

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 20TH MARCH 2017

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 14TH FEBRUARY 2017

“ BARRY ISLAND BEACH HUTS (REF) –

Cabinet had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to making a final decision and a copy of the reference from Cabinet from 6th February, 2017 was tabled at the meeting for Members' information.

In presenting the report, the Head of Visible Services and Transport advised that the 24 beach huts at Barry Island (12 large and 12 small) had been available for rental since Easter 2015. Bookings for the huts were taken online or over the telephone via the Council's Contact Centre. During the year the beach huts had been further marketed by the Tourism and Events Team and a specific brand had been successfully developed for them. The beach hut branding could be found at Appendix 2 to the report. Committee was informed that marketing the beach huts had been integral to the marketing activity undertaken by the Tourism and Events Team in 2016 and the huts were fast becoming an iconic symbol featured in not only the Council's marketing work, but also that of Visit Wales. The Tourism and Events Team also had flexibility to use the huts for regeneration and tourism activities. The demand for beach hut rentals had increased significantly since the introduction of the new revised Policy for 2016/17 and, not including the beach huts let via annual rentals from 1st April to 31st December, 2016, 846 bookings had been made. When compared to the previous year over the same timeframe there had been an increase in bookings for the huts of over 200%. Appendix 4 to the report gave a detailed breakdown, month by month, of rentals for both the large and small huts.

The daily hire and annual season ticket prices for 2015 / 2016 had been deliberately set on the low side to help stimulate demand. Committee was informed that it was however, clear from the short time it took to let all the annual season tickets and the significant increase in daily hires, that there was opportunity to now raise these prices to a level more fitting with the market. The beach huts were still a reasonably new addition to the facilities at Barry Island and it was likely to take a number of years to find the most appropriate price / demand balance for them. From the cost and income table detailed in the resources section of the report, it was evident that the beach hut service made a small surplus during the year. However it was noted that energy costs were not included. Whilst this was likely to be a relatively minor cost in terms of the overall expenditure, a greater provision needed to be made for reactive and planned repairs for the buildings going forward.

For the 2017 / 2018 period it was proposed to increase the rental fees as follows:

Daily Hire Spring / Summer	Current	Proposed 2017 / 2018
Small Hut	£10	£15
Large Hut	£20	£25

(If available, huts may be hired by the half day at 50% of the prices shown.)

Daily Hire Autumn / Winter	Current	Proposed 2017 / 2018
Small Hut	£5	£5
Large Hut	£10	£10

(There was no half day rate for “out of season” hires, the full daily rate was payable).

Annual Season Tickets	Current	Proposed 2017 / 2018
Small Hut	£350	£450
Large Hut	£500	£600

It was further proposed that from April this year all annual tickets not required by the existing ticket holders would be sold to applicants via a random selection process.

In future licences would last for a maximum of one year and therefore every year from 2018 all the annual season ticket huts (six small and six large) would be available to anybody over the age of 18 who had suitably registered. The arrangement for the random selection had yet to be determined, though this could be an electronic process or a public draw. In any event, governance of the registration and draw arrangements would be suitably robust to ensure probity and fairness.

All Members agreed that the beach huts were a tremendous asset to the Authority and much discussion had taken place previously by the Committee in relation to the marketing, charges etc. of the beach huts. The Chairman stated that she was pleased to see that electricity supply had now been installed in the beach huts which had been an issue raised by the Committee.

Following a query from a Member as to whether any consideration had been given to allocating a beach hut for educational purposes, the Head of Service in response advised that one of the beach huts was available for tourism / events activities and as such could be open to any school, although it was not the intention to dedicate a beach hut to any particular school due to the sheer numbers that probably would require one each.

In referring to the pricing policy for the beach huts the Head of Service advised that some research had been undertaken with other Local Authorities the result of this being that the prices detailed were now considered to be the right prices for Barry

Island. The Cabinet Member for Visible, Leisure and Regulatory Services, with permission to speak, stated that the Council needed to ensure there was money for repairs in the future which would be taken from the hire charges in order to deal with any maintenance issues required.

A Member also referred to the upkeep of the beach huts, stating that he would wish to see some sort of detail in the Terms and Conditions of Hire that any person hiring the beach huts should be required to ensure that they are left in a clean and tidy state. Although the current Terms and Conditions stated that the hirer should not do anything untoward in the beach huts, it was agreed that a firmer condition in relation to keeping the properties clean and tidy should be included in the documentation.

A number of Members reiterated that they had received good comments from users and a Member further took the opportunity to congratulate the onsite worker for the way in which the Beach Huts were maintained. Comments were however made about the particular issue of cigarette butt ends being dropped on the beach and whether anything further could be done about this type of littering. The Head of Service confirmed that dropping litter of this nature was a criminal offence.

A Member also stated that it was important to allow for flexibility within the beach hut scheme and for officers to be allowed manage the beach huts as appropriate. It was therefore important to ensure that the charging regime was in line with “what the market would bear” and that it was also important to learn from any complaints received.

Councillor N.P. Hodges, not a Member of the Committee, with permission to speak, advised that there had recently been some confusion with information provided on the Council’s website in respect of renewing season tickets as the website indicated that they were available from 1st March whereas Appendices 1 and 5 referred to 1st February to 31st March. The Head of Service agreed to look into the matter and rectify the matter if necessary.

Following discussions regarding the potential for retail offerings at the site, it was suggested that the Tourism and Regeneration Officers speak to local retailers to encourage the submission of a business improvement bid and that further discussions with regard to this be considered.

Having fully considered the report and the reference from Cabinet, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to include in the terms of hire that all hirers must ensure that the beach huts are kept in a clean and tidy condition.
- (2) T H A T consideration be given to a business improvement bid being submitted to encourage the retail offer at the site as outlined in the above minute.

- (3) T H A T the details of the operation of the beach hut service for the 2016/17 period be noted.
- (4) T H A T the Beach Huts Rental Policy for 2017/18, as attached at Appendix 5 to the report, be endorsed subject to Recommendation (1) above.
- (5) T H A T the above recommendations be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure that the beach huts are maintained in as good a condition as possible.
- (2) In order to further the retail area of the district.
- (3) For information.
- (4) Following consideration of the proposed Rental Policy under discussion at the meeting.”
- (5) For Cabinet approval.

Attached as Appendix - [Report to Cabinet: 6th February, 2017](#)