

## CABINET

23 OCTOBER 2015

### REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDERS OF REGENERATION AND COASTAL PROTECTION

#### A.3 REGENERATING THE CLACTON TO HOLLAND HAVEN COASTLINE - A POSITIVE VISION FOR OUR SEAFRONT

(Report prepared by June Clare)

#### PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

##### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To obtain Cabinet approval to develop a range of regeneration projects which seek to capitalise on the opportunities afforded by the Coastal Defence Scheme.

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council and its partners (Essex County Council, The Environment Agency and more recently Anglian Water) have invested almost £36m in protecting 3000 homes and businesses along the stretch of coastline from Clacton Pier to Holland Haven. The seafront is a key asset which is intrinsically linked to the future economic and physical regeneration of Clacton and the wider district of Tendring. By harnessing the potential of the new beaches as a catalyst for regenerating this stretch of coastline, this report sets out an ambitious package of projects and initiatives designed to promote positive action and a step change in the perception of Clacton as a visitor destination. This report also seeks Cabinet approval to a vision for this coastline, namely: **“The seafront from Clacton to Holland Haven will be a new, distinctive destination for both residents and visitors with a range of facilities for all ages”**.

Together, the vision, the projects and the activities are designed to broaden the appeal of the Clacton to Holland Haven coastline to new market segments and to generate a higher level of spend by visitors. Generating income is important both for local businesses and the District’s economic future and through its community leadership role, the Council can start to make a difference, now.

##### RECOMMENDATION(S)

**(a) That Cabinet approves in respect of the projects to be taken forward in year 1, that:**

- 1) In principle, 12 new beach huts be constructed along the seafront with further details being reported to the next meeting of the Cabinet**
- 2) The Corporate Director (Coastal and Seafronts), in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders, undertakes the necessary design phase for a seafront café and applies for associated planning permission, and once completed brings a report back to Cabinet for further decisions;**
- 3) Arrangements be made to clear the Pond at Holland Haven Country park (funded from within existing Open Spaces budgets);**
- 4) Investigations are undertaken into a ‘hide’ type building at the Country Park to facilitate bird watching and other nature related activities, with the outcome being reported back to Cabinet for further decisions;**
- 5) An investor event be held, funded from within the Regeneration budget;**
- 6) A review of existing, empty/redundant seafront assets be undertaken**

with a view to marketing new opportunities for businesses, with the outcome being reported back to Cabinet for further decisions;

- (b) Officers examine the business case for an aerial trekking facility as a year 1-2 project, with the outcome being reported back to Cabinet for further decisions if necessary;
- (c) That Cabinet authorises the Corporate Director (Coastal and Seafront projects) in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Regeneration and Coastal Protection to develop a programme of seafront regeneration projects for delivery in 2017 and beyond, to be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet for consideration.
- (d) That a sum of £1.000m be set aside within the 2015/16 New Homes Bonus budget to support the costs associated with delivering seafront regeneration projects, with up to £20k of this budget committed to support recommendation a2) above.

## PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

### DELIVERING PRIORITIES

The regeneration of this stretch of coastline will contribute to the following corporate priorities:

#### Our prosperity

Build a thriving local tourism industry  
Promote sustainable economic growth

#### Our people

Reduce health inequalities and disadvantage  
Promote healthy and active lifestyles

#### Our place

Regenerate the district and improve deprived areas  
Promote and enhance our environment, countryside and coast.

### FINANCE, OTHER RESOURCES AND RISK

#### **Finance and other resources**

There are no funds currently set aside to develop the projects listed within the report. However, the Council needs to identify ways in which it can create a contingency reserve to pay for a potential beach recharge, the costs of which are estimated to be in the region of £140,000 per annum. Similarly, funding needs to be identified to deal with the collection of litter along this stretch of coastline, along with the cleaning of the new beaches which are not tidally washed. Success will also bring its challenges as the Council may need to potentially broaden the scope of summer seafront patrols if usage of the beaches and the water increases.

Although the projects set out in this report can largely be delivered within existing budgets, it is proposed to make a financial commitment now rather than at a later date by committing **£1.000m** from the existing **£3.179m** New Homes Bonus Budget. The design and planning permission phase of developing the seafront café project will incur costs and it is therefore proposed to commit up to **£20k** of the **£1.000m** budget to support this element of the project.

