

District Wide Beach Hut Association Meeting

Tuesday 26th July 2022 – 2PM -5PM

Attendees Present:

Lee Heley, Corporate Director, Project Delivery
Kieran Charles, Sports and Leisure Operations Manager
Yana Humphreys, Seafront Business Manager
Cllr. Alex Porter, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism
Melanie Whithead- Chair, Beach Hut Owners' Association of Walton
Hayley Hill- New chair for Frinton Beach Hut Association
Alan Stoker- Walton Beach Hut Association
Ray Lafferty- Chair, Clacton/Holland Beach Hut Association
Heather Burwood- Harwich & Dovercourt Beach Hut Association
Mandy Martin- Harwich & Dovercourt Beach Hut Association
Carol Ketchley- Brightlingsea Beach Hut Association
Sarah Chandler- Brightlingsea Beach Hut Association
Cydney Janes-Hendy, Administrator (Minutes)

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologises- Michael Carran

L.H: welcomed the group and members introduced themselves Explained that the group is here as part of the beach hut strategy review and to focus on the questionnaire and any suggestions for the future. Council officers are in listening mode.

K.C: Explained the timeline for the next steps needed to be taken. The pre consultation went out on 12th July and will close 11th August 2022, once complete TDC will take all considerations received and look to draft the strategy ready for October Cabinet. If draft agreed then it will be subject to 6 weeks consultation period with stakeholders. If everything has been adopted TDC will look to do BH specs for January 2023, looking to have all implement by 1st April.

Frinton: Ased if the consultation circulated will go to the BH Associations in advance of going to cabinet.

Walton: Needs to be proper consultation for BH owners. Is disappointed that hut owners were not notified individually about the publication of the questionnaire .This review directly affects all beach hut site licence holders and as such the Council should have consulted the main stakeholders in this process.

Beach hut associations: Felt customers should have all been written to ahead of this consultation.

It was suggested that the 6-week consultation after Cabinet to go out to beach hut licensees in writing.

Q.1 RENTING OF BEACH HUTS:

L.H: Talked through the questions in order to see the group's views on the questionnaire. There is consideration of issuing commercial licences for rentals.

Comments received from Walton Association:

- Individuals who rent out once in a while should stay as normal, those who rent out more than it should differ.
- BH rentals aren't always negative, there could be benefits from rentals in one area.
- Prior to 2022 the Council actively facilitated and promoted beach hut rentals under the same licence conditions.
- TDC should speak to those who rent out huts to see their views. Other Beach Hut associations concurred.

- Without rentals the huts hardly gets used- Beach hut rentals have not made huts unaffordable for ordinary users. Beach hut values have increased nationwide regardless of whether an area permits beach hut rentals or not. Beach hut rentals provide a more affordable way for more people to enjoy the use of huts.
- Each area needs to be looked at individually. Other beach hut associations concurred.
- The questionnaire takes a negative view of rentals.
- The use of the term 'commercial' letting seems to imply something much more corporate and large scale than the reality - huts are rented out on a very professional way, but mostly by individuals (definitely not big business), many of them local residents.
- The Council has not provided any evidence of beach hut rentals causing overcrowding.

LH: As previously discussed, the council's position (as the authority issuing the licence) is that hut rental is not permitted, and the Council has written to all hut licensees to set that out.

Comments received from Brightlingsea Association:

- Less of a commercial letting area and is a smaller scale
- Lots of rented huts where groups are having parties.
- TDC need to look at current practices of how beach huts are run.
- 10 days a year sounds reasonable for casual rentals of huts.
- Most of those who rent out aren't part of the association.
- Have huts owned by Brightlingsea Town council and would like to see a uniform of policy.
- Once the tide is in the huts are used more.

Comments received from Harwich Association:

- In a different situation to others. There are only one or two who rent out huts and don't use it for themselves, who are not part of the association.
- The association explains to those in their association that they cannot rent out there huts due to the backlash.
- There is a limit of 6 per hut and there is a curfew of 10pm

Comments received from Frinton Association:

- Have customers who are both for and against rentals of hut.
- If these huts came into TDC care then more local families have opportunity to use these huts.
- Some rentals of huts are overran with people with noise.
- Occasional renting is fine, such as 10 days a year.

Comments received from Clacton/Holland Association:

- Star point leased beach huts have verandas- Section A-B. Are TDC have to have a commercial licence if they were renting out this way?
- Propose to take more time on the consultation, do not want this to be rushed- all beach hut associations concurred.

L.H touched on the key points in each area and numerous points made in relation to rentals. If commercial licences are issued then the customers will need to have professional requirements.

