

Policy Development Committee

31st July 2017

Review of deckchair pricing policy

For Recommendation

Briefholder(s)

Councillor R Kosier - Briefholder for Tourism, Culture and Harbour

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

M Hamilton, Strategic Director

Report Author:

N Thornley, Head of Economy, Leisure & Tourism

Statutory Authority:

Local Government Act 1972

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the public consultation results regarding the policy of providing free deckchairs and half price windbreaks for residents of Weymouth and Portland aged 60 and over.

Officer Recommendations

2. That the results of the public consultation carried out on proposed changes to the current deckchair pricing policy be noted.
3. That the existing policy of providing free deckchairs and half price windbreaks for older Borough residents be continued.

Reason for Decision

4. Earlier this year, the Committee considered a report to review the current policy of providing free deckchairs and half price deckchairs on Weymouth seafront to older residents living in the Borough. This policy had not been reviewed since its introduction 30 years ago. Members agreed to carry out a public consultation on proposed changes to the policy. This was carried out in May/June on dorsetforyou.
5. The consultation results are presented at Appendix A. There were a total of 370 respondents with 81% supporting a continuation of the current policy. 75% of respondents did not support any increase in income from changing the policy being used to provide free or subsidised swimming for disabled people at Weymouth Swimming Pool and Fitness Centre.

6. 85% of respondents were aged 55 plus and 53% were aged 65 plus. The results of the consultation clearly demonstrated that the current scheme is highly valued by residents and therefore they are keen for it to be retained. Almost all respondents added a comment as part of their response. These have not been added to this report given the number of pages these cover (8 pages of A3) but can be made available if required.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

7. Members have recognised the need to review the policy of providing free use of deckchairs and half price wind breaks to Borough residents aged 60 and over. A working group set up by this Committee looked at the possibility of ending this policy in order to potentially generate £5000 - £7000 which could be used to support another council function such as providing free swimming for disabled people at Weymouth Swimming Pool.
8. When considering this policy earlier in the year, Members noted that:
 - The policy was established for 'pensioners' but the age that people become pensioners is now variable. People now do not receive their pensions until the age of 65 at a minimum. Some of those who have retired enjoy high levels of disposable income and some have second homes in the Borough. A deckchair costs £2.20 to hire for a full or part day.
 - There is no obvious health benefit from providing free deckchairs.
 - There has been confusion because the qualifying criteria for a free deckchair pass requires residency of the Borough. Some residents in Chickerell and Lanehouse qualify while their neighbours do not.
 - The council used to use the Weymouth and Portland free bus pass as the qualifying criteria for a free deck chair pass. However, the bus pass scheme has now changed and the council is now required to carry out its own tests and issue its own passes leading to a cost of around £1500 per annum in staff time and administration costs.
 - The deckchair operation helps towards the costs of managing Weymouth's Blue Flag beach. However, 30% of deckchairs are given out as free, at peak times, and it is felt that an improved financial performance for the council is now required given the pressure on local government funding and the costs of managing the beach.
9. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of this review and is presented at Appendix B. This has noted that a change to the current age threshold could be considered to bring this in line with other age threshold changes. However, given the strong view from the consultation to keep the policy as it is – of benefit to those aged 60 and over – it is proposed that no change is made. It will however be important to review this policy again in 5 years' time to ensure that it is still up-to-date and viable.

Implications

Corporate Plan

10. Empowering Thriving and Inclusive Communities - Building strong inclusive and sustainable communities that empower local people to influence and provide the services that matter most to them.
11. The population in Weymouth and Portland is becoming increasingly elderly as residents live longer and because many people who come to live in the area are close to retirement age.

Financial

12. The deckchair operation is vulnerable to weather conditions annually but the last 4 years have shown net profits of:

2013/14 - £25,532

2014/15 - £25,567

2015/16 - £6,501 (impacts of Job Evaluation coupled with extremely poor weather during "peak" season)

2016/17 - £22,519

The cost of administering the subsidy scheme annually is approximately estimated £750. The current printing expenditure is £1,055 for 4,250 passes which are in circulation.

13. It is estimated that if all those who enjoy a free deckchair pay the standard £2.20 then an additional £5000-£6000 would be generated.

Equalities

14. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken on the current scheme (Appendix B) to ensure that the extent of the dependencies and impacts are known.

The main impact relates to people that are aged 60 and over and residents of the Borough who have been issued a pass. Any decision to increase the age to 60 would not affect the validity of any passes already in circulation.

Affordability of the deckchair hire may be an issue for some wishing to use the service; however there is alternative free public seating available on and around the seafront offered by the Council.

There is also a wide range of seating options provided by the private sector (eating out and seating areas) along the seafront.

Risk Management (including Health & Safety)

15. The operation of the deck chair hire service has a full risk assessment together with adopted operational procedures to mitigate against risk.

Consultation and Engagement

- 16 A consultation exercise was undertaken by the Consultation Officer in line with Council policy throughout May and June 2017, a copy of the Consultation and subsequent results are included at Appendix A & B

Appendices

Appendix A. Consultation Results Overview

Appendix B. Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implication have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Report Authors: Nick Thornley, Kevin Good and Simon King

Telephone: 01305 252474

Email: NThornley@dorset.gov.uk