

Cross Party Group on Older People and Ageing

7 May 2014, Conference Room 24, Tŷ Hywel

Note of Meeting on Public Toilets and the new Public Health Bill

Attendees	Apologies
Mike Hedges AM - CHAIR	David Melding AM
Julie Morgan AM	Emily Warren, SSIA
Mark Isherwood AM	Ruth Crowder, College of Occupational Therapists
Mark Major AMSS to Suzy Davies AM	Monika Hare, Older People and Ageing Network (OPAN) Cymru
John Vincent, Welsh Senate of Older People	Robyn Miles, UK Government Affairs & Policy, Glaxo Smith-Kline
Iwan Williams, Older People's Commissioner's Office	Phil Vining, Age Connects Cardiff
Lynda Wallis, Vale 50+ Strategy Forum	
Carol Maddock, Older People and Ageing Network (OPAN) Cymru	
Robin Moulster, BASW Cymru	
Andrew Bell, SSIA	
Lorraine Morgan	
Simon Wilkinson, WLGA	
John Vincent, Welsh Senate of Older People	
Phyllis Preece, National Pensioners Convention	
John Davies, National Old Age Pensioners Association of Wales	
Nancy Davies, Pensioners Forum Wales	
Gareth Powell	
Graeme Francis, Age Cymru	
Gerry Keighley, Age Cymru	
Laura Nott, Age Cymru - SECRETARY	

Welcome and introductions

Mike Hedges AM welcomed everyone to the meeting and called out the apologies.

Matters arising from previous meeting

There were no matters arising from previous minutes.

AGM Report

Graeme Francis led this discussion by requesting the re-election of Chair and Secretariat for the Cross Party Group meeting. Mike Hedges AM was re-elected as Chair and Laura Nott, Age Cymru was re-elected as Secretariat.

Presentation by John Vincent, Welsh Senate for Older People

John Vincent gave an overview of the Welsh Senate provides a voice for older people across Wales and has over 50 older people's organisations affiliated to it. One of their campaigns is 'P is for People', which is seeking to protect public toilets in Wales.

Older people have to do a risk assessment every time they leave their house – 'will there be any toilets?' They are feeling confined and trapped in their houses due to this which is resulting in mental and physical problems.

Older people aren't the only ones in this situation, eg, disabled people, pregnant women and children. All these people and they are being limited by the amount of toilets available to them.

The Welsh Senate for Older People recently wrote a report highlighting key asks:

- **Welsh Government** to provide more funding for the Public Facilities Grant Scheme and reinstate the ring-fencing within the local authority budgets by repositioning it as a stand-alone grant outside the Revenue Support Grant.
- Previously unspent 'ring-fenced' budget to be re-invested into the scheme, including funding to compensate local authorities for the promotion and administration costs associated with the operation of the Public Facilities Grant Scheme.
- Local authorities to ensure the Scheme is effectively promoted/advertised and easily accessible in both printed and digital formats.
- Potential issues and/or objections should be researched and definitively removed by provision of information packs covering aspects such as public liability insurance, health and safety aspects, external/internal on site signage requirements, etc.
- Local authorities to have a **statutory duty** (which is monitored and enforced by the Welsh Government) to ensure, as a fundamental right and public health safeguard, that adequate numbers of authority owned public toilets and/or privately owned, publically accessible, toilets are available in every major town or city within Wales.

Short term:

- No further reduction in currently available and publically accessible toilet facilities throughout Wales.
- Removal of qualifying criteria or means testing the eligibility for RADAR keys, including the short term provision of keys to individuals who may be temporarily incapacitated. Cost of keys to be either totally removed or uniformly applied across Wales at a nominal cost (max £1.00 each).

Medium term:

- Public toilet facilities to be well signposted and available at least 1 hour after the operational hours of the retail park or centre.

Long term:

- Everyone should be within 300 metres of a signposted authority-owned public toilet and/or privately owned, publically accessible toilet in every major town/city centre within Wales.

Questions

Julie Morgan AM – this is a major concern. When I was MP, I worked with the British Toilet Association - a lot of older people in Cardiff North talk about this issue and I would like to do something on a local level.

