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REPORT TO: CABINET MEMBER – LEISURE AND TOURISM

DATE: 25th March 2009

SUBJECT: Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) Beach Lifeguard Partnership Proposal

WARDS AFFECTED: Cambridge, Ainsdale, Harington, Ravenmeols, Blundellsands, Church

REPORT OF: Graham Bayliss, Leisure Director

CONTACT OFFICER: Dave McAleavy, Head of Coast and Countryside
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**EXEMPT/
CONFIDENTIAL:**

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

The report describes a proposal for the development of a partnership approach to managing beach safety on the Sefton Coast between Sefton Council and the RNLI. Members will be aware that the Leisure Services Department operate a Beach Lifeguard service at Southport, Ainsdale and Crosby.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

1. To authorise Officers to progress discussions with the RNLI, undertake an assessment of personnel and procurement issues, carry out risk assessments and investigate the financial implications of an RNLI partnership with Sefton Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Officers progress discussion with the RNLI to consider developing a partnership approach to delivering and improving beach safety in Sefton.
2. That following discussion with the Legal and Personnel Directors and the RNLI, officers report back to the Cabinet Member on the contractual and financial implications of the proposal.

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: No

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Following expiry of the call in period.

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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

Maintaining the existing service restricts the Council's ability to improve the beach safety service and will restrict investment in beach safety.

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget/Policy Framework: None

Financial:

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2006/ 2007 £	2007/ 2008 £	2008/ 2009 £	2009/ 2010 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Revenue Contribution to Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? YES				
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal:

Risk Assessment: A risk assessment will be developed as part of discussions with RNLI

Asset Management:**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS:**

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CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1.	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2.	Creating Safe Communities	√		
3.	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
4.	Improving Health and Well-Being	√		
5.	Environmental Sustainability		√	
6.	Creating Inclusive Communities		√	
7.	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8.	Children and Young People	√		

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT:

1. The RNLI submission to Sefton Council for the provision of a Lifeguard Service

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (a registered charity) currently provides a 24/7 on call lifeboat service to cover search and rescue requirements to 100 nautical miles out from the coast of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. The RNLI also provides beach lifeguard services on many of beaches in the South, East, & West of England and Wales. More recently this has expanded to beaches in other parts of the country and discussions are taking place with Councils in the North East and Wales. The RNLI currently provide Beach Lifeguard services in the following areas: Bournemouth, Poole, Weymouth, Exmouth, South Hams, Caradon, Carrick, Kerrier, Penwith, Restormel, North Cornwall, Torridge, North Devon, North Norfolk, Great Yarmouth and Pembrokeshire.
- 1.2 The RNLI Lifeguards also provide beach safety education on a national basis through a number of well promoted programmes and there is a significant bank of resources to support educational work.
- 1.3 The RNLI are discussing partnerships with a number of Councils in the north of England and have expressed a strong desire to work with Sefton Council. The RNLI have submitted a proposal to Sefton Council based on risk assessments and existing current provision on the Sefton Coast.
- 1.4 This type of service historically has been delivered by a local authority, as in the case of Sefton, or recently, through a contract with the RNLI Lifeguard Service. There is no private supplier market for this type of specialist service.
- 1.5 The RNLI acknowledges and aims to follow the objectives of local authority partners:
 - To provide the public with a safe and enjoyable beach experience
 - To ensure that all lifeguard personnel are appropriately trained and qualified and that all lifeguard services provided are cost effective; comply with widely accepted service industry standards and best practice; and are within all relevant requirements prescribed by legislation, local laws and byelaws
 - To ensure a high level of customer service is maintained and all services are provided in a friendly, courteous and professional manner;
 - To provide all the labour, management, equipment and resources necessary to maintain an efficient and effective lifeguard service;
 - To work in cooperation with other agencies and community groups, fostering the responsible use of beaches;

