

Report To: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: Monday, 18th October 2021

Report Title: Status Report - Foreshore Trust Business Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25

Report By: Victoria Conheady, Assistant Director, Regeneration & Culture

Key Decision: N/A

Classification: Open

Purpose of Report

To present a review of progress made in 2020/21, and in year COVID-19 related activity.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the update on 2020/2021 Business Plan be noted, as detailed in paragraphs 4-24.
2. That it is agreed that the activity projected in the 2021/22-2024/2025, as agreed in March 2019 for this financial year be followed if affordable given fiscal impacts due to COVID-19.
3. That the deviations to the current business plan for this financial year (21/22) are noted, as detailed in paragraphs 35-54.
4. To note that due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the financial year 20/21 and 21/22 has meant that a business plan for the 5-year period commencing 2021/2022 was unable to be presented in March 2021
5. That a business plan for the 5-year period commencing 2022/2023 will be worked on and presented as soon as practicable once accounts are completed, the COVID-19 impact on the Foreshore Trust assets are understood, and the level of uncertainty surrounding the ongoing pandemic is reduced.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The Charity Committee requires a business plan to support its decision-making on the use of Foreshore Trust assets and surpluses.
2. Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic the development of a new 5-year business plan has not occurred. The current agreed business plan runs until March 2025.
3. COVID-19 prevented much of the work needed to refresh the current business plan.

Background

1. The business plan normally is a rolling 5-year plan which is revised every year. It is based upon our current knowledge of maintenance, income, required capital works and proposals for new activities.
2. It normally is subject to review and modification as developing proposals and investigations are completed, most significantly in relation to the Stade facilities and the White Rock Baths area.
3. The plan should be reviewed annually.
4. Due to the impacts detailed below it has not been possible to work on a business plan for this financial year and into next financial year. We are still to understand the loss of income for the trust from the COVID-19 pandemic for this current financial year as lockdown was only fully eased in August 2021. This could impact the ability to deliver some activity, beyond maintenance of our assets.

Overview of impact during Financial Year 20/21

5. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented effect on all sectors and changed everyday life here and across the world. At the end of March 2020, as a council we had to quickly refocus our priorities and the way we operate. We had to work at an incredible pace on a huge range of issues to protect our community and staff to reduce transmission of the infection, as well as continuing to deliver essential services. It has been an extraordinarily demanding period for the council, but staff have worked above and beyond coming together as one team to serve our community.
6. Councillors and officers worked in collaboration with key local partners including East Sussex County Council (ESCC), the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), other Boroughs and Districts, the Sussex Resilience Forum, East Sussex Housing and Homelessness Cells, and participated in national networks such as the Local Government Association, District Councils Network, liaising with relevant central Government departments and briefing the local MP.
7. This work was initially focussed on keeping people safe and well and supporting those in our community who had to shield or isolate, and needed support to access food and prescriptions. We also have been focused on delivering a grants process to support closed and impacted businesses, the payment of additional furlough schemes and support for those needing to self-isolate. Latterly we are focused on the safe reopening of our economy and society whilst also supporting the COVID vaccination programme.
8. The majority of staff across HBC during 20/21 were diverted from 'business as usual' duties to support the pandemic and as such much of the work needed to inform the business plan hasn't been able to take place since March 2020.
9. The levels of uncertainty regarding reopening the economy, especially for the trust's assets, has led to significant financial concern relevant to our income generation from car parks and rented assets. However, maintenance, street cleaning and sea defences has continued.

10. The below paragraphs report on the work undertaken during 20/21.

Significant impacts for 20/21 Financial Year

Financial Implications

11. The negative impact financially on the Foreshore Trust as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant in the 2020/21 financial year and will continue to be in the following financial year (2021/22), albeit not as substantial than the previous financial reporting period.
12. The Foreshore Trust saw reduced income compared to expected budgeted income for 2020/21 of £466k at the end of the financial year in total. This was despite better-than-expected results from rental and investment income for the same period. The majority of this loss was centred around the Trusts primary source of income which is derived from car parking, which suffered the heaviest of losses overall at £527k for the reporting period.
13. Current forecasts for the 2021/22 financial year are that there are still likely to be significant losses of income, mainly in relation to car parking revenue, with expectations this particular income stream could see losses in the region of £181k compared to budget.

