

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20 SEPTEMBER 2021

REPORT OF PORTFOLIOHOLDER FOR LEISURE AND TOURISM

A.2 ENQUIRY INTO PARTICULAR ELEMENTS OF THE COUNCIL'S SEAFRONT SERVICES

(Prepared by Mike Carran, James Ennos, Andy White and Richard Barrett)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Committee with the information requested for its programmed enquiry into particular elements of the Council's Seafront Service

BACKGROUND

On 13 July 2021, Council approved the work programme for this Committee based on their recommendation. This work programme included an enquiry into particular elements of the Seafronts Service at the September meeting of the Committee. In particular, the committee requested the following background information:

'Cliff stabilisation – Looking at the issue based on previous discussions around the risks and evaluating/surveying them to support financial decision making in the medium and long term, preventative maintenance measures to mitigate the risks of those cliffs with the greatest incline and assessing opportunities to look at introducing more access for the disabled from the upper promenade to the lower one when cliff stabilisation work is being undertaken.

The Beach Huts Service The coastal defence 'fish tails', the created beaches and the potential for Beach recharge activities Details of the Summer Plan and how this has evolved given experience.'

This report covers the points requested by the Committee and includes other relevant issues, which may be of interest to Members.

DETAILED INFORMATION

Coastal Defence

In 2014 the Council instigated a £36 million coastal defence project stretching from Clacton Pier to Holland on Sea in partnership with the Environment Agency. Not only has this protected the coastline, it has led to the creation of 23 new sandy beaches which provide a major opportunity for tourism development

You will find attached Beach Monitoring Reports for 2017 and 2018 (Appendix A and B). Unfortunately, the reports were unable to be completed in 2019 as the drone surveys couldn't be carried out on a number of occasions due to adverse weather conditions. The 2020 Beach Monitoring Report could not be carried out due to the national pandemic and government restrictions. Throughout this time the beach has been subject to regular visual inspecting by officers. The Engineering department is working closely with the Environment Agencies' Anglian Coastal Monitoring Department to ensure the Beach Monitoring Report is completed for 2021.

Cliff Stabilisation

In 2016 the pre-construction phase started to stabilise the cliff between Hazelmere and Queensway, the pre-construction phase consisted of ground investigations, numerous surveys, obtaining planning permission, producing detailed designs, producing tender documents, obtaining tenders, and appointing a contractor in line with the procurement policy. The construction of the project commenced on 28/08/18 and was completed on 28/06/19 at a cost of £4.3 million. The project stabilised a 500m length of coastal slopes by temporarily removing 83 beach huts, excavating to construct a new piled slope retaining wall and new steel piled retaining wall at the base of the slope to provide a stable shelf for the beach huts to be returned. The scheme also included new drainage and Equality Act compliant ramped from the top promenade to the lower promenade.

The scheme was identified in the Clacton & Holland Geomorphological Assessment and Conceptual report 2015 produced by Mott MacDonald. The report identifies the areas most at risk of failure between Clacton Pier and Holland Haven. The report also suggests a detailed slope stability study of the cliffs is carried out at a cost of £225,000. Based on this estimate the suggested cost to carry out detailed slope stability studies on all the cliffs TDC are responsible for would be between approximately £700,000.

Kiosks

The policy in respect of kiosks along the lower promenade in Clacton and elsewhere is to let these to private businesses for operation as attractions and tourist facilities. Leases are at open market values and on full repairing terms. Where properties become vacant the property team invites tenders both openly and from registered interested parties. These are evaluated both in financial terms and in terms of the contribution of the tenderer's proposals to the quality and diversity of the seafront offers.

The kiosks are let on full repairing terms and as a result there is only direct cost to the Council in the event that the kiosks become vacant. Incidental costs such as cliff and structure maintenance near to the kiosks are budgeted for within the generality of seafront activities.

Annual income from kiosks amounts to around:

Clacton/ Holland:	£93,200
Other:	£47,810
Total:	£141,010

Additionally a small number of rent reviews are in progress which are likely to add a further £12,000 to the total, subject of course to final agreements with the tenants or independent experts if that's not possible.

We are seeking to initiate projects that may work with existing tenants and others to enhance the facilities along the seafronts in a financially responsible way. Ideas are at the stage of generation of concepts only and it is therefore too early to expose these to a wider discussion.

