

Appendix 5.1

Data from Town Centre toilets public engagement

Summary

We had 512 responses across online and offline engagement activities. We asked people about toilet provision in the town centre, including their experiences of the currently closed Market Yard toilets and the Cheese and Grain toilets, and asked what they would like to see happen next.

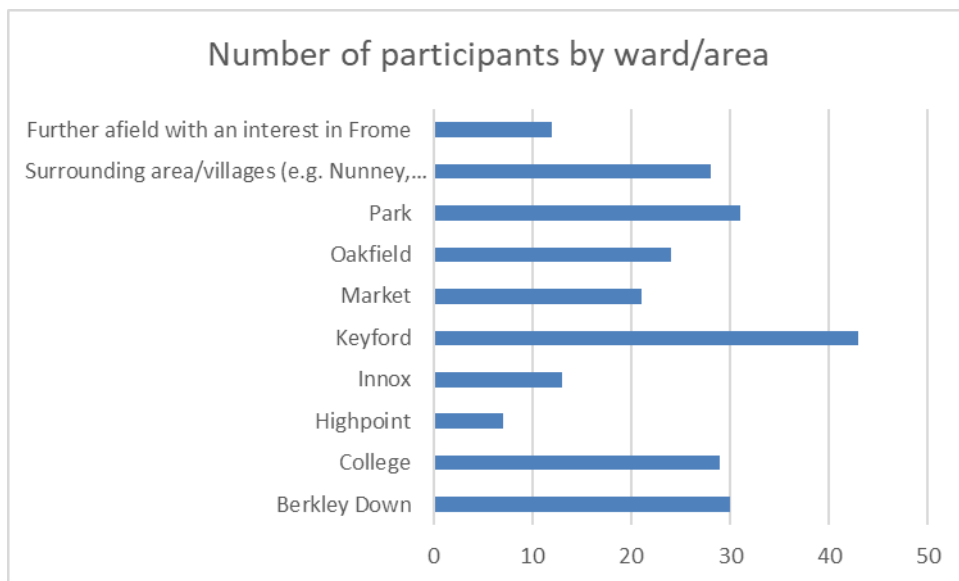
We presented people with four options for the future of toilet provision at Market Yard and asked them to rank them from their favourite to least favourite option. Creating a reimagined site incorporating new toilets proved the most popular option by an extremely narrow margin, followed by Refurbishing existing Market Yard toilets.

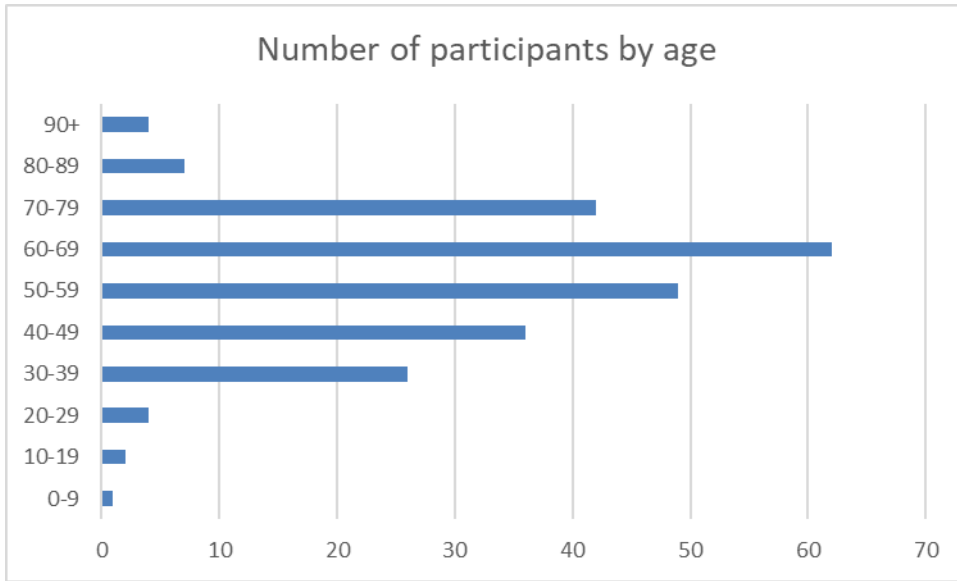
There were a wide variety of opinions. The main point of consensus, both online and offline, was a strong demand for central, reliable public toilet provision, with clear dissatisfaction around the current reliance on the Cheese and Grain alone; 75% said that current provision was insufficient or very poor.

