

## **REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**29 SEPTEMBER 2010**

### **MEMBER'S ITEM: REFURBISHMENT OF AND CHARGING FOR THE PENTAGON TOILETS**

Report from: Robin Cooper – Director for Regeneration,  
Community and Culture

#### **Summary**

This report is in response to a request from Councillor Godwin and provides information on the change of ownership and management of the Pentagon Shopping Centre toilets.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 Under Medway's Constitution, Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Godwin has asked that an item on this issue is included on the agenda for this meeting.

#### **2. Member's Item request**

- 2.1 Councillor Godwin's request is:

" Refurbishment of and charging for the Pentagon toilets.

In particular I would like to raise the whole issue of the Value for Money for the Council in terms of their £200,000 investment and the failure to get guarantees about the toilets remaining free of charge."

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The toilets at the Pentagon had been an increasing cause for complaints for a number of years. In spite of being a staffed facility, both the upper floor and lower floor toilets had become in need of major refurbishment as the main toilets in Chatham Town Centre.

- 3.2 Discussions commenced with the owners of the Pentagon concluding with the signing of a deed and lease in early 2010 transferring ownership and maintenance of the toilets at the Pentagon to Pentagon Co-Ownership S.A.R.L. (the owners of the Pentagon). A grant of £210,000 was secured from the Home and Communities Agency (HCA), via Medway Renaissance, in 2008 to invest in the toilets as a one off grant. The toilets are now run by the Pentagon until 2100, under a 90 year agreement.
- 3.3 Various improvement work had to be undertaken by the Pentagon owners including demolition and alterations; internal walls; floor finishes; roof structure to prevent water leakage from the bus station; new doors; painting and decoration; new ceilings; reconditioned basins with new driers; soap dispensers and baby changing equipment; some new WC pans and basins; new trough urinals; new electrical fittings and lights.
- 3.4 The Pentagon have decided to make a charge for the toilets. They estimate the cost to them in maintaining and staffing the toilets to a high standard (they had suffered from anti-social activity) is around £100,000 per annum, including rates and utility bills especially for water and electricity.
- 3.5 When the new bus station opens in Summer 2011, free toilets are being provided by the Council during opening hours. There is also an automatic toilet near to Debenhams. Other toilets are available in Chatham Library and in retail units in the high streets.

#### 4. Director's comments

- 4.1 The lease with the Pentagon represents good value for the Council meaning that clean, modern toilets are available for shoppers and no longer maintained by the Council. This will save the Council around £61,298 per annum or £5.5 million at today's costs over the duration of the lease.

#### 5. Risk Management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
The Pentagon toilets close	If the toilets close, the nearest toilet would be at the new bus station, Chatham Library or close to Debenhams	A lease has been agreed and one of the undertakings are that the toilets are open: 08:00-18:00 Mon, Tues, Wed, Sat 08:00-19:00 Thur, Fri 10:00-16:00 Sun They are to be appropriately staffed and cleansed as reasonably necessary.

## **6. Financial and Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The transfer of the toilets will save the Council significant sums of money. Whether the owners choose to make the toilets free or not is a matter for them. The new bus station toilets inside the bus station opening in 2011 and, within a very short distances of the Pentagon, will be free.

## **7. Recommendation**

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to consider the Member Item and officer response.