Q2. OWNING BEACH HUTS (SHOULD THE COUNCIL IMPLEMENT A LICENCE TO ONE HOUSEHOLD)?

Comments received from Clacton/Holland Association: What does it mean by stakeholder?

As a local authority we use that term in a broad sense, we do not mean just someone with a financial stake. Difficult for one licence if there is a big family.

Y.H we only one name addressed to one address, as it's determined to be a solicitor.

There has been a lot of issues with customers with probate. – need to look into this separately.

Comments received from Walton Association:

- There will be issues with unmarried couples who aren't on the licence holder on TDC system.
- There's no problem with customers renting out more than one hut. Would not introduce this rule at Walton.

Comments received from Frinton Association: Can there be something such as a disclaimer on the transfer form to let customers know about this?

Comments received from Brightlingsea Association: View on this is perfectly reasonable

Comments received from Harwich Association: those who have bought their next hut before selling their current one should be taken into consideration, as they own two huts for a short period of time but don't intend to own two huts.

Q3&4. BEACH HUT SPECIFICATION'S & ADAPTATIONS:

Comments received from Brightlingsea Association:

- Around 20% meet specifications.
- Because there has been no checks there has been no prevention of the conditions.
- The specs are dated, there could be more diverse specs for different areas. This needs to be looked into further.
- There is not as an issue with adaptations- could generate income with those who do have adaptations. The only issue is the uneven land. To get this all even should be done by TDC.
- The patios are the issues.
- There is never any checks done on these huts to check they meet specs. Brightlingsea aren't active with checking this.

Comments received from Harwich & Dovercourt:

- Don't think the specs for Harwich should be changed.
- Taking huts off spec with double doors has shown that huts aren't being vandalised as much as normal huts from TDC specs.
- Most customers want double doors on their huts.
- Against the cladding on the huts
- Haven't got issues with the adaptations as they tell owners that those who have patio are low enough to go over with grass cutters
- The only issue they have with adaptations are with TDC huts, as the warden's huts have the balcony.

Comments received from Frinton Association:

- Most hut owners respect the rules of specs and conditions. There are some owners that have received enforcement notices which hasn't been followed through with.
- It depends on the surrounding areas and the licence fee pricing.
- Who is liable if there is an issue outside the hut due to uneven areas?

Comments received from Walton Association:

- The specifications on the roofs should stay.
- Would like to see the front of huts with shutters, providing it doesn't interfere with neighbours.

- There shouldn't be any adaptations, however those balcony's already situated is not an option for taking down. The balconies should be made to the specifications.
- Should charge for the extra plot to the extra adaptations.

Q5. MONITORING OF BEACH HUT LICENCE CONDITIONS & COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT:

Comments received from Walton Association:

- If there are staff with more authority for younger members of staff to speak to then more customers can be dealt with.
- This has to be done by the council not the beach hut association.

Comments received from Brightlingsea Association:

- Enforcement has to be done by the council, not the association, need to hold people to these specs in place.
- Pointless of the strategy if there is no enforcement.

Comments received from Clacton Association:

- Have got community guard which is paid for, which is security.

Comments received from Frinton Association:

- Did offer to go halves with TDC to have people monitoring in the summer.
- Those in beach patrol needs to gain more info on the byelaws and someone to support younger staff member.

Beach hut associations concurred the need to be monitored through the whole year.

Q.6 AN IMPROVED DIGITAL SERVICE FOR LICENCE HOLDERS:

Opportunity by TDC to digitalise communications to run quicker. Do owners want more of an ownership of their information and the information they need to provide us. The website can be sued as more of a point of call.

Comments received from Walton Association: Would be good to have a site to have updates such as changes of huts being transferred.

Comments received from Frinton Association: Maybe worth having individual websites for each site or sharing data. – Happy to work with TDC on this.

Comments received from Harwich & Dovercourt Association: Already sort of do this with a member's only page on FB to help with the admin side.

Q.7 BUILDING NEW BEACH HUTS:

Comments received from Walton Association: There are empty plots from TDC.

Comments received from Clacton Association: Suggests TDC needs to sort out the current huts first and then to look further into selling more huts for the future. The specs and conditions need to be sorted first.

Comments received from Harwich & Dovercourt Association:

- There has been no customers using the green/blue huts from the TDC hut
- Suggests that TDC shouldn't even do this
- Put beach huts on the concrete bases and sell these huts.

Comments received from Frinton Association: questioned TDC empty plots.

L.H Thanked attendees and closed the meeting.