We are keen to see kiosk leaseholders stay within their leased area, particularly in relation to seating, signage, vehicles and displays that are encroaching onto the promenade.

Beach Huts

There are currently 3,040 beach huts directly under the operation and management of Tendring District Council. The Seafronts team manage the beach hut service, which strives to ensure continued popularity of Beach Huts in Tendring, continually improve seafront appearance and generate revenue to reinvest.

Beach Hut license holders are required to complete a form prior to transferring Beach Huts and a fee of £360 is applicable. The number of transfers which have been processed over the last three financial years are as follows:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Transfers	182	155	187

The council charges an annual site licence fee which is sent out around the 1st April. This includes a reduced charge for Tendring District residents, subject to checks carried out during the process of the transfer. Concessions are only provided if the named licensee pays council tax to Tendring District Council. License holders of beach huts are subject to National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR), particularly for those who have more than one beach hut in their name. It is possible to claim up to 100% relief for NNDR in some circumstances.

The objectives for the Beach Huts service at Tendring District Council are to provide a customer focused, efficient, quality service, seeking income opportunities, which will enable:

- *Improved seafront assets and infrastructure*
- *Increased awareness of local seafront issues*
- *Support for tourism and inward investment strategies of the Council*

There are five Beach Hut Associations around the District representing the following locations:

- *Brightlingsea*
- *Clacton and Holland*
- *Harwich and Dovercourt*
- *Frinton*
- *Walton on the Naze*

Officers meet regularly with representatives from each committee, to discuss a District Wide agenda. Furthermore, it is typical for a Senior Officer to attend each organisation's Annual General Meeting, which can be attended by up to 100 license holders.

Beach Hut Specifications

License holders are required to comply with a specification, which sets out the dimensions, appearance and adaptations which are permitted under their agreement. The specification is sent out annually with the appropriate license fee and is attached as Appendix C to this report.

Beach Hut Fees and Charges

There are different annual license fees applicable for different parts of the District and residents receive a concession on the full price. The charge varies with the size and area of the site. The full breakdown of the approved fees and charges is set out below:

		Resident Fees Inclusive of VAT (£)	Non Resident Fees Inclusive of VAT (£)
<u>BEACH HUT SITES</u>			
1	Frinton		
	The Walings	493.00	976.00
	High & Low Walls <i>includes rows 1 & 2</i>	318.00	637.00
	The Leas <i>includes rows 1 & 2</i>	318.00	637.00
2	Walton		
	Southcliff <i>includes rows 1 to 5 & Memorial Gardens</i>	212.00	424.00
	Eastcliff <i>includes rows 1 & 2</i>	266.00	530.00
3	Clacton/Holland		
	Holland A Section East Seafront (1-79)	266.00	530.00
	Holland A Section East Seafront (80-124)	266.00	530.00
	Holland East Seafront other <i>includes Brighton Road</i>	266.00	530.00
	Clacton		
	Martello	266.00	530.00
	Blue Chalets small (residents only)	711.00	resident only
	Blue Chalets large (residents only)	891.00	resident only
4	Brightlingsea		
	West Promenade	212.00	424.00
5	Harwich		
	Harwich Green	185.00	412.00
6	Dovercourt		
	Dovercourt West End & Spa <i>includes West End front & back rows</i>	185.00	412.00
	Spa Cabins (residents only)	585.00	resident only
	Orwell Terrace Chalets (residents only)	530.00	resident only
	Dovercourt Bay	280.00	587.00

It is typical to collect 100% of license fees by the end of the cycle of a second reminder. It is rare to encounter problems with lack of payment which would lead to the removal of the applicable Beach Hut License.

Expenditure

Expenditure on Beach Huts in 2020/21 was £292,767 and income £1,033,322. From the resulting surplus, £500,000 is apportioned towards the direct costs of managing the seafront

service, including employee costs, engineering works, maintenance etc. The balance covers recharges from other service areas for seafront related matters.

Summer Plan

Following on from the challenges experienced in 2020 in the aftermath of the national lockdown, a cross Council plan was developed to support seafront locations in dealing with high volumes of visitors. The plan was considered a success and the presence of the Community Ambassadors, increased the Council's capacity in reacting to situations and providing advice to seafront visitors.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determine whether it has comments or recommendation to put forward to the relevant Portfolio Holder or to Cabinet.