

Agenda Item

Executive Board

30 January 2008

Mark Reilly



Outsourcing of Beach Lifeguard Service

Summary

This report seeks approval to outsource the beach lifeguard service to the RNLI beach lifeguard services. Since 2001 RNLI lifeguards have been patrolling beaches in the south west of England. They have a presence throughout Cornwall and Devon, including Sandy Bay, and Lyme Regis in Dorset. The RNLI lifeguard service has an excellent reputation for its lifeguard role. It is the largest provider of lifeguard services in the UK. It provides a service in cooperation with the local authority, not on a commercial basis. The Council would have to provide the funding equivalent to the season wages of the lifeguards and sites for on-beach facilities. The cost to the Council would be the salary cost already built into the budget, but the Council would not have to find capital funding for the equipment and machinery required by the lifeguards; this will produce a significant saving for the Council. The RNLI has a proven track record of working with volunteer groups and would be happy to work with existing groups in Exmouth. The consequence of outsourcing the service will be to free up the Beach safety Officer to concentrate on beach management.

Recommendation

1. That authority is granted to the Head of Street Scene Services to enter into an agreement with the RNLI lifeguard service to provide the life guard service at Exmouth commencing from April 2008 for a minimum period of five years.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

East Devon District Council is currently providing a quality beach lifeguarding service in Exmouth (service is an approved training centre for the Royal Lifesaving Society and all lifeguards are National Beach Lifeguard trained) at a revenue cost of £11,150 approximately. The beach lifeguarding service will require capital outlay for the financial year 08/09 to replace ageing lifesaving equipment. Further to this the revenues budget will require increase to compensate for job evaluation salaries increases. The service will require further investment if it is to continue in its current vein. If this investment is not forthcoming, other methods of service delivery must be investigated. The RNLI lifeguard service has a proven track record of delivery and has a presence throughout the South West. The RNLI would be able to provide the same quality lifeguarding service on the current revenue budget whilst absorbing capital costs for renewed equipment. The introduction of the RNLI lifeguard service will allow the Beach Safety Officer to be better utilised in beach and foreshore management for the whole district.

b) Alternative Options

1. Disband the current beach lifeguarding service without replacement (potential for bad press and public relations). Redeploy existing capital and revenue resources into Beach Wardens as part of a Beach Management Plan.
2. Continue to provide a quality in-house beach lifeguard service which will require increased capital and revenue investment for 08/09.
3. Increase in-house beach lifeguard service to cover a wider area in Exmouth or even East Devon as a whole.

c) Risk Considerations

Reduction or removal of the current quality lifeguard service may result in bad press and public relations. Furthermore although there is no statutory duty to provide a beach lifeguarding service, East Devon District Council could be open to a civil action should a serious injury or death result from removal of beach lifeguards.

East Devon District Council has a duty of care to the public to ensure that any beach lifeguarding service provided is safe and adheres to all relevant national standards.

If the service is outsourced, East Devon District Council will have less control over the daily operations, but as the beach owner/operator will still retain liability for the lifeguarding services actions.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

Existing budget for lifeguard provision is £11,150 + on costs. This budget would require additional input for 08/09 to maintain existing cover as well as the addition of capital funding for replacement vehicle (quad bike £8,000 08/09, jet ski £8,000 09/10). The RNLI would deliver the service for the same revenue funding but would cover the capital funding, thus presenting a saving to the Council.

e) Date for Review of Decision

January 2013

1 Main Body of the Report

East Devon District Council has provided a quality beach lifeguarding service in Exmouth (service is an approved training centre for the Royal Lifesaving Society and all lifeguards are National Beach Lifeguard trained) since 2000. The service was started following recommendations from the South West Beach Safety Committee and local stakeholders. In subsequent years the service was expanded to cover Sidmouth beaches. During the 2004 service prioritisation the beach lifeguard service was removed from Sidmouth and reduced in Exmouth.

The current service provides a high quality beach lifeguard across Exmouth beach (Maer Rocks) with limited resources. The beach lifeguard service is delivered seven days a week with the provision of two lifeguards on any one day, a lifesaving jet ski, beach patrol quad bike and inshore inflatable. The service is based in a small lifeguarding hut at Maer Rocks and is in place from the end of May to the beginning of September from 10:30am until 5:30pm daily.

To maintain the current level of service provision the beach lifeguarding service will require capital outlay for the financial year 08/09 to replace ageing fleet. Further to this the revenues budget will require increase to compensate for job evaluation salaries inflation. It is suggested that a further £6000 for salaries and £8000 for capital items will be required for the financial year 08/09. With further increases required in successive years in line with inflation.

This report recommends that outsourcing the beach lifeguard service to the RNLI lifeguard service be considered as a method of providing a continued lifeguard presence whilst avoiding capital outlay for specialised equipment. It is important to realise that outsourcing will not negate the need for providing a beach safety budget and that a fee or amount for salaries will need to be paid to the external contractor. This amount is likely to continue to increase year on year in line with the RPI%.

Preliminary research has suggested that the RNLI would be able to provide the required outsourced lifeguarding service (as they do with many Local Authorities). The RNLI have initially indicated that they would provide two lifeguards with a third during the peak season (8 weeks duration) and all relevant lifesaving equipment and vehicles for a service cost of £11,500 plus on costs and £1000 miscellaneous items. This cost would be subject to an annual increase in line with the RPI% and would be subject to a service agreement contract of duration not less than five years.

The RNLI would provide and fund:

- Training for all skill levels
- A complete supervision and management service
- Independent insurance coverage for the service provided
- All equipment including maintenance and operating costs
- Community engagement and education programmes
- A comprehensive statistical recording and analysis process
- On beach and infra-structure support facilities.

The RNLI will work with existing volunteer groups working on Exmouth beach and this is something we would need to work closely with the RNLI to ensure a smooth and effective introduction and working arrangements.

The RNLI could provide lifeguarding cover for the 2008 season provided a service contract is signed early in the New Year.

Legal Implications

Retaining liability for outsourced lifeguard service whilst losing control over their daily operations – legal to comment.

There are no apparent legal implications requiring comment on this report. It is understood that there are no employment issues involved.

Financial Implications

The financial implications are included in the report.

Background Papers

- N/A

Mark Reilly – Head of Streetscene
Karime Hassan – Corporate Director