2020/21 Business plan achievements and additions/deviations to the business plan:

14. Below provides and overview of the main achievements of the business plan across the last financial year, in addition to the main additional activities and any deviations to the business plan.

Foreshore Trust Car Parks

15. In the FY 20/21 the FST car parks saw a fiscal loss on the previous year of £527k.
16. Free parking was offered to key workers, in addition to COVID testing units utilising Pelham car several times during the year. We saw the busiest August in 2020, though significantly lower usages during the shoulder seasons and school holidays where lockdowns were in place.

Stade open space

17. All bookings were cancelled during 20/21.

Fish Fairs

18. COVID-19 prevented all 2020 fish fairs from taking place.

RNLI lifeguard service – Summer 2020

19. The RNLI lifeguard service had been due to commence on the last weekend of May, the late Spring bank holiday weekend, as has been traditional in recent years. However due to staffing availability (a number of their seasonal staff work in New Zealand/Australia, in

our winter and with COVID-19 travel restrictions were unable to return to the UK; the RNLI were unable to recruit and train staff in the UK during the lockdown), the RNLI service started on 20th June 2020, two weeks earlier than had been expected, at Pelham, the busiest station, and later at St Leonards Marina; the pier station was not staffed at all during 2020.

Foreshore Trust Combined Small & Events Grant Programme (responding to COVID-19 pandemic crisis) Round 3.

20. The chair of the charity in consultation with the protector and the chair of the grant advisory panel agreed to alter the scheduled (round 3) combined grant call to focus on the COVID-19 response. It was agreed that the grant call would primarily fund organisations to help our communities respond to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
21. This COVID focussed round had a quicker turnaround to award grant funding to local organisations that were responding to the challenges within our community presented by the current health pandemic. Applications were also considered from organisations which had been indirectly disadvantaged by the pandemic or which brought proposals to enhance social cohesion.
22. The main aim of this programme was to support smaller voluntary and community groups in carrying out activities and services supporting the immediate demands and needs of local residents to provide relief and support.
23. The fund also has ambitions to help with capacity building of smaller voluntary and community groups to strengthen their ability to carry out their work. Grants of up to £6,000 were awarded to voluntary and community groups providing support within Hastings. To release the funding as quickly as possible the call was open for less time than normal.
24. The awarded organisations and projects were:

| Applicant | Project | Grant Awarded |
|------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Hastings Furniture Service | Small Necessities Crockery, cutlery, kitchen utensils and personal hygiene necessities to previously homeless, resettled, families or individuals. | £5,200 |
| Counselling Plus Community | Supporting the Front Line: Therapy for Social Care Workers | £6,000 |
| Xtrax | A Space To Be - refurbish two rooms at Xtrax | £3,660 |
| Ore Community Land Trust | The Bridges steps pathways project | £1,995 |
| Hastings Community Transport | HCT COVID-19 response | £6,000 |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--|----------------|
| Bike Lab Hastings | Hastings Bike Lab – COVID-19 Response Programmes Hastings Bike Lab promotes cycling culture in Hastings & St Leonards through a free to access | £3,800 |
| Association of Carers | Carers virtual café project | £938 |
| Culture Shift CIC | Being Our Best Selves (BOBS) supporting disabled adults | £1,800 |
| Audioactive | SHIFT Hastings : Music Mentoring Project | £5,265 |
| Sweet & Dandy | Stade Saturdays concerts and events | £6,000 |
| Creative Space Science CIC | Space@Home providing space-themed science activity packs delivered through the local Trussell Trust food bank | £4,600 |
| | Total | £45,258 |

Cycle and Deck Chair Hire

25. During 20/21 FY summer season:

Due to COVID restrictions, the provision was delivered in 2020, but at a significantly reduced offer. Bookings moved to online group reservations only. Income and spend were minimal due to the limited service.

