

Cabinet Meeting		Agenda Item: 4
Meeting Date	10 September 2014	
Report Title	Beach Huts	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Cosgrove, Cabinet Member for Regeneration	
SMT Lead	Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact	
Head of Service	Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact	
Lead Officer	Charlotte Knowles, Commissioning Officer	
Recommendations	1. To retain the existing huts beyond the trial period and to introduce a further 15 huts at The Leas, Minster, by April 2015. The final mix of huts available for rent or sale to be agreed by the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Finance.	
	2. To commence a separate project to review the provision of public toilet facilities in the Minster area.	
	3. To delegate authority to the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact to finalise licence conditions in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Finance.	

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress with the Beach Hut Pilot project to date, includes a summary of consultation undertaken and proposes introducing a further 15 huts by April 2015.

2 Background

- 2.1 On 19 March 2013, SMT approved the recommendation that the Council would work in partnership with Minster Beach Hut Association (MBHA) to introduce beach huts along the Leas at Minster, Sheppey for a two year pilot project. MBHA assisted with the location, size and style of the huts and installed steps to access the huts from the promenade. They invested £25,000 of their own money and in return members of the Association own 10 huts on the site. The agreement was entered into on the condition that if the scheme was unsuccessful, MBHA would remove the huts at the end of the trial period.

- 2.2 Members of the association pay a minimal ground rent of £50 per annum during the trial period to reflect their investment in the project and the level of risk involved for them if the scheme fails.
- 2.3 The Council introduced 10 huts to rent out to members of the public at a rate of £650 per annum, and implemented a waiting list to judge the level of interest in the huts.
- 2.4 Since the trial began in June last year, the scheme has received a significant amount of positive feedback. There are currently over 370 people on the waiting list. To date there have been no incidents of vandalism or serious issues relating to the huts.
- 2.5 Consultation was undertaken with members of the public who are on the waiting list. Of the 56 respondents, 29 (57%) said that they would prefer to purchase a hut, 12 (23%) stated that they would prefer to rent, and 10 (20%) were undecided. Four of the six SBC licensees who responded said they would prefer to buy their hut if given the option.
- 2.6 When asked whether they would consider another location on the Island, 26 (52%) said no, 22 (44%) said yes, and 2 (4%) were undecided. They were also asked to suggest additional locations; suggestions included Leysdown, Shellness, Sheerness, Warden Bay, and Queenborough. Leysdown was the most popular suggestion.
- 2.7 Fourteen respondents commented on the lack of toilet facilities at that end of the promenade. Many stated that the existing toilets next to The Whitehouse are in a poor condition and in the wrong location. If consideration is given to addressing the issue of public toilet facilities in this area, discussions could be initiated with MBHA or Minster Parish Council regarding a management agreement for those facilities. As background, of the other 13 beach hut providers consulted as part of the British Destinations and East Riding Council Chalet Study, all 13 had toilets within the vicinity of their huts, four had standpipes/water facilities, and three had showers.
- 2.8 Quinneys (who are based near Canterbury) were used for the provision of huts for the trial period, so that a recognised specification could be used that has been successful in other areas (e.g. Tankerton). However, a procurement exercise would be undertaken for any additional huts.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 With the positive reaction received for this project so far, it is recommended that the existing huts are retained and a further 15 additional huts are introduced at Minster in April 2015. These will be a combination of huts for rent and for sale, so as not to exclude those who would prefer to rent a hut on an annual basis.