Who we heard from

We had 512 responses:

- 304 on online survey
- 46 on online quick activity
- 162 in person at 2 events
- Plus a few Facebook comments that we added to the open responses





Gender:

- 57% female
- 42% male
- 1% non-binary

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- 79% No
- 21% Yes

What we heard

The summaries of open-ended responses included below were co-created with the AI tools built into the My Frome platform. When viewing summaries on the platform, the AI agent provides links to real responses to support every point it makes, allowing us to ensure that the summary is an accurate reflection of the responses. The summaries have been lightly edited to make them shorter and easier to read.

How often do you use any toilets in the town centre?

300 responses

Answer	Count
Occasionally	131
Regularly	127
Rarely	36
Never	6

Which facilities have/do you use? (Tick all that apply)

301 responses

Answer	Count
Market Yard (before closure)	264
Cheese and Grain	197
Other toilets in the community toilet scheme (You're Welcome)	76
Other	51
Changing Places facility	19
None	5

How well does current provision at the Cheese and Grain or the Changing Places facility meet your needs?

257 responses

Answer	Count
1 - Not at all	25 (10%)
2 - Not very well	77 (30%)
3 - OK	82 (32%)
4 - Fairly well	50 (19%)
5 - Very well	23 (9%)

Summary of follow-up responses:

Most feel that the current toilet provision at the Cheese and Grain or the Changing Places facility is OK but not ideal, with the majority rating it between 3 and 4 out of 5. Cleanliness and a generally welcoming environment were mentioned positively. However, several recurring issues were highlighted:

- **Location:** Many respondents feel the toilets are too far from the main town centre, making them inconvenient, especially for market traders, people with mobility issues, and visitors unfamiliar with the area.
- **Awareness and Accessibility:** Some people were unaware the toilets were available for public use or felt awkward about entering the building just to use the facilities.
- **Opening Hours:** Some people mentioned needing access to the toilet later in the evening or early in the morning when they are closed, or issues with toilets being closed for holidays e.g. Christmas and New Year.
- **Capacity and Queues:** There are sometimes long queues, especially for women during events, and some felt there were not enough toilets for the number of users.
- **Cleanliness Issues:** While some praised cleanliness, others, particularly parents using the baby change facilities, reported dirty conditions.

- Specific User Needs: Market traders and taxi drivers found the location and opening hours unsuitable for their work patterns.

Which future option do you prefer most?

461 responses

We presented four options with a brief description of each option. People were asked to rank the options from their favourite to least favourite.

Option	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	4th choice
Refurbishing existing Market Yard toilets	165	100	93	75
Building a new purpose-built toilets facility	62	137	123	96
Creating a reimagined site incorporating new toilets	161	118	115	58
Continue and expand partnerships	73	70	89	190

Using weighted averages, where the lowest score = most preferred option, **Creating a reimagined site incorporating new toilets** is the most popular option by a very narrow margin, with **Refurbishing existing Market Yard toilets**:

1. Creating a reimagined site incorporating new toilets — **2.15**
2. Refurbishing existing Market Yard toilets — **2.18**
3. Building a new purpose-built toilets facility — **2.61**
4. Continue and expand partnerships — **2.94**

Although the ranked voting system used puts the reimagined site option on top, refurbishing the existing toilets was the first choice of four more people. The recommendation to the 22 April Council meeting seeks to explore how we might balance both of the most popular options.

