



APSE Briefing: COVID-19. Survey Results for Public Conveniences

Key Issues:

- With the onset of ever more stringent measures to control the spread of coronavirus, local authorities are having to constantly adapt to shifting government and other agencies advice, regarding the provision of services.
- As these restrictions are amended and lifted, the demand for public conveniences is set to increase and local authorities have to balance public demand with mitigating the risk of the public using the facilities.
- The findings from this survey look at the on-going levels of service provision being maintained, as well looking at how councils are looking to re-open the provision going forward.

Background

Due to the nature of the Coronavirus and its ability to infect others at a rapid rate, social distancing has been a key response to preventing the spread of the virus. This has meant many councils have had to close their public toilets or introduce measures to mitigate the risk. Following the Prime Ministers announcement on 11 May that set out Government intentions for lifting restrictions (in England) and subsequent announcements by the government administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, local authorities are now reviewing the public conveniences they are responsible for, and are developing strategies for the future use of the facilities.

This survey explores the current position and the plans that councils are putting in place as the restrictions are amended or lifted.

Findings of the survey

The survey was issued to APSE members during the week commencing 11 May 2020 and what follows is the main findings of the survey.

How many public conveniences is your council responsible for?

The survey sought to gain an understanding of the number of public conveniences a local authority had responsibility for and the majority of respondents (40.74%) reported that the council had 0-5 public conveniences. 25.93% advised that they had 20 plus facilities, 14.81% stated that they had either 10-15 or 15-20 public conveniences and a further 11.11% state that they were responsible for 10-15 public conveniences.

What percentage of the facilities have been closed in response to the COVID-19 restrictions?

It is clear from the responses that the majority of councils have opted to close the facilities with 62.96% of respondents advising that 80-100% were closed. A further 11.11% reported that 60-80% of the public conveniences were closed. There were also just over a quarter of responding (25.93%) of councils stating that 0-20% of toilets that the local authority were responsible for were closed.

If the authority has kept open provision what measures were introduced?

There have been a variety of measures introduced by councils who report keeping their provision open, 69.23% of respondents advised that additional cleaning or an amended cleaning specification had been introduced. 30.77% of respondents advised that they have removed the requirement for payment, and 7.69% have stated that they have reduced opening hours and put an attendant in place.

In addition, it was commented that councils had done the following: -

- Introduced additional signage regarding hand washing, social distancing, etc.
- Restricted usage to key workers
- Given the keys to waste operatives in rural areas

Is your authority planning on re-opening public conveniences?

At the time of conducting the survey, just under half of respondents, 48%, reported that they were currently planning on opening public conveniences. With 32% stating that they were unsure and 20% advised that they were not planning on opening the facilities.

If so, when is the authority planning on opening the facilities?

From the respondents that advised that the council was planning to open public conveniences, only 14.29% advised that this would be done in the next two weeks. 9.52% reported that the public conveniences would not be opened until the end of June, with 19.05% advising that there were no plans in place to open the facilities until July or later.

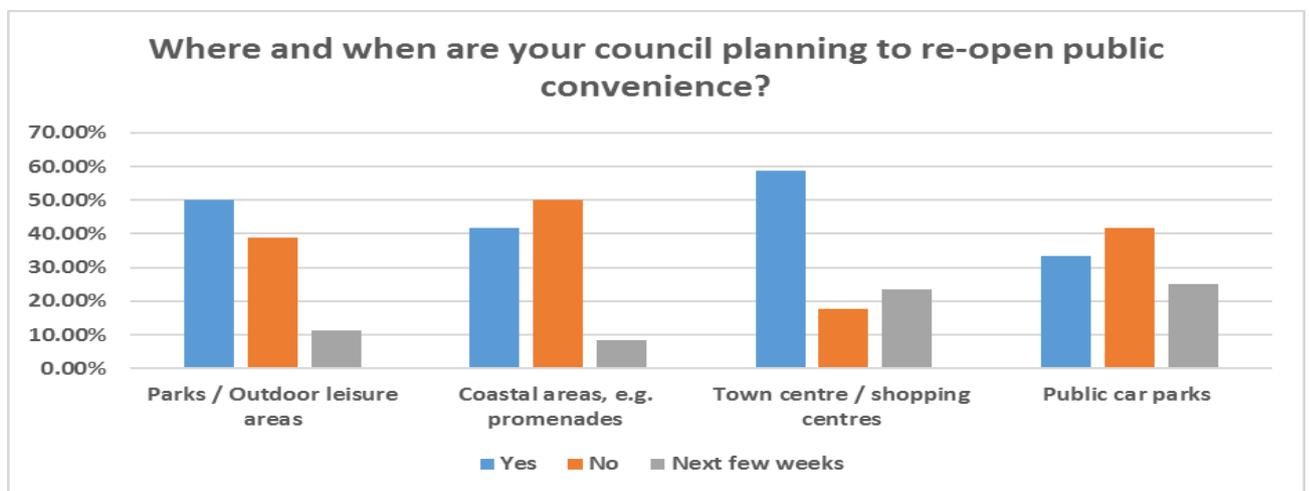
In addition, 61.90% of respondents commented that they had other plans in place. Several of these comments stated that they would not be opened until the government guidelines changed. This may be in part attributed to the different lockdown restriction in place across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

What approach will be taken to re-open the public conveniences?

The vast majority of respondents, 65.22%, advised that the facilities would not be opened until it was deemed safe to do so. 17.39% stated that there would be a phased approach and 8.70% commented that the council would open them all at the same time.

Where and when are your council planning to re-open public convenience?

The graph below details the responses received to this question: -



What measures is the council putting in place for when the facilities reopen?

The vast majority, 65% of respondents, stated that additional cleaning / changed cleaning specification would be implemented. 30% reported that cubicles and sinks will be closed to comply with social distancing guidelines. Reducing the opening times was a measure that 15% of councils were putting in place and the responses also highlight that 5% will be removing the requirement for payment and plan to put in place an attendant.

Other respondents commented that the council was currently reviewing what measures were going to be put in place but had not confirmed the arrangements.

APSE COVID-19 WhatsApp Groups

As well as surveys, APSE has introduced various WhatsApp groups which allow members to ask questions on service-related issues, often receiving swift answers to their queries. As part of this APSE has been monitoring these responses closely, and have been reporting back to members about these changes via its web pages and briefings notes, which cover

a variety of other service areas, as well as parks. These WhatsApp groups allow members of APSE to keep in touch on a minute by minute basis discussing the latest developments in their service areas.

You can join the WhatsApp groups (APSE members only) for Building Cleaning, Parks and a range of related areas using this [online registration form](#).

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