter is simply one about our basic human rights and it fulfils an important requirement for health and well-being, equality, social inclusion and private and public decency.

We recognise and understand that there is no legal duty imposed on the Council to provide public toilets, but the Public Health Act 1936 does give the Council power to do so. Those local authorities who have closed public toilets as Swale Council proposes to do on the grounds of costs are now finding that the costs of not providing public toilets are mounting in the need to clean up street fouling and other matters which are an inevitable result.

We would suggest that public toilets are also needed in the case of visitors to Sittingbourne who make an important and much needed contribution to local economies.

Public toilets are important in giving older people the confidence to leave their homes and to avoid the many problems arising from isolation and dependency. They are also most important for women, especially those with babies and young children and regard must be had to matters of sartorial, biological and functional matters including menstruation, those at menopause and those with diabetes. Among the matters that make public toilets important for men is the urgency caused by prostrate problems. Urinary incontinence affects a great many people over the age of 65.

People travelling by public transport in Sittingbourne need readily available public toilets and to an extent that need is catered for by the toilet at the Forum. That is a concern for all but especially for those with conditions such as Colitis and Crohns Disease.

We have mentioned the Public Health Act 1936 and would refer to the Local Government Act 2000 which, we understand, places a duty on local authorities to provide a 'community strategy' which "should aim to enhance the quality of life of local community and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and its inhabitants".

A 'common strategy' allows local committees to voice their needs and priorities to co-ordinate the work of the Council. We would submit that the provision of public toilets – and it must be accepted that the present provision of the same in Sittingbourne itself is minimal – should be a key priority for Swale Council. Concerning all it does a healthy and safe environment for the purpose and in an accessible local facility and service. It would seem that the only case the Council has for closing the public toilets is one of cost. We would submit that the case for the need for public toilets exceeds the financial consideration and that there must be other ways in which the finance can be realised and that a Community Toilet Scheme (CTS) is not the answer to closure. We note what the Council states about CTS. Whilst accepting there are some advantages in such a scheme the disadvantages outweigh them.

Whilst the Council embarked on a so-called regeneration scheme some years ago little has been achieved in that the High Street is to some extent moribund but nevertheless people do have to shop there and make use of other facilities. To take away the public toilets would be on the path to degeneration. Among the disadvantages of the CTS we see are:

1. Insufficient suitable premises in the High Street
2. The right of the premise proprietor to refuse the right in appropriate circumstances to use the toilet facilities. These would, for example, show a need for the Council to have public toilets to supplement a CTS scheme
3. If a public house is in a CTS scheme there would be concerns for women, people with young children, people from ethnic and religious groups (who would be deterred from entering pubs) and, indeed, older people.
4. Take away the public houses and the number of businesses eligible for the scheme would be limited and there should be no suggestion whatsoever that toilet facilities reserved for members of staff should be available for public use, many of the reasons for which are too delicate to mention here although are pretty obvious when thought is given to the matter
5. There may be pubs and cafes not willing to enter a scheme and those that are willing will provide only a partial solution to an adequate provision of public toilets. We submit that the present provision is adequate. The scheme should be seen only as a supplement to public toilets
6. How much money would have to be provided to participate in the scheme. It might also be again for several obvious reasons that proprietors would need to employ a member of staff to attend to the toilet after each use by a member of the public and it would be highly unlikely, with the exception of pubs and some restaurants that there would be urinals for men and that, again without stating the obvious would be unsuitable.
7. What about the costs to proprietors of sanitary provision and appliances, toilet rolls, bins, hand washing products and disposal of detritus
8. Opening hours of relevant premises would also be a relevant consideration.

Would the Swale Council Office themselves be a part of a CTS?

It is really a matter of chance that the Forum became aware of this consultation and we wonder how widespread the consultation will be. There does not appear to have been wider public consultation. Survey forms are said to be available at the reception desk of the Council offices but there are no community group survey forms available there and enquiring is met by non-awareness and understanding. When the desk assistants telephone relevant offices about the forms there is nobody answering the telephone and the enquirer has to go away empty-handed and all this has to occur between the hours of 10am and 12 noon.

Yours sincerely



Mr P Harper
Vice Chair
Swale Senior's Forum

Freedom Centre

Good morning

I spoke to our clients yesterday re this – their thoughts are:

As disabled people the whole group (around 15 members present yesterday) felt that there are already too few disabled public toilets available and that often they are unable to find a suitable one wherever they are in Swale. They stated that those with walkers and wheelchairs cannot access a non-disabled toilet and that rather than closing any there should be more. They also raised concerns around the cleanliness of those that we do have stating that they are always “disgusting and dirty”.

One client stated that he tried to access the “normal” toilet at the library carpark and ended up having an accident due to this so felt this one should not be closed as he and others would not be able to use any other.

They did feel that maybe the ones in Minster could be closed as they do not feel safe when using this one due to it being dark and not knowing who else could be in there, and that the new ones along the leas were much nicer.