Most respondents strongly support the need for dedicated public toilets in the town centre, particularly in the Market Yard/car park area, which is seen as central and convenient for both residents and visitors. There is a clear consensus that public toilets are essential for a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive town, especially for people with disabilities, families with young children, older people, and those with health conditions. There is some openness to creative, multi-use solutions, especially if they do not delay reopening or inflate costs.

Refurbishing and reopening the existing toilet block is a popular option – it is widely viewed as still structurally sound and more cost-effective and sustainable than building new. Many are frustrated by the estimated cost of up to £200,000 for refurbishment, with several questioning the need for major works given the relatively recent construction and current condition of the building.

A reimagined site that combines toilets with other services (visitor info, café, community space, etc.) is another popular option – with people suggested it would create a safer, more vibrant environment and offset costs. Concerns about anti-social behaviour (vandalism, drug use, rough sleeping) in standalone public toilets are common, with some suggesting that multi-use or staffed facilities, or toilets incorporated into community hubs, would help address this.

Accessibility, cleanliness, and clear signage are repeatedly highlighted as priorities. Many want toilets open beyond standard business hours, especially for events and visitors, but some suggest closing at night to reduce misuse. There are also calls to maintain Changing Places provision and ensure there are facilities suitable for disabled people, families, and those with additional needs.

A minority favour expanding partnerships or using business toilets as the main solution, citing cost savings, reduced anti-social behaviour and improved support for local businesses. Many see partnership schemes as a useful supplement but not a replacement, with some saying these are poorly signposted, not always open, and make people feel awkward or unwelcome if not buying something.

Do you have a different idea? Tell us more here.

49 responses

A number of ideas and suggestions were proposed. These were:

- Charging a small amount of money to use the toilet (20p and 50p were suggested) – this was seen as a way to reduce anti-social behaviour and recoup some costs
- Getting more quotes for refurbishment – the projected cost of up to £200k was seen as surprisingly high
- Covering costs of refurbishment or maintenance with ideas like: crowdfunding, using 10p from each parking ticket sold, asking event organisers to cover costs
- Providing public toilets elsewhere too – some mentioned locations where public toilets used to be available such as Gorehedge and Badcox, and some mentioned other locations – Stony Street and within the library
- Better signage for toilets and the You’re Welcome scheme
- Providing portaloos until the Market Yard toilets are reopened
- Simple, basic facilities and high-tech, luxury toilets were both suggested
- Waterless eco-toilets
- Better security, such as visible CCTV or a constant staff presence

How often do you visit Frome town centre?

158 responses

Answer	Count
Several times a week	61
Weekly	51
Daily	27
Monthly	11

Occasionally	8
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What best describes your main reasons for visiting the town centre? (Tick all that apply)

158 responses

Answer	Count
Shopping	135
Visiting cafés/restaurants or venues	123
Events	77
Work	21
Caring responsibilities	7
Tourism	4
Other (please specify)	35

Other responses: library, exercise, dog walking, banking, appointments, school, toddler classes, sport and living in the town centre.

At what times do you most often need to use public toilets? (Tick all that apply)

157 responses

Answer	Count
Weekdays daytime	127
Weekends	90
During events	61
Evenings	44
Early mornings	16
Other (tell us in your own words)	4

Do you live in Frome?

152 responses

Answer	Count
Yes	122
No, but I live nearby	26
No, I visit from further away	4

If you used the Market Yard toilets before they closed, how would you rate them?

148 responses

	1 - Very good	2 - Good	3 - Fair	4 - Poor	5 - Very poor
Cleanliness	6.34%	33.8%	38.73%	16.9%	4.23%
Safety	16.9%	40.85%	30.28%	7.75%	4.23%
Accessibility	27.46%	50%	17.61%	4.23%	0.7%
Reliability	15.49%	37.32%	30.28%	11.27%	5.63%
Overall	11.51%	39.57%	35.25%	9.35%	4.32%

Tell us more about your experiences - what did and didn't work well?

