



SOUTHWOLD HARBOUR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 14 July 2022

Subject	Caravan Site Update
Supporting Officer	Kerry Blair Head of Operations Kerry.blair@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	Southwold

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

To provide members with an update on the consultation and implementation of changes to the Southwold Caravan site

Recommendation:

That the Harbour Management Committee (HMC):

- Note the updates.

Impact Assessment

Governance:

Part of the Southwold Caravan Site is located within the Harbour Undertaking as set out in the 1933 Harbour Order. Therefore the HMC is required to make recommendations relating to changes in this location.

Environmental:

Any redevelopment of the Caravan Site could have an impact on the ecology of the area. In addition, consideration will need to be given to the sustainability of any changes made. This report does not contain any matters for decision at this stage, but HMC members will need to consider the results of any environmental surveys before making any recommendations in the future.

Equalities and Diversity

This report does not ask HMC members to take any decisions that may have an impact on E&D. However any changes that are proposed for the site – in particular changes to leases, fees and charges and license arrangements will need to be subject to an E&D impact assessment.

Financial:

No impacts

Legal:

No impacts

Risk:

None

Harbour Business Plan Priorities

To be added when the plan is in place.

East Suffolk Council Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the themes of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal:		
T01	Growing our Economy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	<p>In 2019, East Suffolk Council employed an external consultant to carry out a review of Southwold Caravan and Camping Site, and to make recommendations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve service provision – mainly through the installation of water and power provision to each site. • Modernise the site – in a way that is sensitive to local wishes • Present options for changing the lease and license arrangements between the council and static caravan owners.
1.2	The report has been shared with Southwold Caravan Owners Association (SCOA) – who have carried out a survey of their members and provided a detailed response to the proposals in the report.
1.3	Further consultation is now required with members on the findings of the survey and the response of members.
1.4	It is proposed that the plans for the redevelopment of the site are reviewed by the General Harbour manager – and updated if necessary. This work, it is proposed, is to be overseen by the Caravan Site Working Group – reporting into the HMC.

2 Current position	
2.1	<p>The Rural Solutions report made the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the register of all caravans by manufacturer, date of manufacture / age, type, and size, together with insurance details. The intention is to promote the use of newer caravans to improve both appearance and compliance. • Review of licence agreements for all static owners in line with BH&HPA guidelines. Specifically – to offer longer period of tenure than the current annual license model

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the policy of caravan replacement / exchange for older inappropriate units / notification of implementation upon redevelopment. This is in support of the first objective. • Proactive approach to supplier agreements with a number of preferred caravan manufacturers, for example Pemberton, ABI, Willerby, and or second-hand unit provision. This brokerage process to be managed by the Site management. • Implementation of a new licence agreement policy defining the commission terms for the private sale of caravans – in support of the objective above. • Improved service provision across the site including electrical, water and sewage, in particular to those caravans currently on individual separate electrical supplies. • Review of all current pitch spacing and the site layout, so as to consider potential redevelopment spacing criteria, roadways etc. • Improvements to service standards: that management should seek to implement a series of KPI's against which to analyse the park performance objectively, including touring pitch occupation performance, average unit rates, revenue per available unit, static pitch churn rates, commissions levels (new, second hand etc), yearly competitor pitch rate comparisons etc.
2.2	In early 2022, the council's Head of Operations attended SCOAs AGM to present a summary of the proposals to members.
2.3	On the basis of this proposal and the Rural Solutions report – that was circulated in advance of the meeting – SCOA conducted a survey of members on the proposals contained within the report.
2.4	The take up of the survey – which covered 52 points -was good, and member engagement is high on this issue.
2.5	<p>The report produced by SCOA on the back of the survey contained a number of points – both recommendations and issues for consideration. In summary, these included responses on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The restrictions and constraints offered by the current site. The size of pitches and the need to ensure a quality outlook for customers. • The phasing of the works – proposed over three years – and the impact on customers. • The assumptions on fees – and comments on the 'comparables' on which the report is based. • The desirability of additional services (bar, leisure facilities, play areas) for existing customers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments on the need to retain the character of the existing site • Comments on how to ensure that a fair price is charged through metering of electricity. • Use of materials – such as concrete for hardstanding – and their environmental and aesthetic impact. • Opposition to the proposal in the RS report that site management act as a ‘broker’ for new caravan sales – as is standard practise elsewhere. • Issues relating to environmental sustainability. <p>This is not an exhaustive list but provides a flavour of the issues raised within the SCOA report.</p>
2.6	<p>The SCOA report finishes with a helpful ‘main recommendation’:</p> <p><i>“That the HMC engage in consultation and negotiation with the SCOA committee as a matter of urgency. We would strongly recommend that the Caravan Working Party of the HMC has an agreed schedule of dates with a starting date of August 2022. The Chair of SCOA should attend every Caravan Working Party meeting as part of its consultation remit to show a commitment to openness and transparency.</i></p> <p><i>A firm way forward underpinned with a robust business plan should be in place by December 2022.</i></p> <p><i>SCOA members recommendations, contained within this document must form the basis of the proposed way forward and must take into account the uncertainties experienced by caravan owners over the past 10 years.”</i></p>

3 How to address current situation

3.1	The HMC values the contribution that SCOA has made through the conducting of the survey and the associated report.
3.2	In order to progress the future redevelopment, the following is proposed:
3.3	That SCOAs recommendation to be the main body for consultation is agreed by the HMC.
3.4	That the Caravan Site Working Group is the body responsible for taking forward the development plans, with the support of the Southwold Harbour General Manager and the council’s Asset Management team.
3.5	That a target of December 2022 for the development of a business plan should be agreed by the HMC.
3.6	That the SCOA recommendation that the comments in their report form the basis of the way forward is noted – but recognising that the HMC may adopt a course of action that is not one of the recommendations set out in the report.

4 Reason for recommendation

4.1	The HMC are asked to approve the above recommendations as basis for open and transparent discussion with caravan owners on the future development of the site.
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Appendices

Appendices:
None

Background reference papers:
None