#### **Risk**

As the footfall along this stretch of coastline has been relatively small for many years,

there is a risk to whichever businesses start trading. Any project proposals will therefore need to undergo the Council's normal due diligence processes to ensure that risks are mitigated.

## **LEGAL**

In coming to decisions in relation to management of assets, the Council must act in accordance with its statutory duties and responsibilities. Under case law following Section 120 of Local Government Act 1972, the Council is obliged to ensure that the management of its assets are for the benefit of the district.

## **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

**Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.**

**Crime and Disorder / Equality and Diversity / Health Inequalities / Area or Ward affected / Consultation/Public Engagement.**

There is an opportunity to work with those organisations in the health sector to develop a series of activities which would help to improve individual's health whether this be simply in the form of healthy walks, stretching to both land and water based activities.

Consideration has also been given to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and it is anticipated that greater footfall will improve the natural surveillance of this area and lead to reduced crime such as criminal damage. Providing a range of things to do may also assist in motivating people to become involved in a range of activities and subsequently have less time for general acts of anti social behaviour.

## **PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Council's Clacton to Holland on Sea coastal defence scheme has delivered precisely what it set out to do, namely protecting 3000 homes and businesses from the effects of coastal erosion. However, it has the capacity to be '*more than just a coastal defence scheme*' by virtue of the potential to lever in regeneration activities.

This hitherto under utilised stretch of coastline provides the opportunity to create an additional offer to residents, tourists, businesses and investors. A large stretch of beach, accessible at high tide, is now available for all to use, year round. The new beaches have been created in sculpted bays which provide a different physical environment to much of the rest of our seafront. Increased footfall provides opportunities for new businesses to be established which cater for the needs of those on the beach, those who travel along the promenade and those that take part in water based activities. The Council itself has assets along this stretch of coast which can be the catalyst for new activity, whilst simultaneously respecting the environment enjoyed by many over the years.

There has been significant positive feedback on the Council's coastal defence project and the scheme itself has been a visitor attraction at times of peak activity. The beach hut owners are enthusiastic about regaining access to their beach huts and many are undertaking repairs and general maintenance or plan to do so in the spring of 2016. Now is a good time to seek to improve the standards of beach huts, which are much in demand, as their usage adds to the vibrancy of the coastline.

Officers have already noticed an increase in the type of interest shown by investors in

working along the seafront and it is considered that this could be developed still further to the benefit of the economy of the whole of Tendring.

## **CURRENT POSITION**

The Celebrate on Sea document commissioned by the Council in 2010 identified that Clacton had the capacity to reinvent itself as a truly 21<sup>st</sup> century resort offering a high quality, year round visitor experience building on the many assets of the town. The study focussed on the area between the Pier and Martello and much work has been undertaken to deliver the outcomes through the Council's tourism strategy.

The Coastal Defence Scheme completed in October 2015 has provided the opportunity to look eastwards from the Pier, i.e. from the Pier to Holland Haven and to consider how this stretch of coastline could contribute to the renaissance of Clacton and its surrounding areas.

### The Vision

It is suggested that the following statement becomes the vision namely: **“The seafront from Clacton to Holland Haven will be a new, distinctive destination for both residents and visitors with a range of facilities for all ages”**.

This will be achieved through a series of complementary projects which have a strong fit with the location and the physical space.

### Tourism

In tourism terms, some 13 million people live within a 2 hour drive time of Clacton and there is potential to tap into overseas tourism generated from the port of Harwich. The short break market is important to tourism in the area and there is an opportunity to link both the district's coast and its countryside, thereby providing the opportunity for the whole district to benefit from the regeneration of the Clacton to Holland Haven seafront.

### Projects

An officer project group has been examining a number of projects which could deliver positive regeneration outcomes including the introduction of a coastal activity park that will be a “quality space”, a place to experience and learn about the natural environment and to enjoy the new beaches. The Holland Haven Country Park has much to offer in this context. Utilising local knowledge, officers have assessed those projects which are both economically viable in the short to medium term and that provide additionality rather than duplication.