73 responses

Cleanliness and maintenance were the most frequently raised issues. Many respondents described the toilets as often dirty, grubby, or poorly maintained, with several mentioning broken facilities, lack of toilet paper, soap, or hand-washing facilities. Some noted that the toilets deteriorated over time, with a few suggesting this was due to reduced cleaning or deliberate neglect. Convenience and location were generally seen as positives, with many appreciating the central position and accessibility, especially for those with children, prams, or shopping bags. However, some felt the facilities were too far from the centre or not enough in number, leading to queues, especially on market days.

Reliability was a concern, with several reporting that the toilets were often out of order, closed, or had broken flushes and alarms. Design and atmosphere received mixed feedback. Some found the toilets unwelcoming, cold, or intimidating, especially for children or those with anxiety. The use of timers and anti-vandal features made some users feel rushed or uncomfortable. Metal seats were unpopular, particularly in winter. The large cubicles were appreciated by parents and wheelchair users but criticised for encouraging anti-social behaviour.

A few respondents mentioned safety concerns, including anti-social behaviour and one incident of someone being locked in. Some users appreciated the gender-neutral aspect and the provision for disabled users, but others felt access could be improved. A minority were satisfied with the toilets, describing them as functional, convenient, and better than some in

other towns. In summary, while the central location and accessibility were valued, the main concerns were around cleanliness, maintenance, reliability, and the overall user experience, with many feeling the facilities had declined over time and were not always fit for purpose.

If the Market Yard toilets were refurbished, would you support there being a small charge to use the toilet if the facilities were better quality?

148 responses

Answer	Count
Yes	66
No	54
Depends on quality	28

Were you aware that the council funds public toilet access at the Cheese and Grain?

156 responses

Answer	Count
Yes	116
No	40

Have you used the Cheese and Grain toilets?

153 responses

Answer	Count
Yes	130
No	23

How would you rate the Cheese and Grain toilets?

131 responses

	1 - Very Good	2 - Good	3 - Fair	4 - Poor	5 - Very poor
Accessibility	21.43%	41.27%	23.81%	10.32%	3.17%
Convenience	14.06%	42.19%	24.22%	15.63%	3.91%
Cleanliness	25.98%	47.24%	20.47%	5.51%	0.79%
Feeling welcome	20.8%	43.2%	25.6%	7.2%	3.2%
Opening hours	18.11%	37.8%	25.2%	14.17%	4.72%

18. How does this compare to traditional public toilets?

123 responses

Answer	Count
Better	40
About the same	39
Worse	30
Much worse	8
Much better	6

Has anything stopped you from using the toilets at the Cheese and Grain?

28 responses

Answer	Count
Felt uncomfortable using a venue	12
Limited opening hours	10
Didn't know about them	7
Accessibility issues	6
Hard to find	2
Other (tell us in your own words)	6

Other responses: too far from town centre, not able to take dog into toilets, no free parking for taxi.

Thinking about all current facilities together including the Cheese and Grain toilets, Changing Places, and other toilets in the community toilet scheme, do you feel there are currently enough toilets in the town centre?

154 responses

Answer	Count
Insufficient	93
About right	37
Very poor	23
More than sufficient	1

Are there enough toilets at busy times, for example when events like markets are happening?

147 responses

Answer	Count
No	105
Sometimes	36
Yes	6

What are the main issues with accessing toilets at events and busy times? (Tick all that apply)

143 responses

Answer	Count
Queues for toilets	83
Difficult to find a toilet / not enough signage	67
Opening hours	51
Poor condition / cleanliness	47
Lack of accessible facilities	29
I haven't experienced any issues	15
Other (tell us in your own words)	11

Other responses: cafes and pubs not welcoming or distracting for autistic people, not enough baby changing locations with pram space, market traders needing to walk too far from their stall, general preference to avoid public toilets

What would make it easier to find or use a toilet at busy times?

67 responses

The vast majority of responses were the same two suggestions: **more toilets** and **better signage**.

