



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>RNLI Beach Lifeguard Service Provision 2024</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	Leisure & Development Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	21 November 2023
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	For Decision
<b>For discussion In Committee</b>	No

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets Resilient, Healthy and Engaging Communities
Outcome	
Lead Officer	Coast & Countryside Manager

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	£166,508 to £177,153 plus VAT
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES</b>
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	1439-62370
Staffing Costs	Officer time as liaison

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>YES/NO</b>

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**The purpose of this report is to ask Members to consider options for adjustment in the provision of Beach Lifeguarding services to Council from RNLI for 2024. In addition, Officers are requesting Elected Members' approval to alter the hours of service provision from 11:00am to 7:00pm to 10.00am to 6:00pm.**

## **2.0 Background**

At the March 2022 Leisure and Development Committee Meeting, Elected Members approved the renewal of the contract with RNLI to provide beach lifeguarding services for a further five-year period from April 2022 through to March 2027. This was based on a predicted increase per annum for the period of the contract capped at 2%, and the provision made to revert to Council if there is a requirement to increase on 2%.

At the Full Council Meeting on 4 April 2023, Elected Members approved a payment of £163,615 to RNLI for Beach Lifeguard Services for the 2023 season.

Inflationary pressures continue to be a major issue for the provision of this service. The average for the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the period October 22 to September 23 is 9%. The cost of provision to the RNLI for the services has been communicated to Council as being well above the 2% increase provided for in the Council Report in March 2022. Due to the excessive variance, between what was agreed at Council and the average rates of inflation, Council Officers and Officers from RNLI have met to discuss options for mitigating the increase in costs, whilst continuing to provide an effective and efficient service.

## **3.0 Service Provision**

The RNLI has delivered beach lifeguard services on behalf of Council since 2010. Initially this was for Coleraine Borough Council and Limavady Borough Council. In December 2015 Council agreed to a new agreement between Causeway Coast & Glens Council and RNLI for the following beaches:

- Benone Strand
- Downhill Strand
- Castlerock
- Portrush West
- Portrush East
- Whiterocks
- Ballycastle

As part of the agreement RNLI is responsible for the following elements;

1. Recruitment, selection, and training of lifeguards.
2. Provision of Beach Lifeguard Units and associated shore works.
3. Provision of all surf rescue equipment including vehicles and watercraft.
4. Undertaking of beach risk assessments for lifeguard service provision.

In addition, the service also provides;

1. Advice and support to Council with respect to beach and coastal events, beach safety signage and public rescue equipment.
2. Beach safety annual reviews for each site.
3. Delivery of an education programme where possible.

The service is operational during;

- Easter (selected beaches only).
- Weekends and Bank Holidays in May and June (All beaches).
- Daily from late June – early September (All beaches).

Beach lifeguard service provision has been from 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. It is proposed to adjust the hours of service to 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. for the 2024 season.

Since 2020 beaches have seen increasing numbers of visitors and a wider range of activities both on and off the water, especially during the summer months. The service provided by RNLI is invaluable in support of Council's ongoing approach to beach management to ensure the public can enjoy a safe environment and have a quality experience.

#### **4.0 Options**

In light of the extraordinary high levels of inflation, and after discussion with RNLI Officers, options for 2024 are presented below for Members consideration.

##### Option 1

To provide the same level of service as per 2023 with adjustments for the Easter Bank Holiday falling in March. The cost to Council would increase from £163,315 to **£177,153**.

##### Option 2

Reduce the service provision slightly.

- The summer service start to be moved from 22 June 24 to 29 June 24.
- Easter bank holiday (29 March 24 to 07 April 24), total cost to Council **£166,508**.

Therefore Option 2 is considered the most viable option as it retains a service at key times with a cost increase of 2%.

#### **5.0 Request from RNLI for a change in times of service**

Since 2010, the beach lifeguard service provision has been from 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. Elsewhere in Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom provision is from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. RNLI has conducted a statistical analysis of incidents on Council managed beaches which would support the adjustment of the service hours to 10.00 a.m. to 6 p.m. It would be appropriate for Council to mirror these timings with the seasonal Beach Ranger service.

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee recommends to Council the approval of Option 2 with a contribution to the RNLI of £166,508 for the 2024 season, along with approval of a change in hours of operation of the beach lifeguard service from 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. from 2024.