- 3.2 This will mean there is a total of thirty five huts at Minster Leas; consisting of ten owned and maintained by MBHA and twenty five provided by the Borough Council. The final mix of huts available for rent or sale from the Borough Council will be agreed by the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Finance.
- 3.3 The current licensees of the ten Council owned huts will be offered the first opportunity to purchase the huts that they currently occupy.
- 3.4 It is also recommended that authority be delegated to the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Finance, to finalise licence conditions.
- 3.5 A separate project to review the provision of public toilets in the area will be commenced before the end of the trial period, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environmental & Rural Affairs.
- 3.6 Further research will be undertaken on the feasibility of introducing beach huts at Leysdown and elsewhere, with a separate report brought forward once that has concluded.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 One option would be to agree for the pilot project to continue until the end of March 2015 but not introduce any further huts. The existing 20 huts would then remain on a permanent basis. The Council could then either continue to rent out the 10 huts that it owns or sell them. This option is feasible but would limit income generation.
- 4.2 A second option would be for the pilot project to continue until the end of March 2015 but then remove the existing 20 huts. This option is not recommended as it would mean that the Council would fail to benefit from any future income opportunities through either rent or sale of beach huts, as well as losing a popular new amenity.
- 4.3 A further option would be to introduce more or fewer than 15 additional huts. This is not recommended because at this time it is considered that 15 will best balance income potential with concern regarding parking and the current toilet provision.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 In 2011/12 Beckwith Consulting Ltd undertook consultation with 111 people on the Isle of Sheppey, a mix of residents, visitors and local businesses.
- 5.2 Comments have been invited on the beach hut pilot project from members of the public since the pilot began. There have been signs located at Minster Leas since the huts were constructed.

- 5.3 SBC took part in a Chalet survey conducted by British Destinations and East Riding Council. SBC were one of 14 respondents.
- 5.4 Further consultation has been undertaken with the members of MBHA, the occupiers of the Council-owned huts, and members of the public who are on the waiting list. Of the 156 people who were on the waiting list at the time of the consultation, 56 of these responded. Of the 10 SBC licensees, six responded and all 10 members of MBHA responded to the consultation.
- 5.5 Residents of the Leas were also consulted. Of the 53 residents, 10 responded. Of these eight were in favour and two were opposed.
- 5.6 Other stakeholders consulted include: Cabinet members (Regeneration & Finance), Ward members, Kent Police, KCC Wardens, Sheppey Matters, Sheppey Tourism Alliance, Minster Parish Council, Swale Community Leisure Limited, licensee of the former lifeguard hut, The Beach PH, Little Oyster Tea Room, The Playa PH, The Whitehouse Restaurant, and Sheppey Beach Users Forum.
- 5.7 Minster Parish Council suggested that the consultation process was flawed with insufficient opportunities for Minster residents to comment on or oppose the proposal, in part because there was no online survey. In response to this, the consultation has been added to the Council's website and extended until 5 September 2014.
- 5.8 It should be noted that Minster Parish Council have suggested that the Borough Council maintain ownership of the scheme, that the hours of use be reduced and that a sound structure limiting the numbers and establishing the exact cut off points in Minster for future huts be created. They have asked that the decision for expansion be postponed until the Borough Council has acted on the Parish Council's recommendations (please refer to Appendix I).

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Supports tourism on the Isle of Sheppey, and supports the Council's regeneration programme.
Financial, Resource and Property	The one-off cost of the project will be funded from the Regeneration Fund via a top up from reserves. The revenue budget implications will be picked up through the 2015/16 budget process.
Legal and Statutory	Planning permission is not required; however the Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Finance will consider whether the proposal will be considered by

	planning committee.
Crime and Disorder	The huts have the potential to attract vandalism and anti-social behaviour. However, to date there have been no incidents reported.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this time.
Equality and Diversity	An initial CIA was completed prior to the commencement of the trial project. The introduction of beach huts has no negative impact on people who possess any of the protected characteristics. The only potential impact identified refers to access to the huts for those with the disability protected characteristic. As a result the plans will ensure that the huts are accessible for those with disabilities.
Sustainability	As far as practicable, appropriate construction materials will be used from sustainable sources.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I – Consultation Comments
- Appendix II – Map

8 Background Papers

- SMT Paper – Beach Huts, 16/08/2011
- SMT Paper – Beach Hut Option Appraisal, 21/02/2012
- SMT Paper – Beach Huts, 26/06/2012
- SMT Paper – Options for the introduction of Beach Huts, 19/03/2013