

Economy and Property Committee	
Meeting Date	7 th July 2026
Report Title	Closed Public Conveniences – Property Next Steps
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson, Head Place Services
Lead Officer	Kieren Mansfield, Strategic Programmes and Asset Manager
Classification	Part Exempt
Recommendations	1. That the Council retains the Eastchurch Public Conveniences to be reviewed after a period of no more than 18 months to accommodate any potential project arising from the local Pride in Place Programme. 2. To delegate authority to the Head of Place to authorise the demolition of the Forum Toilet, subject to landlords consent and agreement as to how the footprint of the building will be used or reinstated.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out potential next steps in respect of the three public conveniences which the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee resolved to close (White House in Minster; Milton Regis High Street; and The Forum in Sittingbourne) from April 2026. It also considers the position in respect of the Public Conveniences at Eastchurch, which have been closed for some years.

2 Background

- 2.1 On 12th November 2025, the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee agreed the recommendations from the Public Conveniences Review. The recommendations aimed to align the service with the allocated budget.
- 2.2 This included the closure of three public conveniences at the White House in Minster; Milton Regis High Street; and The Forum in Sittingbourne. These toilets have now all been closed. This report also considers the toilets at Eastchurch, which have been closed for some years.
- 2.3 The toilets and associated land at Eastchurch and the White House are in the freehold ownership of the Council, the Forum Toilets are part of wider lease held by the the Council, incorporating the Forum Car Park, and Milton Regis

Toilets are operated under a deed which provides rights to access and operate the Public Toilets within a property owned by another party.

- 2.4 The decision to close these toilets means that they are currently not required for operational use and at present no potential alternative use by the Council has been identified. The properties also have ongoing security and maintenance liabilities for the Council.
- 2.5 SBC's adopted Property Asset Strategy sets out the requirement to:
"Make it a priority that the Council only retain land and property where it makes strategic or financial sense to do so. This should be to deliver services in line with corporate priorities, to generate income, to provide a return on investment, to enable regeneration or to provide social value."
- 2.6 The properties currently make no contribution to the delivery of the Council's services and at this stage no viable potential with regard to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan has been identified. Under the Council's Disposals Policy this meets the threshold for the relevant properties to be declared surplus.
- 2.7 As such the Head of Place will commence the disposal of the Whitehouse Toilets under delegation 2.8.19.12, following engagement with Ward Members and the Parish Council. The Council owns the freehold of the premises and it is anticipated that any consideration will not exceed £100,000.
- 2.8 Milton Regis Toilets were operated Council via rights and obligations on 78 High Street, Milton Regis, granted by a Deed. The rights cover use of, access to, and maintenance of the public convenience and in return, the Council has ongoing covenants to contribute to repairs, insurance, services and certain other costs. Under delegation 2.8.19.7 the Head of Place will also seek to agree terms with the freeholder 78 Milton Regis High Street for a formal surrender of all rights and obligations granted by the Deed.
- 2.9 Although also in the freehold ownership of the Swale Borough Council, the next steps for the former toilets at Eastchurch is potentially more challenging, by virtue of its position in relation to the Aviation memorial. It also falls within the Geography of the Pride in Place Programme for Sheppey East, which will now be developing its investment plans for the funding which it is set to benefit from. As such the Council could retain the site for a fixed period, to provide an option for the site to be included within these.
- 2.9 The Toilets adjacent to the Forum form part of wider leased demise the Forum Car Park and the Council's next steps will require landlords permission (not to unreasonably withheld). Whilst no alternative use for the building has been identified by Swale Borough Council, the building has attracted an enquiry from a third party about its potential for alternative use. To date this has not crystallised into a specific proposal.
- 2.10 Exempt – see Appendix I

- 2.11 If the building is left vacant it would require ongoing maintenance and has the potential to attract anti-social behaviour, with additional holding costs associated with keeping it secure.
- 2.12 There are also concerns about the barrier the building helps form between the High Street, the Forum, Forum Car Park and Bourne Place. The adopted Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD identifies this as follows.

“Berry Street is the prime route connecting the High Street with Bourne Place. A new map sign is located at the junction of Berry Street with the High Street giving directions to Bourne Place and the railway station but the route initially leads to a blank wall.”

3 Proposal

- 3.1 That the Council retains the Eastchurch Public Conveniences to be reviewed after a period of no more than 18 months to accommodate any potential project arising from the local Pride in Place Programme.
- 3.2 To delegate authority to the Head of Place to authorise the demolition of the Forum Toilet, subject to landlords consent and agreement as to how the footprint of the building will be used or reinstated.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 An immediate disposal of Eastchurch Toilets could be considered. This is not recommended at this point. The building forms part of the site of the British Aviation Memorial and is set in a position which would heavily constrain potential interest, with the potential for some alternative uses to harm the setting of the memorial. There is the potential for investment from the Pride in Place Programme, but if this were not forthcoming disposal or demolition, sensitive to its setting could be pursued.
- 4.2 Do nothing. This is not recommended. The Toilets at the White House and at 78 Milton Regis would continue to present ongoing maintenance and management liabilities. The Forum Toilets, occupy a relatively prominent location within Sittingbourne town centre and this option could result in a vacant building have a detrimental impact on the amenity of that part of the town centre as well as perpetuating the physical and visual barrier between the High Street and other town centre destinations, identified in the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed Considered and Rejected

- 5.1 The public conveniences review was subject to a consultation process. In respect of the proposals above for disposal, the relevant ward Members and Parish Councils will be approached, as required by the Disposals Policy. In

respect of the Forum and Milton Regis Toilets the Council has engaged with the owners of the properties.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals align with the Councils' Property Asset Strategy to only retain land and property where it makes strategic or financial sense to do so. This should be to deliver services in line with corporate priorities, to generate income, to provide a return on investment, to enable regeneration or to provide social value. In light of the decision to close these toilets there is currently no identified operational or specific reason to retain the properties or rights to use them, with the temporary exception of Eastchurch.
Financial, Resource and Property	The proposals seek to divest the Council of the financial and management liabilities of retaining facilities, whilst potentially generating a capital receipt contributing positively to the Council's financial position.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	There is no statutory obligation for the Council to provide Public Toilets. Any transactions and removal of the rights and obligations at 78 High Street, Milton Regis, will require input from legal services.
Crime and Disorder	Holding sites increases the risk of vacancy-related anti-social behaviour or criminal damage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this stage
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Retaining vacant property comes with risks associated with its ongoing maintenance, the potential to have a deleterious effect on the amenity of the locality in which it sits and attracting anti-social behaviour.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.
Local Government Reform	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Exempt Appendix I

8 Background Papers

Public Conveniences Review - Consultation Outcome - Report to the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee, 12th November 2025

Minute 457 from the Environmental Services and Climate Change Committee, 12th November 2025