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- To increase public safety through proactive measures, including education and awareness;
 - To encourage beach users observance of Council byelaws and regulations
- 1.6 The RNLI have successfully agreed contracts with current partners and in doing so there is now a good understanding of the requirements of EU procurement law and that of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) arrangements. Sefton officers will consider the implications in discussions with the RNLI.
- 1.7 In most cases there is no permanent staff involved as lifeguards are generally employed during the summer season only. In Sefton, as with numerous other Councils, there are full-time permanent lifeguards. Sefton has three Lifeguards who are 'permanent' and others employed on a fixed term and casual basis. This is due to the need to provide safety cover for "Another Place" and in the last year, the Crosby Marine Lake The latter related to the Sefton WATER Centre development. It is anticipated that the safety cover required at the moment will decrease. Subject to Cabinet Member approval, officers will discuss the proposal with the Personnel Director on issues relating to the transfer of staff.
- 1.8 Because there is no private supplier market for this type of specialist activity other Councils who are now in partnership with the RNLI have already considered the legal implications in respect of procurement and have found that the standard contract tender procurement arrangements are not applicable and have been able to suspend their Council contract procedure rules to award a contract to the RNLI. The RNLI Lifeguard Service is set up as a trading arm of the charity and there are no complications in respect of State Aid rules. Subject to Cabinet Member approval officers will consult the Legal Director on the issues above.

2.0 Existing provision

- 2.1 Members will be aware that Sefton Council operates a lifeguard service as part of the Leisure Services Department, Coast and Countryside Service. This service is being delivered to a relatively high standard in respect of training and deployment, but there are no dedicated facilities on beaches along the coast and offices are not ideally placed – all beach accommodation is hired in during the summer.
- 2.2 Recruitment of beach lifeguards has always been difficult as it is seasonal and tends to attract young people who are in full-time higher education. Lifeguards generally work two or three seasons and staff turnover is very high. Under the terms of the partnership contract all training and recruitment is undertaken by RNLI. The submission to Sefton Council includes lifeguards at Formby,

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Members will be aware that the Council's current provision does not include any lifeguards at Formby.

- 2.3 Equipment provision will improve under the terms of a partnership contract with the RNLI and each beach will have a lifeguard vehicle and other equipment such as personal watercraft. Sefton will not provide any equipment or indeed any capital costs.

3.0 The RNLI Lifeguard Services Proposal

- 3.1 The actual cost to Sefton Council will be for patrol time only, the costs of this rising annually using an appropriate price index. Detailed costings will be reported to the Cabinet Member. There will be no need for Sefton to fund training, uniform, building, vehicles and equipment as all this will be funded by RNLI, resulting in a considerable investment in Sefton.
- 3.2 The RNLI will provide on-beach accommodation as provided at other beaches around the country and will establish an operational base in Sefton. In anticipation of working with other Councils in the region, it is possible that the RNLI will establish a key operational base with support infrastructure for a wider north-west service. Overall the proposal is likely to create additional jobs in Sefton.
- 3.3 The RNLI comprehensive national beach safety awareness and education programme will also be 'rolled' out in Sefton and can work with the Coast and Countryside Service to provide information to schools, individual groups and the wider public.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Early progress in developing a partnership with the RNLI will allow for a partnership to be in place by summer 2010. The next opportunity is likely to be 2012. Early indications are that the RNLI proposals are within existing staffing budgets and the Cabinet Member should note that there may be opportunities to include possible savings in respect of plant, fuel and leasing in the budget process. Members will recall that the Coast and Countryside Service now has a reduced service, as three posts have been lost to budget savings over the last three years. The proposal is likely to increase staffing levels on the coast.
- 4.2 Members need to be aware that this partnership will be 'like for like' and does not include the establishment of an RNLI Lifeboat in Sefton. The RNLI will be a declared facility of the Marine and Coastguard Agency and is likely to have good day to day working arrangements with the Coastguard; because of this there is also likely to be a stronger relationship with other declared facilities such as the Southport Lifeboat. The RNLI have indicated that there are other

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locations where a private lifeboat operates and there is a strong relationship with the RNLI and this actually increased the number of incidents the private lifeboat responded too. The process of developing the partnership can include discussions with the Southport Lifeboat.

- 4.3 The RNLI can offer all year round employment to Beach Lifeguards through their international work. Career lifeguards can be allocated work in different countries according to seasonal variations. Sefton's existing Beach Lifeguards are aware of the partnership approach by the RNLI and have been advised accordingly.
- 4.4 The high profile work of the RNLI as a national organisation with an international reputation will help in promoting the beaches and marketing the Sefton Coast as a major leisure and tourism destination.
- 4.5 Developing a partnership with the RNLI will contribute to the Council's aim to continually improve services while making effective use of existing budgets.