26. It was only possible to provide a total of 35 staffing hours, with only 8 bikes hired. Our request to trial the short-term use of one of the electric bikes by council staff in Muriel Matters for local work related journeys, was approved.

27. Due to restrictions, only one bike was utilised by the Asset Maintenance & Inspection Officer and deemed a success. The background heaters were installed to the cycle hire hut to avoid damp returning.

28. Permission to operate the service in 2021/22 was not sought due to the poor 2020 Summer season.

Bathing water quality

29. Blue flag achieved for 2020 at Marina, Seaside Award achieved for both Marina and Pelham

Town deal accelerated funding items

30. In July 2020 we were provided with £1m 'accelerated' funding via MHCLG as part of the towns fund allocation, this in addition to the £24.3m funding allocated for the projects listed in the Town Investment Plan, of Hastings town deal.
31. Of that £1m advance two initiatives were on Foreshore Trust land and/or affected Foreshore Trust assets.

- **The Source Courtyard**

32. £485,000 was allocated to The Source for phase 2 development of White Rock Baths, refurbishing and converting spaces adjacent to the courtyard space into 5 market style food/drink outlets. The Courtyard works completed in May 2021 and opened to the public in June 2021.
33. Subject to final approval from the Ministry for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, further town deal funding will allow for a lift will be installed in the coming months (planning permission in place) to enable accessible access to the courtyard.

- **Electric vehicle charge points**

34. In the Summer of 2020, the old faulty EV unit was replaced with 3 new ones and then in the Autumn there was a successful bid through the Town Deal Accelerated Fund to install a further 2 units here. The 5 units are all 7Kw chargers. This is the maximum that can be installed with the current supply in the car park.

Current financial year – deviations from agreed business plan:

35. The below paragraphs document the first half of this financial year, and specific impact of either the pandemic or funding initiatives launched by government.

Welcome Back Funding

36. Welcome Back Funding – was launched in April 2021. The funding allows local authorities to put additional measures in place to create and promote a safe environment for local trade and tourism, particularly in high streets as the economies open, as well as developing plans to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 on local economies.
37. Total funding allocation: £229,052 8. Funding timeline: spend can commence from the date of publication of the guidance (16 April 2021) to 31 March 2022

- **Welcome Back Marshals**

38. Over the summer Seafront Welcome Back Marshals helped with the flow of traffic in and out of the Rock-a-Nore car park to prevent build-up of vehicles and traffic in the surrounding area.
39. In addition to this it is hoped that a further Welcome Back marshal will add capacity to the Foreshore Team until March 2022, subject to approval from the contract manager, with the ambition to help to maintain the foreshore and provide a welcoming and attractive environment for visitors and residents during the 'shoulder' tourism seasons.
40. These roles are additional temporary staff resource and are to cover the extra visitors,

due to staycations and support COVID recovery.

- **Safe temporary placemaking and beautification**

41. Programme of public realm improvements/amination to support high street businesses to recover and encourage footfall into the town centres. This could include temporary events, pop-ups, art and beautification such as graffiti removal, murals etc. Work to take place between November – March in the town centres and seafront.

- **Public Wi-Fi network:** renewal of the existing free to access Wi-Fi network.

42. The network gives unlimited access to residents, visitors and businesses who are near to an antenna (hotspots in parts of the town centre and seafront) unlimited free access to a high speed WiFi network). More info can be found [here](#).