Other suggestions were:

- A map of toilet locations including those in the You're Welcome scheme
- Having more venues signed up to the You're Welcome scheme
- Toilets at Badcox and in the library
- Providing more urinals to prevent toilet cubicles being taken up when they aren't needed
- Providing more unisex toilet cubicles or men's cubicles in the Cheese and Grain (there is currently only one)
- More wheelchair-accessible toilets

Are there examples from other places that you like? Let us know where they are and why you like them.

65 responses

Many respondents emphasised the importance of having clean, safe, and accessible public toilets in the town centre, with several expressing frustration at the current lack of adequate facilities and the closure of previous toilets. There was a strong consensus that toilets are an essential public amenity, not a luxury, and should be available for both residents and visitors.

Cleanliness and regular maintenance were repeatedly highlighted as crucial, with several positive references to well-maintained toilets in Victoria Park, Bath Southgate, and other nearby towns. Some respondents noted that other towns of similar size have more and better facilities. Safety was a recurring theme, with suggestions for designs that feel secure, such as individual unisex cubicles, external access, and regular staff presence. Some respondents mentioned that the behaviour of a small number of vandals should not dictate provision for the majority, and that vandal-proofing and cleanliness are more important than restricting access.

Many respondents supported the idea of charging a small fee (e.g. 20p) for use, as seen in France, Cornwall, and other UK towns, to help cover costs and deter vandalism. There was some support for integrating toilets with other facilities, such as visitor information centres or car parks, as this can improve safety and convenience, but concerns were raised about cost and practicality. Accessibility for disabled users, parents with young children, and those with medical needs was also mentioned as important, with calls for spacious, well-equipped facilities.

A few respondents commented on the need for better design, ambience, and creative touches to make toilets more welcoming, but most prioritised basic cleanliness, safety, and availability over aesthetics. Some respondents expressed frustration at having to use toilets in cafes or pubs when not a customer. Overall, the main trends are a strong demand for more and better-

maintained public toilets, support for small usage charges, a focus on safety and accessibility, and a desire for practical solutions rather than lengthy consultations.

Is there anything else you would like to suggest or let us know?

96 responses

The majority of respondents strongly emphasised the need to keep public toilets open and accessible in the town centre, with many expressing frustration that facilities have been reduced or closed. Many noted that public toilets are an essential service, particularly for the elderly, disabled, those with medical conditions, families with children, and visitors. Several respondents highlighted that the lack of facilities is detrimental to the town's reputation and inclusivity and could deter visitors and shoppers.

There was support for charging a small fee (20p–50p) to use toilets if it meant they would be well maintained and open, with several people suggesting contactless or token-based payment options to avoid vandalism and cash handling issues. Some suggested funding through car park charges, business contributions, or market stall fees.

Cleanliness, robust design, and regular maintenance were repeatedly mentioned as priorities, with several advocating for employing a dedicated cleaner or supervisor, as is done in other towns or in France. Respondents stressed that facilities should be basic but clean, not ornate, and robust enough to withstand misuse. There were also calls for longer opening hours, ideally 24/7 access, and for toilets to be accessible for disabled users at all times. Some respondents criticised the current “community toilet scheme” (using facilities in businesses), saying it is poorly advertised, not inclusive, and often impractical due to limited access, small cubicles, or stairs. There were requests for better signage and more information about which premises participate.

Other suggestions included: benchmarking refurbishment costs and looking at solutions from other towns; considering environmentally friendly options; ensuring women's facilities are adequate and reduce queuing; and providing urinals and unisex options, but not at the expense of basic needs. A few respondents mentioned anti-social behaviour as a concern, but most felt this could be addressed through design, lighting, and supervision rather than making toilets unwelcoming. In summary, the overwhelming message is that public toilets are a vital service for all, and the town should prioritise keeping them open, clean, accessible, and well maintained, even if this requires a small charge or alternative funding. The current alternatives are not seen as sufficient or inclusive.