The projects have been divided into year one and a forward programme of projects which acknowledge financial constraints, the need to build footfall and the resources required (including staff capacity) to deliver the outcomes required. The absence of footfall is a significant issue along the seafront for any new business. For the Council, the ability to 'stretch' the footfall from the area around the Pier towards Holland Haven will be achieved by having facilities/points of interest that have visitor/resident appeal.

### Year One Projects (October 2016-October 2017)

- (i) Café - Year one projects include a new café situated along the top promenade

providing a specific 'offer' to visitors. It would be located mid way between Clacton and Holland Haven on the site of the existing Visitor Centre at Starpoint. The Visitor Centre location has already proved its appeal to residents and visitors as many thousands of people have sought information from the centre staff during the course of the coastal protection works and people often stop to sit outside the centre and admire the views towards the Pier and Holland Haven. The café would provide an offer throughout the year to those that travel along the top promenade. It is proposed to commission design work and apply for associated planning permission as part of the initial phase of developing this project with a subsequent report being presented to Cabinet at a later date.

- (ii) 12 new beach huts will be constructed along the seafront. These will be available for rent thereby ensuring accessibility for all. A report on this subject will be made to a future Cabinet meeting.
- (iii) The pond at Holland Haven Country Park (located on the left hand side of the car park from the entrance) will be cleared and made a feature picnic area for families and school children to enjoy. Early, informal discussions are taking place with a nature related organisation that may be willing to undertake some outreach work at Holland Haven. Investigations are also taking place into a unique bird hide type facility at this location as Holland Haven is known as a place for birdwatchers who can enjoy various species of birds across the reclaimed estuarine saltmarsh and the freshwater marsh between Holland on Sea and Frinton on Sea.
- (iv) An Investor event to be held to alert investors to the changes that are taking place along the seafront and to highlight the opportunities for businesses to locate there.
- (v) The Council's existing seafront assets will be examined, including bringing back those assets not in current use, to provide new opportunities for businesses and economic growth. Part B of this agenda sets out an opportunity to review the existing lease / use of Council assets in a key location along the seafront.
- (vi) The business case for an aerial trekking facility will be examined as a potential year one/two project in order to provide a completely new activity for the coastal park. Such a facility would be a visible signal of change; would bring in new visitors to the area; would create jobs; would encourage people of all ages to undertake physical activities thus linking to the health agenda. Experience elsewhere suggests that such a facility has the potential to generate a revenue stream for the Council both through the cost of using the facility as well as the associated spend in the local economy. Such a facility would be unique for a seafront location in this part of the country.

#### Future projects

Potential future year's projects include:

- a) A bike hire scheme enabling those wishing to cycle along the seafront to travel from Frinton to Clacton and beyond to Jaywick.
- b) An arts and entertainment venue.
- c) A signature restaurant.
- d) Commercial premises that would be available for a business associated with water sports.
- e) The repositioning of the public conveniences at Holland Haven.
- f) A new bridleway.
- g) New seafront planting to be developed over the next 5 years.
- h) A possible 'glamping' type scheme.
- i) Beach zoning.

- j) Beach sponsorship.
- k) An arts/sculpture trail.
- l) A development of a small number of aspirational houses.

At the same time, a major engineering project to stabilise the cliffs along this section of coast will also be undertaken. This again will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet.

### Summary

These projects seek to reposition Clacton to Holland Haven as a distinctive seafront destination. Clacton, along with other seaside towns in the UK, is faced with the challenge of redefining its image and role in response to significant changes in the British tourist market and the increased competition for leisure time.

In September 2015 a report published by the Centre For Entrepreneurs - From Ebb To Flow: How Entrepreneurs Can Turn The Tide for Britain's Seaside Towns - repeats the common traits of some seaside towns, namely decaying seafront infrastructure, low wages, low skilled seasonal work, educational deficiencies, ageing population and lack of digital connectivity. The report concludes that each resort has to formulate its unique strategy based on the town's identity in order to restore its fortunes and that seaside towns will prosper because of individuals' imagination and initiative.

The 23 newly created beaches along the Clacton to Holland Haven coastline provide the district with a unique opportunity for our landscape to be the catalyst for positive change and, with the Council acting in its role as community leader, work can begin on this now.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR THE DECISION**

None

### **APPENDICES**

None