

Report To: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 29th March 2021

Report Title: Proposal to extend the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) contract to provide a beach lifeguard service for Hastings Borough Council and Hastings & St Leonards Charitable Foreshore Trust for a further three years

Report By: Kevin Boorman, Marketing and Major Projects Manager

Key Decision: Y

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To update charity committee on the performance of the RNLI ('Royal National Lifeboat Institution') operated beach lifeguard service in Hastings for the last four years and to recommend that a new contract is awarded for the next three years.

Recommendation(s)

1. That HBC and the Foreshore Trust enter into a new three year agreement with the RNLI for the RNLI to provide a beach lifeguard service at Hastings for the 2021 – 2023 (inclusive) seasons and they are appointed without going through the competitive tendering procedures, subject to cabinet agreement.
2. That authority is delegated to the assistant director of regeneration and culture or her nominee to conclude the necessary legal agreements.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. Because the RNLI, the 'gold standard' of lifesaving at sea, is able to provide a better service at better value than we can provide in-house.

Background

1. Hastings Borough Council/the Foreshore Trust operated an 'in house' seasonal Lifeguard Service from 2000 until 2016. This developed over the years in response to risk assessment, visitor habits and service review.
2. In 2017 the RNLI was awarded the contract to provide lifeguard services in Hastings for a one year trial period. This was successful, and in 2018 agreement was reached for the RNLI to operate the lifeguard service in Hastings for a further three years.
3. The RNLI operate a joint funding arrangement to cover the costs associated with running the lifeguard service. The RNLI ask for a contribution from the beach operator equivalent to the seasonal wage bill for the time the operational lifeguards spend patrolling, with the RNLI funding the remainder of the service, including management provision. The RNLI also undertake all training, and provide the highest level of safety equipment. They also ask for permission from the beach operator to fundraise and promote the Institution on the beach during the lifeguarded season. This means that the RNLI can provide a better value service than we could provide on a like for like basis and also that our lifeguards have access to a more focussed 'saving lives at sea' management support organisation and peer network than we are able to provide.

Review of last contract

4. Each year the RNLI provide a report of their operation in Hastings; the reports for the last three years are appended.
5. As can be seen, in 2018 2 people were rescued, 15 assisted, major first aid rendered on 4 people, minor first aid on 55, and a total of 12 796 face to face 'preventative actions' were carried out.
6. In 2019 4 lives were saved, 7 people were rescued, 16 assisted, major first aid rendered on 5 people, minor first aid on 22, and a total of 6357 face to face 'preventative actions' were carried out.
7. In 2020, in a season much curtailed by Covid, and in which only two of the three regular lifeguard stations were staffed, 4 lives were saved, 7 people were rescued, 6 assisted, major first aid rendered on 5 people, minor first aid on 17, and a total of 7432 face to face 'preventative actions' were carried out.
8. The performance of the RNLI lifeguards is to be commended, with 8 lives saved, and 14 people rescued in the last two years alone.

2021 season

9. It is proposed to start the 2021 lifeguards season on 29th May 2021 (Spring bank holiday weekend). All three beaches (Pelham, Pier, St Leonards) will initially open full time until Sun 6 June 2021 to cover both the bank holiday and associated school half term break. From Sat 12 June 2021 all beaches will work weekends only up until the start of peak season which would be scheduled to begin on Sat 10 July 2021. From this date they will operate 7 days a week.

Peak season will finish on Sun 5 Sept 2021. All beaches will then revert back to weekend only cover until the end of main season on Sun 26 Sept 2021 (an additional three weekends).

Discussion

10. As noted above, the RNLI operate a joint funding arrangement to cover the costs associated with running the lifeguard service. The RNLI ask for a contribution from the beach operator equivalent to the seasonal wage bill for the time the operational lifeguards spend patrolling, with the RNLI funding the remainder of the service, including management provision. The RNLI also undertake all training and provide the highest level of safety equipment. They also ask for permission from the beach operator to fundraise and promote the Institution on the beach during the lifeguarded season. This means that the RNLI can provide a better value service than we could on a like for like basis.
11. The RNLI pay all their lifeguards above the living wage.
12. In addition, the RNLI provide accommodation at Pelham and the pier at no additional cost to us, and a very high standard of lifeguard equipment. As noted above, they provide excellent training and specialist management support, and are widely seen as providing the 'gold standard' of lifeguarding operation.
13. The RNLI have indicated that, given the level of investment they are providing, they would like to enter into a three year agreement with us to provide our beach lifeguarding service. Such an agreement would also provide us with certainty of operation.
14. The RNLI, a national charity dedicated to lifesaving at sea, provides the 'gold standard' of lifeguarding, and manages beach lifeguarding services for many local authorities around the country. It is able to provide a better service at a lower cost than we can offer in-house, whilst paying the lifeguards above the living wage. The RNLI also operates the lifeguarding service at Camber Sands and Bexhill on behalf of Rother District Council, and Hastings fits well into this local structure; this helps provide additional resilience for the Hastings service. The RNLI also operates Hastings lifeboat station, of course.
15. It is therefore recommended that the RNLI be appointed to operate the Hastings lifeguarding service for the 2021, 2022 and 2023 seasons
16. Ordinarily, our financial operating procedures requires us to tender for contracts over £50 000. However, there is provision within the procedures (paragraph 21, clause j) for derogation from this requirement if expressly approved by cabinet on consideration of a report from an authorised officer. Such a report is being taken to cabinet.

Financial Implications

17. If the lifeguard season had gone ahead as normal in 2020, our contribution for the service would have been £39,990 plus VAT. For 2021, in line with the contract, this will be increased by 2%, bringing our 2021 contribution to £40,790 plus VAT. By way of comparison the service cost HBC/FT approximately £54 000 for staff in 2016, this figure did not cover any internal supervision costs, and there were additional costs of £7500 for training, induction and supervision from our lifeguard consultant. There was a shorter operating season then, and the service only operated out of two locations, Pelham and St Leonards; the pier was added by the RNLI in 2017.

18. What is being proposed for 2021 onwards provides a longer season operated out of three bases at a figure which is around £20 000 per annum less in cash terms than we were able to provide from two bases in 2016.

Recommendation

19. That HBC and the Foreshore Trust enter into a new three year agreement with the RNLI for the RNLI to provide a beach lifeguard service at Hastings for the 2021 – 2023 (inclusive) seasons and they are appointed without going through the competitive tendering procedures, subject to cabinet agreement; and that authority is delegated to the assistant director of regeneration and culture or her nominee to conclude the necessary legal agreements.

Timetable of Next Steps

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

Action	Key milestone	Due date (provisional)	Responsible
Cabinet discussion	Approval recommended	6 th April 2021	Marketing & major projects manager
Service recommences	Cabinet approval	29 th May 2021	Marketing & major projects manager

Wards Affected

Old Town, Castle, Central St. Leonards

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 40.5

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

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

Additional Information

RNLI lifeguard reports 2018, 2019, 2020 appended

Officer to Contact

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