Lifeguards

43. Cabinet and charity committee agreed earlier this year to extend the RNLI contract to provide lifeguards at Hastings for a further three-year period, so until the end of the Summer 2023 season. It was noted in the reports that the performance of the RNLI lifeguards is to be commended, with eight lives saved, 14 people rescued, and nearly 14 000 face to face 'preventative actions' in the last two years alone. This is an incredible achievement, especially because the 2020 season was much curtailed by COVID as noted above.

44. Our lifeguard service operated as normal during the Summer of 2021, starting at the last weekend of May and running through to the last weekend of September, at all three lifeguard statins (Pelham, Pier, and St Leonards Marina)

Beach Access

45. A new fully accessible path has been constructed on Pelham beach for the 2021 season.

Cycle and Deck Chair Hire

46. Due to the performance of the service during 20/21 FY, the continuing impact of COVID response and backlog of business-as-usual activities, and the uncertainly regarding lockdown easing; the decision was made in May 2021 that there would be no cycle and deckchair hire this FY, though efforts were made to outsource this service temporarily.

47. Deckchairs were made available for Stade open space event organisers to utilise.

Fish Fairs

48. Because of ongoing COVID restrictions, the Midsummer Fish Fest, which usually takes place in late June, was not held in 2021. The Seafood & Wine Festival did take place over the weekend of 18th/19th September, albeit with some modifications in the light of COVID, including hand sanitising points at every entrance to the site, different entrance arrangements to minimise the impact of queueing, a simplified layout with fewer stalls and a one way system, more staff to clean tables, etc., an enhanced management presence specifically to ensure that at no time was the event overcrowded, and the removal of sides from the entertainment marquee to improve ventilation.

49. Although advance ticket sales were down around 90% on usual, there was good demand 'on the gate', particularly on the Saturday when over 2500 tickets were sold. The feedback from customers and traders has been overwhelmingly positive, with several new traders confirming their attendance next year. Some expenditure invoices are still outstanding, but it is expected that all direct costs associated with running the event will have been covered this year.

Small and Events Grants

50. Round 4 of the combined grants programme was awarded in April 2021 and would have normally been followed by another call in the summer (of 2021) for projects to be awarded in September. Given the income loss on the budget this second call was cancelled.

Large Grants Scheme

51. This scheme, although delayed in launch due to the pandemic had a successful call and organisations were awarded for funding for financial year 21/22 with activity commencing from April 2021.
52. The awards were agreed in principle for two more financial years, which we be contracted annually after the yearly budget approval.

Public Convenience Cleaning

53. Currently public toilets in Hastings are cleaned under the SHS contract. This contract is due to expire on 31st March 2022. With this in mind, the service is currently out for tender, with bids expected back in October 2021. As two of the town's major public toilets are on Foreshore Trust land, this will have a financial impact on the Foreshore Trust.
54. In December a report will be brought to both Cabinet and the Charity Committee with the outcome of the procurement exercise, with a view to obtaining approval to appoint the successful contractor.

Consultation

55. The views of this report will be sought from the Coastal Users Group and the Protector. When work starts on compiling the future business plan, a method of closer engagement in its development will be sought from the Coastal Users' Group, as outlined in the paper which went to the March 2020 committee, via the Foreshore Trust Compliance and Liaison Officer. This new post was created as a result of this 2020 paper to enable closer working with the GAP and CUG, and was recruited to during the autumn of 2020.
56. The Coastal Users' Group's comments will be contained in the minutes of their next meeting on 12th October.
57. The Protector's comments will be considered at the meeting of the Charity Committee on 18th October.

Timetable of Next Steps

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

| Action | Key milestone | Due date (provisional) | Responsible |
|---------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| Coastal Users Group | Seek coastal users group comments | 12.10.21 | Marketing and Major Projects manager |
| Charity Committee | Chair, protector and members of the charity committee adopt recommendations | 18.10.21 | Assistant Director, Regeneration and Culture |

Wards Affected

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

Policy Implications

Reading Ease Score: 36.5

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

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

Additional Information

Officer to Contact

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