

Report to: Charity Committee

Date of Meeting: 11 December 2023

Report Title: Proposal to extend the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) contract for beach lifeguard provision for a further five years

Report By: Aaron Woods
Coastal and Commercial Services Manager

Purpose of Report

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

Recommendation(s)

- 1. That HBC, as trustee of the Foreshore Charitable Trust, enters into a new five-year contract with the RNLI for provision of a beach lifeguard service in Hastings for the 2024 – 2028 (inclusive) seasons**
- 2. That authority is delegated to the Director of Place, or her nominee, to conclude the necessary legal agreements.**

Reasons for Recommendations

Because the RNLI has a proven track record of being able to provide a better service, at better value, than we can provide ourselves.

Background

1. Hastings Borough Council previously operated an 'in house' seasonal Lifeguard Service from 2000 until 2016. This service had a broad remit, developed over the years in response to risk assessments, changes in visitor habits and service review.
2. In 2017 the RNLI was awarded a contract to provide lifeguard services in Hastings for a one-year trial period, replacing the in-house service. The trial was successful, and in 2018 a contract was agreed for the RNLI to operate the lifeguard service in Hastings for a further three years.
3. In 2021 the RNLI provided beach lifeguard service was renewed again, and a contract was agreed for the RNLI to operate the lifeguard service in Hastings for further three years.
4. 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 landowner 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.
5. The RNLI also undertake all initial and ongoing training and provide the highest level of safety equipment.
6. They also ask for permission from the beach operator to fundraise and promote the Institution on the beach during the lifeguarded season.
7. The RNLI have a proven track record of providing a better value service than we could on a like for like basis, and the 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

8. Each year the RNLI provides a report of their operation in Hastings; the summary reports for the last three years are appended, with interactions categorised as follows:

Life Saved – if the lifeguard had not intervened, life would have been lost.

Rescue – where a lifeguard responds to a person at risk, and physically returns them to shore or transfers them to another craft.

Assistance – where a lifeguard aids a person in the sea who is at little risk, but if left, would be at risk later.

Major First Aid – where a lifeguard treats a patient who is at risk due to sickness or injury and has called in external assistance.

Preventative Action (PA) – an action conducted by the lifeguard team to prevent persons coming into contact with harm, including PA / Tannoy announcement, moving flags, displaying safety signage, interacting with and educating beach users.

9. In 2021 there were 45 incidents, involving a total of 45 people. No lifesaving intervention was needed, 7 people were rescued, 12 assisted, major first aid rendered to 6 people, minor first aid was given to 12 people. A further 16,870 face to face 'preventative actions' were carried out.
10. In 2022 there were 54 incidents, involving a total of 59 people. 1 life was saved, 5 people were rescued, 6 assisted, major first aid rendered to 8 people, minor first aid was given to 24 people. A further 56,076 face to face 'preventative actions' were carried out.
11. In 2023 there were 41 incidents, involving a total of 48 people. No lifesaving intervention was needed, no people required rescue, 16 were assisted, major first aid rendered to 5 people, minor first aid was given to 16 people. A further 26,680 face to face 'preventative actions' were carried out.
12. During the 3 years of the contract 140 incidents took place, with 152 people involved. The RNLI's actions saved 1 life, 12 people were rescued, 34 people were assisted, 19 people were given major first aid, and 52 people were given minor first aid. A total of 99,626 additional preventative actions took place to keep beach users safe.
13. In addition to the contracted work undertaken on the beach itself, the RNLI carried out educational visits to 234 schools and youth organisations. An estimated 30,000 young people were engaged with by water safety volunteers across the southeast region.
14. The above figures underscore the invaluable service provided by the RNLI and the benefit that their lifeguard provision brings.

The 2024 season and beyond

15. It is proposed that lifeguard provision for 2024 is maintained at its current level:
 - 3x lifeguards will operate at Pelham beach during peak season
 - 3x lifeguards will operate at Marina beach during peak season
 - 2x lifeguards will operate at Hastings Pier beach during peak season. Note – this site has a shorter peak season and may be closed at times when there are staffing pressures or a lack of demand.
16. 2024 peak season dates are to be confirmed, but based on the 2023 season this is expected to be 25/5/24 through to 29/9/24.
17. The contribution cost for 2023 was £49,725. This constitutes 58.8% of the total lifeguard seasonal wage bill for service provision at Hastings. The RNLI covers the

remaining 41.2% of the season wage bill cost, plus all additional costs including the training, kit and equipment.

18. If a contribution was required covering 100% of the seasonal wage bill, this would still only constitute roughly 40-50% of the total cost of running the service at Hastings.
19. The contribution for providing the service will increase over time between 2024 and 2028:
 - 2024: to be based on 2023 contribution plus RPI for calendar year plus 2.5%
 - 2025: to be based on 2024 contribution plus RPI for calendar year plus 2.5%
 - 2026: to be based on 2025 contribution plus RPI for calendar year plus 2.5%
 - 2027: to be based on 2026 contribution plus RPI for calendar year plus 2.5%
 - 2028: to be based on 2027 contribution plus RPI for calendar year plus 2.5%
20. For 2025 through 2028 the exact level of lifeguard provision will be determined as part of the ongoing review of the service, to ensure that the provision remains of a sufficient level.

Considerations

21. 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.
22. The RNLI pay all their lifeguards above the living wage.
23. The RNLI provide welfare and equipment accommodation at Pelham and Pier beach sites at no additional cost to us, and a very high standard of lifeguard equipment. As noted above, they also provide excellent training and specialist management support.
24. The RNLI have indicated that, given the level of investment they are providing, they would like to enter into a five-year agreement with us to provide our beach lifeguarding service. Such an agreement would provide them with the security to invest in the service provision long term and will aid in recruitment and staff retention. A five-year agreement also provides us with certainty of operation and reduces the risks that the trust is exposed to.
25. The RNLI, a national charity dedicated to lifesaving at sea, is an exemplar 'best practice' operator providing 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 better value 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.

26. It is therefore proposed that the RNLI be appointed to operate the Hastings lifeguarding service for the period 2024 to 2028 (inclusive).

Recommendation

27. That HBC, as trustee of the Foreshore Charitable Trust, enters into a new five-year contract with the RNLI for provision of a beach lifeguard service in Hastings for the 2024 – 2028 (inclusive) seasons
28. That authority is delegated to the Director of Place, or her nominee, to conclude the necessary legal agreements.

Wards Affected

Old Town, Castle, Central St. Leonards (Directly)
All others (Indirectly)

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

Appendix 1: RNLI End of Year Report Summary 2021
Appendix 2: RNLI End of Year Report Summary 2022
Appendix 3: RNLI End of Year Report Summary 2023

Officer to Contact

Aaron Woods
awoods@hastings.gov.uk