

Wokingham Borough Local Loo scheme Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Local Loo scheme?

The Wokingham Borough is in the process of rolling out a community toilet scheme to provide improved toilet facilities to all residents and visitors when they are in Wokingham and Woodley town centres and Twyford and Wargrave village centres.

It works by local businesses and organisations ranging from cafés, restaurants, libraries, pubs and council offices opening their toilets up to the public in return for a set annual fee from the borough council.

There would be no cost to residents/ visitors using these toilets.

All businesses and organisations taking part will be called Local Loo partners and will display a sticker on the outside of the building, or in a window, to indicate that they are part of the scheme. Details would also be available on the borough council's website.

This scheme will eventually replace the current system where Wokingham Borough Council owns and maintains five sets of outdated public conveniences.

Where will the Local Loo scheme run in the Wokingham Borough?

It will be implemented in the four areas that currently have borough council-run public conveniences:

- Wokingham town centre
- Woodley town centre
- Twyford village centre
- Wargrave village centre

What are the benefits?

The Local Loo scheme has several advantages over the current public conveniences that Wokingham Borough Council runs. These include:

- Longer opening hours, including evenings and weekends
- Better baby changing facilities
- Being in a cleaner, warm and more appealing environment
- More toilet cubicles available
- Less risk of being closed for long periods owing to vandalism/ misuse

Where exactly will the Local Loos be?

The council is still negotiating with businesses in all four areas. Once negotiations are completed information on exact locations will be available at www.wokingham.gov.uk/local-loos and businesses taking part will display a sticker indicating they are a Local Loo partner.

What about disabled access?

The council will ensure that in all four areas disabled people have access to a toilet.

Will I have to pay to use a Local Loo?

No, each Local Loo partner will be paid to take part in the scheme by the council. Residents and visitors will not be expected to pay to use the toilet facilities and they will not be expected to purchase anything from the business. For example if it the Local Loo partner is a pub or café residents/ visitors will not be expected to buy a drink in order to use the toilet as the company will have already been financially compensated by the council.

When will the current public conveniences close?

The council will gradually roll out the Local Loo scheme over the next year and remains committed to ensuring all residents and visitors have access to a toilet.

Public conveniences currently run by the borough council will be not be closed for at least a month after the Local Loo scheme in a particular area goes live. This will ensure that residents/ visitors are allowed time to get used to the new system and also allows the council and Local Loo partners time to iron out any teething problems.

Why is the council changing to a Local Loo scheme?

The council currently runs five sets of public toilets, which are costly to maintain owing to on-going bouts of vandalism and are not particularly appealing owing to the age and location of the toilets. Many of the toilets are closed for long periods of time due to vandalism and are underused by the public.

Therefore the council has looked into providing a cleaner, more appealing toilet scheme. The Local Loos will be in more convenient locations, will offer more toilet cubicles and baby changing facilities and will be open for longer hours. Plus they are less likely to be shut for long periods owing to vandalism.

Not only will this provide a cleaner and safer environment it will also reduce costs for the council, and therefore the taxpayer, and will allow vital funds to be ploughed in to the council's priority areas of safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. The scheme will also help support local businesses by offering a cash sum if they sign up to be a Local Loo partner.

Has this scheme been used anywhere else?

The London Borough of Richmond piloted a community toilet scheme in 2005 and it has since been replicated by many local authorities across the country, including:

- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- London Borough of Lambeth
- Chester City Council
- Sheffield City Council
- Cardiff Council
- London Borough of Westminster
- Eden District Council
- London Borough of Camden
- Bradford Council

I have business and would like to get involved, who do I contact?

Businesses should contact Wokingham Borough Council via Wokingham Direct on (0118) 974 6000 or by email at wokinghamdirect@wokingham.gov.uk

What are the benefits for businesses?

There are several benefits to businesses and they will also be paid for taking part in the scheme. The average sum is about £600 per year – but this is dependent on what services can be offered and can be negotiated accordingly.

Other benefits include:

- Free publicity on the council's website for being a Local Loo partner – the borough council's website is visited by around 250,000 different people each month.
- Inclusion in leaflets sent out by the council on the scheme – thousands of these will be sent out each year to various community spots.
- Named in Borough News articles on the Local Loo scheme – Borough News is received by all households in the borough (61,000 plus)
- Businesses in areas where schemes are already operating have reported an increase in passing trade – for example in Richmond 25 per cent of people using pub toilets have later returned for a family meal, when they would not have normally.

Businesses retain the right to stop certain people from using their toilets, even if they are part of the Local Loo scheme, for example under 18s in pubs or people banned from pubs under the Local Pub Watch scheme.