# Bristol campaigners challenge Labour's public toilet reopening plan



In a contentious development in Bristol, campaigners from the community union ACORN are taking aim at the Labour group's latest proposal to reopen public toilets, which were shuttered back in 2018. With a pivotal council meeting on the agenda this Tuesday, February 25, Labour aims to allocate £1 million towards reopening or constructing public lavatories, coupled with an ongoing annual expense of £319,000 for maintenance.

However, ACORN argues that Labour's recent shift on this issue reek of hypocrisy and opportunism. Arvind Howarth, a member of ACORN, didn't hold back in his critique, stating, "It’s just insulting to the people of Bristol that Labour has remembered this now when it’s politically convenient. Rather than using their authority to restore dignity to the city, they funneled funds to the mayor’s office when they had the power." The dire consequences of closed public toilets, from littering to health risks for vulnerable groups such as rough sleepers and those with disabilities, underscore the severity of this neglect.

Labour's leadership has justified their previous decision to close the toilets by pointing to budget constraints imposed during a period of austerity dictated by the previous Conservative government. A spokesperson from the Bristol Labour Party has claimed that closing public toilets was one of the more agonising decisions they faced. Yet, the Labour group now asserts that the funding boost from the change in government is an opportunity they've seized to revisit this issue. Labour touts receiving a 5.2% increase in real-term funding, translating into £27 million more than previously allocated, allowing them to claim they are now in a position to invest in crucial local services.

Interestingly, Labour’s proposed budget amendments hinge on either depleting reserves or increasing borrowing to finance the reopening of these public toilets. While this may superficially appear progressive, the expected costs of loan repayments are reportedly set to come from a £54,000 cut in allowances for elected members. There are murmurs that streamlining policy committees and cutting the leader's allowance could help alleviate some of these burdens.

Despite their earlier criticisms of Labour's failings, ACORN is now urging councillors from all parties to back Labour’s amendment. They have even gone so far as to create a webpage rallying local residents to contact their councillors in support of this initiative, revealing a troubling trend of political expediency ahead of the local elections in 2024.

As the debate unfolds, it leaves the public wondering whether this newly apparent urgency from the Labour group is a genuine transformation or merely a strategic maneuver in their ongoing quest for power.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/campaigners-accuse-labour-of-hypocrisy-over-plan-to-reopen-bristol-public-toilets/> - This article supports the claim that campaigners from ACORN are criticizing Labour for hypocrisy in proposing to reopen public toilets, which Labour had closed in 2018. It also details Labour's plan to allocate funds for reopening toilets and ACORN's response to this proposal.
* <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/labour-ask-bristol-public-toilets-reopened/> - This article corroborates Labour's proposal to reopen public toilets by allocating £1 million for renovations and £319,000 annually for maintenance, as part of their budget amendments.
* <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/documents/s106473/08a.%20Labour%20-%20Capital.pdf> - This document from Bristol City Council supports the claim that Labour is proposing to allocate £1 million towards reopening or constructing public toilets, as part of their capital budget plans.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the initial context for the article, though it does not directly support specific claims about the Bristol public toilets issue. It serves as a general reference for the news piece.
* <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-meetings> - This URL would typically provide information on council meetings, which could support the claim about a pivotal council meeting being scheduled. However, specific details about the meeting on February 25 might not be available without direct access to the council's meeting schedules.