

To: Councillor Mary Newton, Portfolio Holder for Business and Economic Growth

From: Laura Richardson, Economic Growth Officer

Cc: Barbara Pole, Economic Growth and Enterprise Manager

Cc: Lee Heley, Interim Corporate Director – Projects Delivery

Cc: Mike Carran, Assistant Director, Economic Growth & Leisure

Date: 7th January 2022

Dear Councillor Newton,

Annual TDC Contribution to Harwich Harbour Ferry

TDC has for a number of years annually contributed £1,500 towards the operational costs of Harwich Harbour Ferry (HHF), alongside partners as follows:

- Essex County Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Babergh District Council
- East Suffolk Council
- Harwich Town Council
- Felixstowe Town Council

Each tier contributes a variable amount, related to their level of government and capacity to do so. For the 2022 season the total contribution is £31,750, which is equivalent to the total contribution made in previous years.

HHF operates a service between Harwich, Felixstowe and Shotley, with Harwich benefitting from the increased tourism revenue and brand recognition the company brings to the area. Recent years have brought challenges, with COVID lockdowns and a storm surge in October 2020, as well as engine replacement in 2021. Customer numbers between the lockdowns was promising, with some months showing increased uptake over 2019.

At the annual update meeting in November 2021, the owner of HHF was in attendance to provide an update on the performance of the business over the year:

- After extensive repairs were made to the vessel after 2020's storm, and a replacement engine in Summer 2021, the vessel now requires far less Winter maintenance than usual before the service reopens in Spring 2022. This has allowed the Owner to look towards larger and more long term investments to the business, most notably considering options to replace the diesel engine (when it next needs replacing) with a hybrid/low carbon alternative. This has not yet come to market as it goes through the testing and patenting process however the Owner is in talks with the relevant company and has added HHF to the appropriate waitlist.
- The service continues to be COVID safe, with new ability to process contactless payments and social distancing (which limits passengers) on board.
- Passenger numbers were varied in 2021, with a drop in those using the service to commute to work, but a rise in those using the service on staycations.
- The Owner has reduced marketing costs in 2021 after an extensively rebuilt website in 2018/19 but intends to begin to supplement this again with traditional marketing including flyers as footfall increases in 2022.

- The Owner is looking to train local people to become part of the business whether as maintenance or as Skipper; this continues efforts he was making pre-pandemic.

Consideration has been given to the environmental impact of this continued public funding support; this ferry offers alternative public transport options to those wishing to commute (when not working from home) or travel for pleasure between Harwich, Felixstowe and Shotley, as well as encouraging other sustainable travel through initiatives such as allowing bicycles onboard. This is an extant service and therefore will not be a new impact to the surrounding area and waters, and as aforementioned the Owner is looking to further reduce carbon impact by preparing the vessel for a hybrid/low carbon engine as soon as they come to market.

I therefore request your approval for TDC's contribution of £1,500 to HHF to be made for the 2022 season.

Kind regards,

Laura Richardson
Economic Growth Officer
Tendring District Council

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Cc: Barbara Pole, Economic Growth and Enterprise Manager

Cc: Lee Heley, Interim Corporate Director – Projects Delivery

Cc: Mike Carran, Assistant Director, Economic Growth & Leisure

Date: _____

Dear Laura,

Annual TDC Contribution to Harwich Harbour Ferry

Thank you for your memorandum dated 7th January 2022 requesting approval for TDC's annual contribution of £1,500 to be paid as outlined.

I agree/ do not agree for the contribution to be made.

Kind regards,

Cllr Mary Newton
Portfolio Holder for Business and Economic Growth