

Report To: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 16th March 2020

Report Title: Coastal Users' Group update

Report By: Victoria Conheady, Assistant Director Regeneration and Culture

Key Decision: Key

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

1. To update on recent discussions with the Coastal Users' Group and budget recommendations/implications.
2. To update on need for a dedicated resource to support the group.

Recommendation(s)

1. Approve the creation of a part time (0.3 FTE) Coastal Users Group liaison officer, at a cost of up to £12,000 pa
2. Approve the changing of the group into two parts:
 - a) a smaller core group focussed on the Hastings and St Leonards Foreshore Charitable business as advisory group (as outlined within the constitution)
 - b) a wider group focussed on the wider seafront issues.
3. That the charity committee note the business plan will be presented at the June committee.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. After considerable discussion with representatives of the Coastal Users Group (CUG), a workable way forward to ensure a healthier working relationship with the Hastings and St Leonards Charitable Foreshore Trust has been proposed, which necessitates a more focused advisory group on FST matters, but still maintain a larger seafront/coastal users' group.
2. Through discussion with the coastal users' group representatives, the shrinking officer resource and analysis of future FST workload the need for a dedicated resource to support partnership working between the CUG and the FST has been identified, subject to agreement by the full Coastal Users' Group, which meets on Tuesday 10th March.
3. Given that the above role's workload fluctuates throughout the year, we propose to include 1.5 days a week working with the Coastal Users' Group (CUG) with the proposed FST programme compliance and support officer, if possible. It is also likely that the programme

compliance and support officer workload may also fluctuate throughout the year dependent on the grant programme cycles, and therefore we need only create a 0.8 FTE post.

Background

Coastal Users Group

1. In addition to its long-standing role as providing a forum for beach/sea users to meet with the council, CUG fulfils a statutory purpose in respect of the FST, as set out in its constitution, excerpt below:

Matters for consultation with the Advisory group:

- a) *The standards or specifications for the maintenance of the charity's land*
 - b) *The charity's policy relating to the activities and events arranged or permitted on the charity's land; and the arrangement or permitting of any activity or event on the charity's land which is outside the charity's policy*
 - c) *The charity's policy relating to the exercise of any power under the Hastings Borough Council Act 1988 or otherwise to manage, let sell or otherwise dispose of the charity's property.*
 - d) *The Exercise, other than in accordance with its established policies, of any power under the Hastings Borough Act 1988 or otherwise manage, let sell or otherwise dispose of the charity's property.*
2. The last CUG annual general meeting (AGM) took place on 3rd December 2019. The then chair, Paul Carter, officially stood down at this meeting. There were no nominations for the position of chair and vice chair prior to, or at the AGM. In the absence of such nominations, the AGM was adjourned, and an informal discussion on current issues and how the group may go forward took place. This was in part due to the relationship between the CUG and the FST becoming strained in some respects in recent times.
 3. CUG identified the following concerns:
 - a) Process of advice and recommendations given to the FST by the CUG and feedback related to their comments has not been satisfactory and has led to significant frustrations within the CUG
 - b) The timings of release of paperwork for scrutiny by CUG prior to meetings mean that they are unable to fully review the papers, and therefore limits their ability to fulfil their statutory duties to the FST
 4. CUG expressed that the relationship between the FST and themselves as advisory body could be much more productive, but a coordinator/liaison officer would be needed to work between the council and trustees.
 5. It was agreed that some of the CUG members would meet with HBC officers and chair of the Charity Committee to identify a way forward, and three CUG members volunteered. This meeting took place on 22nd January 2020.

6. The three CUG members confirmed that they, and the rest of CUG, are keen to continue the work of the group on a long-term basis and it was confirmed that the Foreshore Trust also wants to keep CUG as its advisory group.

Liaison Officer Post

7. As identified in paragraph 4, it has been suggested that a liaison officer post be created to ensure that communication and feedback between the CUG and the FST are as open and productive as possible, in between and following on from the quarterly meetings.
8. CUG members reiterated at the meeting that without this dedicated resource, they could not see how they could continue in the advisory function for the FST.
9. After some discussions, officers and the chair of the charity committee agree that, assuming sufficient financial resources are available over the long term, this post should be created.
10. This post would need to be solely focused on FST matters, for example: managing liaison and consultation with the CUG on the FST business plan. It would not have sufficient capacity to manage communications on a wider basis around, for example, relating to highway/pavement conditions on non FST land.
11. A programme support and compliance officer post is being provided to monitor the grant giving aspect of the FST's work; currently 2.5 days/week. Officers propose, due to the likely fluctuating workload of each post, we expand this role to 4 days/week, using the additional time to fulfil the liaison officer role identified by CUG.
12. This would be subject to a suitable job description and person specification drawn up, and HR advice sought as to whether one person might reasonably be able to undertake the role.

Future composition / governance

13. In order to focus the work of the proposed CUG liaison officer, it is suggested that a smaller group be set up to deal with any FST issues that arise in between meetings and the current group will stay as it is, focussing on non FST items (i.e. as it used to be before HBC became the sole trustee of the FST).
14. Meetings of both groups could be held on the same day if needed, with the start of one and the end of the other contiguous. Any CUG member could attend the smaller meeting if they wanted to (i.e. it would not be exclusive), however this would need to be allowed on prior agreement of the chair.
15. It is recognised that some members of CUG might not understand its full role. A training session could be held in June to explain the process.

Next round of meetings

- 16. The next CUG meeting is scheduled for 10th March. It is proposed that this paper is presented there, prior to the Charity Committee meeting on 16th March, and the outcome of that meeting reported verbally to Charity Committee at its 16th March meeting.
- 17. It is proposed that between the March and June CUG meetings nominations for a smaller group be held to ensure that the beginning of the new system commences in June.
- 18. It is the intention that we endeavour to appoint a liaison officer in time for the June meeting, but both parties acknowledge we are entering into a transition period which may take some months to settle into a normal working pattern.

Business Plan

- 19. Due to the ongoing discussions, the business plan will be presented at the June committee meeting instead of March, and therefore it is hoped that this role will be in situ to ensure thorough discussion with the ‘focused’ CUG.

20. **Timetable of Next Steps**

Please include a list of key actions and the scheduled dates for these:

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Coastal Users Group Steering Group meeting	Agree scope of work and job description	19 th February	Kevin Boorman
Coastal Users’ Group meeting	Recommendation report presented	10 th March	Kevin Boorman
Charity Committee meeting	Recommendation report presented	16 th March	Victoria Conheady

Wards Affected

Castle, Central St. Leonards, Old Hastings, West St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 45.7

Have you used relevant project tools?: Y/N

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness Y

Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	
Risk Management	Y
Environmental Issues & Climate Change	
Economic/Financial Implications	Y
Human Rights Act	
Organisational Consequences	Y
Local People's Views	Y
Anti-Poverty	
Legal	Y

Additional Information

Insert a list of appendices and/or additional documents. Report writers are encouraged to use links to existing information, rather than appending large documents.

Officer to Contact

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