Phyllis Preece – there's too much talking and not enough action. Cathay's Cemetery toilets have closed, park toilets in Cardiff have closed and lots others. The public toilets in the Hayes have re-opened but they're still closed – they say refurbished by this isn't adequate enough. They say that you should take spare clothes for your children, but now older people have to do the same.

Andrew Bell – has there been a study done on provision of public toilets?

John Vincent – we have contacted LAs about this and some have different responses.

Andrew Bell – the businesses that are part of the Public Facilities Grant Scheme, do they have stickers to show that their toilets are accessible for the public to use?

John Vincent – some businesses do but the sticker needs to be more prominent

Iwan Williams – some older people are aware that they're able to use business toilets but feel uncomfortable using private facilities. And accessibility is an issue, for example, a local pub has 10 steps to the toilets.

Robin Moulster – LAs are thinking in silos – there is a lot of talk about older people and isolation but how much support is given to older people.

Mike Hedges AM – sometimes it isn't about the number of public toilets but more the location. Facilities are sometimes at the wrong end of other public services, for example, doctor surgeries and public toilets are the opposite end of the street. Businesses opening up their doors so that the public can use their toilets need to be better identified. If you don't know where to look for this can be difficult, so older people need to ask, but sometimes they don't want to.

Lorraine Morgan – the point made about incontinence is not an issue about ageing, it's a problem for all. We're going to have to wait for the Public Health Bill to be implemented and for LAs to not close anymore public toilets before we see any change in Wales. This could take up two years.

Simon Wilkinson – (to John Vincent) is it possible you could share the information you sent to LAs? I can share this with my network at the WLGA and make it more accessible (John Vincent to email details over).

Gerry Keighley – local government ministers and AMs should put pressure on LAs to take up the Public Facilities Grant Scheme. There is a lack of consistency in local authority areas and should be uniformity and not an exception due to a postcode lottery.

Mike Hedges – WLGA and Local Government Minister sharing information.

Mark Isherwood AM – Charities Retail Association should be a part of the help towards public toilets. Research should be carried out to ask what the impact would be on a nominal charge for using public toilets.

John Vincent – we asked the same question about charging to use public toilets and the majority of people said yes.

Nancy Davies – Llanelli Leisure Centre is closing and this could deprive older people of access to toilets.

Mike Hedges AM – there are a lot of public buildings with toilets and older people should be made to feel welcome to use them.

Phyllis Preece – can we find out how many toilets have closed in public parks?

Mike Hedges AM – the park in Swansea have closed their public toilets because people were stealing and vandalizing the facilities.

Lynda Wallis – quite a lot of public toilets close at 5pm and this isn't good enough. In the Vale, we have a leisure centre co-owned by Parkwood. The toilet here is accessible to all and is always in constant use. If the Vale can do it, why can't others.

Mike Hedges AM – big superstores have toilets in the day but when they're closed it's difficult to find other options.

Local authorities don't wait until final Welsh Government report and recommendations; they make progress on it quickly as they to plan for it.

Simon Wilkinson – when LAs are preparing for new duties, they have to have the funding and will think long and hard if the money isn't available.

Robin Moulster – there is a lack of joint thinking – people need support and care needs, but it doesn't help with close of toilets. What's the impact of social services? Join up thinking about wellbeing and do something together.

Mark Isherwood AM – access and quality – would it be a good idea to write to the WLGA about the Charity Scheme and access and quality of public toilets. Memorandum of Understanding mentions banks and people having access to their toilets.

Lorraine Morgan – it's about older people's mental health – the 'Strategy for Older People' mentions that Wales should be a 'good place to live'. However, we won't meet this need if older people don't have access to public toilets.

Recommendations / actions

- Mike agreed that the minutes from this meeting should be sent as a letter for the Public Health Bill consultation
- Mark Isherwood AM suggested sending a letter to WLGA regarding access and quality of public toilets, including accessing public toilets in banks and libraries.

Date of next meeting

8 October 2014