

REPORT OF CABINET

(Meeting held on 7 October 2015)

1. BEACH HUTS AT MILFORD ON SEA (WESTOVER) (REPORT ITEM 4) (MINUTE NO. 24)

The Cabinet has approved 4 key characteristics to be incorporated into the design of the 119 replacement beach huts to be constructed at Westover, Milford on Sea.

The consultants engaged to progress the replacement of the beach huts at Milford on Sea have developed a number of alternatives on 4 key design areas. These were subject to extensive consultation through the Council's website and a public engagement event at Milford Community Centre on 14 August, which was very well attended. It had been intended that the consultants would give 3 presentations to the public during that afternoon to explain the various options under consideration. In the event, demand had been so great that there had been 6 presentations. In all 355 questionnaire responses had been received to the consultation exercise. The forms had included the option for some free text as well as the standard tick box responses. All the responses had been analysed and, together with other factors, such as the environmental pressures that apply in this sensitive area, had been considered by the Beach Hut Board.

The Board recommended that the huts should be placed at the western end of the promenade where the vulnerability to damage from the sea was much less. This also opens up opportunities for improved public access to the beach and enhanced views. They concluded the huts should be constructed to allow the public to walk along the roof area – an “inhabited” roof. The use of this option allows the huts to be placed further back, which widens the lower promenade. Overall this option reduces the visibility of the huts and improves public views and accessibility. The Board concluded that the huts should have concrete frontages and coloured doors. In addition the access ramp at the western end of the promenade should curve around the pill box.

The projected cost, at £1,332,000, represents an increase of £73,000 against the original budget estimate but allows for a general upgrade of the area for public benefit.

The Cabinet was addressed by four public speakers who expressed varying concerns about various aspects of the proposed preferred options. The Parish Council however expressed appreciation for the work that had been done by this Council to find the best solution and concurred that the recommendations of the Beach Hut Board represented the best compromise.

Some of the concerns raised by the public speakers related to the lack of detail currently available about the proposals, as well as some technical concerns such as the need for ventilation to account for the use of small stoves within the huts. It was accepted that the report did not adequately reflect the equality and disability issues that would need to be taken into account, but these matters would be addressed more fully as work progressed towards the submission of the planning application. The beach hut owners' group have also asked that the proposed terms of the site licence for these huts should be reviewed.

The Cabinet is satisfied that the suggested preferred option represents the best balance between the competing needs and aspirations of the beach hut licence holders, local residents, visitors to the area and council taxpayers.

2. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN – PRE SPENDING REVIEW UPDATE (REPORT ITEM 5) (MINUTE NO. 25)

The Cabinet has approved the process for the continuing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan, having considered the latest update which now includes the draft resource plan for each portfolio, as attached as Appendices 1-6 of Item 5 considered by the Cabinet. The draft portfolio resource plans will be further reviewed to ensure that they will deliver the new Corporate Plan which will be published in draft in November 2015.

Although the Chancellor has recently made a number of statements that suggest changes to local government funding, such as the retention of Business Rates, current indications remain that the Council will face further reductions in Government funding, probably amounting to some 20% of the current base budget over the next 4 years, which will present increasing challenges to continue to deliver high quality services. A number of actions are being taken to reduce the overall budget requirement and actions to deliver savings of £1 million have already been identified, as set out in Appendix 8 to the report. Work on the budget will continue, with the outcome of the Government's spending review likely to be announced in December 2015 and the provisional Local Government Finance settlement in January 2016.

**Councillor B Rickman
CHAIRMAN**