

Regeneration and Property Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	12 March 2024
Report Title	Beach Hut Policy Consultation Outcome
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment and Leisure
Lead Officer	Jay Jenkins, Leisure & Technical Services Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss the outcomes of the Beach Hut Policy Consultation and SBC response shown in Appendix I. 2. Consider the items listed at 2.8 and recommend for inclusion or not into the policy. 3. Approve and adopt the final draft of the Beach Hut Policy shown at Appendix II.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Beach Hut Policy 2023 consultation which took place between September 2023 and November 2023.
- 1.2 A summary of the feedback and SBC responses are attached at Appendix I. There was a total of 29 returns.
- 1.3 Members are asked to consider the responses and approve the revised Beach Hut Policy.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council currently has 55 beach huts either directly owned and managed by Swale Borough Council (SBC) or privately owned and sited on land under Borough Council control.
- 2.2 Minster has 29 huts privately owned and 6 are rented. Leysdown has 12 huts privately owned with 8 being rented. Annual revenue from rented huts is circa £13,000 and an additional £16,000 is achieved from ground rent of purchased huts.
- 2.3 Despite this success, the Council had never formally adopted a beach hut policy to oversee management of the service. In the old cabinet system, the Policy Development and Review committee discussed an early draft which set out many

of the principles included in this new document. This committee considered a draft policy in July 2023 before moving to public consultation.

2.4 The policy set out the vision and keys to success for the service. It details key policy principles such as;

- a) Provision of additional Beach Huts
- b) Optimising Use, Satisfying Demand and Allocations policy
- c) Standard of Maintenance & Appearance
- d) Security
- e) Pricing Structure

2.5 The policy also detailed future development plans in two phases. Phase 1 is to install 12 additional huts at Minster Leas and 14 at Leysdown Coastal Park. Phase 2 is to install an additional 46 huts in a second row at Minster Leas.

2.6 Phase 1 is currently on hold as recent tender returns all came in well over the £120,000 budget provision. A specification review is being undertaken to identify opportunities to reduce the tender costs and/or relook at the financial modelling with a commitment to come back to this committee in 2024.

2.7 A total of 29 responses were received and the themes from the comments and our responses are included in Appendix I.

2.8 Three particular comments are put forward to Members of the Committee for consideration. The exact wording from the consultation feedback is shown below along with a description of our recommended position:

Resident comment	Policy Position
<p>“Failure to comply with maintaining the hut could result in the hut being taken back into Council ownership”.</p>	<p>There are already clauses within the licences that require the hut owner/renter to keep them in good maintenance. For a rental, SBC remain the owner of the hut, so we feel this has ample coverage.</p> <p>If the hut has been purchased, it would not be possible to confiscate their property. However, we would use the licence clauses to request removal of the hut. In severe cases where requests were ignored, we would pursue legal routes. Previous experience has shown that a threat of action has resulted in positive resolution of any dispute.</p>
<p>“I would love to see at least 10% of any new developments gifted to local primary schools, community groups such as Scouts etc”.</p>	<p>To be clear we believe this to mean donation of the actual beach hut and not the financial proceeds. Members are asked to consider this as a community engagement opportunity. It could help to respond to some of the views held that</p>

	<p>locals do not get to enjoy the benefits of beach huts.</p> <p>There is already a similar precedent of this with one hut at Leysdown where a community organisation receives a reduced annual rental cost. If a hut at each site was agreed to be made available to local voluntary or charitable organisations, then the preferred method would be to have an ‘anchor’ organisation who would pay a reduced annual rate and manage the bookings for other local organisation. This would reduce the annual income for SBC from a commercial arrangement but likely cover the annual maintenance costs.</p>
<p>“Make more available but for local residents only first”.</p>	<p>This is opposed to the existing policy and the wording mentioned in section 5b. Allocations are made in strict ‘date of application’ order. Whilst we can understand the viewpoint, the evidence shows that 89% of huts are owned or rented by locals to Swale, with many others coming from neighbouring Boroughs. The waiting list also shows similar statistics (72% local) so no amendment is recommended.</p> <p>Furthermore, the addition of weekly rentals in some of the new phase 1 huts will lead to greater availability for local people.</p>

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Discuss the outcomes of the Beach Hut Policy Consultation and SBC response shown in Appendix I.
- 3.2 Consider the items listed for inclusion into the policy at 2.8.
- 3.3 Approve and adopt the final draft of the Beach Hut Policy shown at Appendix II.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Members could opt not to approve a number of the 3 inclusions into the Beach Hut Policy.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place over a 3-month period, with 29 returns.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>The policy cuts across a couple of objectives under two priorities.</p> <p>3.5 Promote wellbeing and enjoyment of life by signposting and encouraging a wide range of sporting, cultural and other leisure activities appropriate and accessible to each age group.</p> <p>4.4 Reduce dependence on government-controlled funding sources and support staff to find innovative ways to ensure other objectives can be met in the context of diminished resources.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>There are no other direct financial implications within this report as the Policy allows for annual fees and charge changes and each new development would be managed via a business case and tender reports.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>Beach huts are a discretionary service and therefore fall under the Local Govt Miscellaneous act where Councils are able to levy fees.</p> <p>The beach huts have been confirmed as under permitted development due to their size and nature.</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>None identified at this stage</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>None identified at this stage</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>None identified at this stage</p>
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>None identified at this stage</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	<p>None identified at this stage</p>
Equality and Diversity	<p>See separate Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix III.</p>
Privacy and Data Protection	<p>The consultation returns are held in accordance with data protection principles.</p>

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix I: Beach Hut Policy Consultation Summary Results

7.2 Appendix II: Final Draft Beach Hut Policy for approval

7.3 Appendix III: Equality Impact Assessment

8 Background Papers

8.1 [Regeneration & Property Meeting 6 July 2023 Minutes](#)