Kind regards

Gemma

Area Committee Feedback

Eastern Area Committee - Thursday, 4 September 2025

- Had disability charities been consulted regarding people with accessibility problems accessing facilities as part of the community toilet scheme?;
- the transfer of toilet facilities to town and parish councils was a costly process, would this option cost more in the long run?; and
- if the proposal to close facilities was agreed, people may not feel confident leaving their homes.

Western Area Committee - Tuesday, 9 September 2025

- It was premature to make the decision on public toilet facilities while the Local Government Reorganisation was ongoing. This should be something for the new unitary council to decide;
- it was a good idea to hand the running of public toilet facilities to parish and town councils;
- had research on the impact to residents been carried out on other districts that had closed public toilet facilities?;
- people with medical conditions relied on the public toilets in Sittingbourne town centre;
- the public toilet in the Forum, Sittingbourne was in a bad state of repair;
- would parish councils want to take on the financial responsibility for public toilets?;
- charging for public toilets might work;
- some cemeteries had composting toilets, that might be an effective option in some rural areas; and
- the proposals were causing anxiety for some residents as they cannot walk far and rely on the Forum public toilet in Sittingbourne after getting off the bus.

Sheppey Area Committee - Thursday, 18 September 2025

- Question 2 of the online consultation gave frequency of use options for Minster-on-Sea public toilet facilities, however, those toilets had been shut. This could skew the results of the consultation;
- the Isle of Sheppey was a tourist area and visitors did not want to hunt around to find toilet facilities;
- the message should be that everyone was welcome, including those with disabilities;
- the money should be found to keep as many toilet facilities open as possible;
- how were the costs of running the public toilet facilities calculated?;
- the 'Radar' key at Barton Point toilet facilities had not been working and the facilities had closed earlier than advertised;

- if a public toilet was closed, there should be more information about alternative facilities on the closure sign;
- when reporting problems with public toilets, no feedback on the issues raised was provided;
- how much weighting would the data obtained as part of the consultation process have on the final decision?; and
- the opening times should not be seasonal as people are increasingly visiting the Isle of Sheppey throughout the year.

Sittingbourne Area Committee - Thursday, 25 September 2025

- The Forum, Sittingbourne public toilets were in poor condition and fly-tipping often took place outside them;
- the Library car park toilets, Sittingbourne, were nearby and were in much better condition;
- the community toilet scheme would enable the public to use toilets in cafes and businesses in Sittingbourne High Street without having to make purchases;
- elderly people getting off buses may not be able to walk as far as the Library Car Park; and
- It was important to keep the Milton Regis High Street toilets open, it would encourage visitors to the Court Hall.

Town and Parish Council Feedback

Leysdown Parish Council

Many thanks for your email.

I can confirm that we have been encouraging residents of Leysdown Parish to complete the online form, and this afternoon, I dropped off paper copies of the completed consultations, as well as details of signatories of a petition that was organised too.

We hope you take the views of the parishioners, residents and holidaymakers that use the Spinney toilets into account.

Myself and various Leysdown Parish Councillors have attended recent Swale Area Committee meetings where the public toilets provision was discussed. We have previously noted that we do not recognise the usage figures for the Spinney toilets provided in the report, as we understand usage to be much higher than it has been stated as. We asked in the July Swale Area Committee Meeting as to how the figures were achieved, but understand there was no scope for the usage figures to be re-visited.

Prior to the result of the consultation, we ask that an economic impact statement is undertaken and published which outlines what the impact of closing the Spinney toilets would have on tourist income in Leysdown during the summer months.

Do let me know if you need any more information from us at this stage.

Kind regards,
Emily

Emily O'Neill | Clerk | Leysdown Parish Council

Minster on Sea Parish Council

I am writing on behalf of Minster on Sea Parish Council regarding the current consultation on public toilet provision.

The Parish Council has formally submitted our response via the online survey; however, we wish to follow up with this email to ensure our position is clearly understood and fully represented. We respectfully ask that consideration be given to both our survey response and the additional points outlined below.

The Council has concerns about the fairness and structure of the consultation. In particular, we believe the consultation is skewed. One example is a question asking whether respondents have used certain public toilets in the last six months. However, the White House toilets in our parish have been closed for more than six months by Swale Borough Council. To our knowledge, the toilets in Milton Regis and Leysdown have also been closed for a similar period. This makes it impossible for residents to answer accurately and risks distorting the results in a way that does not reflect actual need or usage.

Furthermore, we feel it is inappropriate that the survey is limited only to Swale residents. Several of the toilet locations, including those along the coast and in visitor hotspots, are regularly used by people from outside the borough. By excluding non-residents from participating, the consultation potentially underrepresents a significant portion of users.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation and ask that the views expressed here be formally recorded alongside our submitted survey response.

Please confirm receipt of this email and its inclusion in the consultation process.

Many thanks

Lauren Crockford
Parish Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer