

FINDINGS PACK SUPPLEMENT
Scrutiny on the Provision of Beach Huts in
the Borough
Guidance on the Bench Marking Analysis
(Section V of the Findings Pack)
Operations, Environmental Services and Norse
Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel Scrutiny and
Policy Development Panel

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OPERATIONS, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND NORSE SCRUTINY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Beach Hut Scrutiny Review

Analysis of Beach Hut

Benchmarking Surveys Background

In July 2016 the Operations, Environmental Services and Norse Scrutiny and Policy Development Panel (“Operations Scrutiny Panel”), at the request of Councillor Briggs, commenced a review of the provision of Beach Huts in the Borough. A benchmarking survey was undertaken to support this review (Appendix B)

The initial review was completed and recommended for approval by the Scrutiny Board in February 2017. Although the Panel considered the income received from Beach Huts and noticed from the survey that there appeared to be opportunities to maximise income from Beach Huts, it did not consider fees and charges in detail. The Recommendations of the Panel were adopted by the Scrutiny Board on 4 April. The recommendations of the Board in relation to this review have not yet been considered by the Cabinet.

On 22 February, the Council agreed to increase the prices for services, which included changes to the fees and charges relating to Beach Huts charges. Complaints were received in response to the changes to the Beach Hut fees and Charges and the Cabinet Lead, under delegated powers, reduced the transfer fee and agreed that the fees, could in some circumstances, be paid by instalments.

In view of the level of the complaints and at the request of some of Hayling Island ward Councillors, the Scrutiny Board on 27 June 2017 requested the Operations Scrutiny Panel to consider the issues raised in these complaints. To aid the Panel the benchmarking survey has been updated (Appendix A) and this analysis of these surveys has been prepared.

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Section B

Benchmarking Surveys Methodology

Initial benchmarking Survey

The initial benchmarking survey (“Initial survey”) was intended to supply details on:

- Beach Hut services provided by other Councils
- The forms of letting arrangements adopted by other Councils
- Fees and charges adopted by other Councils

The survey was never intended to be a comprehensive examination of fees and charges levied by local authorities.

For the purposes of the survey “Councils” included District and Unitary Councils. Beach huts or beach hut sites let by the private sector e.g. West Wittering were excluded

The survey was undertaken by an internet search of Council web sites. In some cases, where time permitted, the Councils were contacted to clarify details set out on their web site. Time constraints would not allow a detailed survey so the Councils included were the above details could easily be found on their website. A Council was not included if details of their beach hut service could not be found. Councils included had to supply at least one of the details (e.g. Southend on Sea Council only supplied details of its letting arrangements) set out above and provided a “like for like” service. In the case of Lewis Council, the beach huts formed part of the local football ground and did not appear to be used in the same way as other beach huts. It was therefore decided to exclude this Council on the grounds that the survey would not be comparing “like for like”.

The main sample included the following Councils on the south coast:

- Adur
- Arun
- Bournemouth
- Brighton and Hove
- Christchurch
- East Devon
- Eastbourne
- Fareham
- Gosport
- Hastings
- Havant
- Isle of Wight
- New Forest
- Poole

- Portsmouth
- Teinbridge
- Tendring
- Torbay
- Worthing

The sample was widened to include a random selection of Councils not on the south coast. The Councils were picked on a random search on a website browser for Councils that provided beach huts/sites for hire. The Councils included in this part of the survey were:

- Canterbury
- Colchester
- East Devon
- East Lindsey
- Rother
- Southend on Sea
- Swale
- Torridge
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Worthing

The survey was undertaken and completed in August 2016

Update Survey

A further survey to update the initial survey was undertaken and completed in July 2017. The main purpose of this survey was to update details on the fees and charges set by each Council included in the initial survey. The details were obtained by viewing the site web sites of each Council and where possible contacting the Council to clarify these details.

Although the survey includes Council which offer a range of beach huts, this survey only includes details of charges for beach huts without water, gas or electricity supplied directly to the huts. None of the beach huts provide car parking permits as part of the licence. This survey is attached as Appendix A.

Weaknesses in the two Surveys

It is acknowledged that the major weakness in this form of survey is that the details depend upon the clarity and accuracy of the web sites viewed e.g. the Isle of Wight Council website where there is a discrepancy between the prices book and other details found on the website.

Analysis Methodology

This analysis attempts to compare a “Like for like” service provide by District and Unitary Councils. Therefore, the more luxurious chalets/huts provided by Councils in the intial survey have been excluded from this analysis

The analysis has been divided into the following three sections:

- (a) Annual Plot Hire Fees;
- (b) Plot Transfer Fees; and
- (c) Annual Hut Hire Fees

Many of the Councils surveyed had a wide range of prices for the different services depending upon a number of factors such as site location, residency etc. To enable a meaningful comparison, it has been decided to compare the maximum and minimum fees charged for each service.

Only prices for beach huts have been compared. Although the initial survey included East Lindsey Council, this Council only provided Beach Chalets and has not therefore been included in this analysis. Similarly, South end on Sea has been excluded from the analysis as it only supplied details of its letting arrangements.

A comparison has not be made of weekly or daily lets as these are not included in HBC’s current prices book.

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