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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>OVERNIGHT OPENING OF DEAL PIER</b>
<b>Meeting and Date:</b>	<b>Cabinet – 4 December 2017</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets</b>
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	<b>Councillor Trevor Bartlett, Portfolio Holder for Property Management and Environmental Health</b>
<b>Decision Type:</b>	<b>Non-Key</b>
<b>Classification:</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>

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**Purpose of the report:** To reduce overnight opening of Deal Pier.

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**Recommendation:** To approve a reduction in overnight opening at Deal Pier to once a month, from April to November.

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 Overnight opening occurs on Deal Pier each Saturday night/Sunday morning (00.00hrs – 08.00hrs) for the summer timetable, between April and November. The drivers for reviewing this service include low usage and income figures and staff challenges in covering these hours.
- 1.2 The income generated by the overnight opening has been analysed and this includes tickets that can be purchased in advance of 00.00hrs. The findings demonstrate that current arrangements are not financially viable.
- 1.3 Over the past year it has also been challenging to staff the overnight opening and this has resulted in six unplanned closures in 2017. Recruitment of casuals is now underway to help address this issue but given the nature of casual working, the risk of not covering the overnight opening is reduced but not removed under current staffing arrangements as there is no contractual obligation for casuals to accept a shift.
- 1.4 Formal staff consultation was undertaken given the potential impact on employment contracts. Stakeholder engagement was also undertaken inviting clubs, retail units, town and parish councils to comment. Feedback from stakeholders indicated a desire to retain overnight opening. Please see appendix one for more detail.
- 1.5 Although the Pier can be hired overnight as well as during the daytime, the proposal, taking account of the finances, the challenges with staffing and stakeholder feedback is to reduce overnight opening to once a month from April to November. The proposal also considers the approved future investment at Deal Pier that will potentially attract more users and bring improvements to services and facilities it offers with better promotion of angling on our website.

## 2. Background and Introduction

- 2.1 The pier is a significant landmark and public amenity visited by many thousands of tourists and locals. It provides pleasant walking with a café restaurant at the pier end offering spectacular panoramic views of the coastline and channel at no charge for entry. The location has more recently been used by the film industry with productions such as Liar and the Tunnel featuring many iconic scenes on and around the pier.

2.2 The pier is internationally recognised as an angling venue and has facilitated national and local fishing competitions. Sport England rank angling the 16th highest participation sport in England in terms of weekly participation. Angling contributes to preventative and restorative health and well-being. It is a means by which people access natural environments, peace and quiet and de-stress, lessening the likelihood of mental ill health. It is regularly used by the local angling community and is frequented by anglers travelling from outside the district. It can be hired for overnight fishing a cost of £200. The Deal & Walmer Sea Angling Club operate from the cabin on the lower deck. There are also two retail outlets, a fishing tackle shop and a tourist shop at either side of the entrance.

2.3 At Cabinet's meeting in November Members approved the business case for expenditure of £587,500 to undertake essential works to the pier. This will also help to bring about visual improvements in particular with proposed seating and stem surface refurbishment. It will potentially attract even more users.

2.4 The public opening times for the pier change from Summer (April to November) to Winter (December to March) timetables. The pier can be hired privately at anytime for events which include fishing or filming.

2.5	Summer	Winter
Monday to Thursday	08.00hrs - 22.00hrs.	08.00hrs -18.00hrs
Friday	08.00hrs – 24.00hrs	08.00hrs – 18.00hrs
Saturday	Overnight open	Overnight closed
Sunday	08.00hrs – 22.00hrs	08.00hrs – 18.00hrs

2.6 The pier attendant mans the pier during opening hours. Day to day operational duties include helping to ensure safety of public, regulating vehicle access, issuing fishing tickets, taking requests for fishing or film hire, keeping it clean and tidy, reporting maintenance defects, answering visitor/tourists queries and general administration including Fish of the Month competition.

2.7 During the early summer of 2017, various medium term sick leave among employees resulted in sustained difficulties in covering the overnight shift (Saturday night into Sunday morning) and led to the pier closing overnight on six occasions. Recruitment of casuals is now complete to help address this issue however there is no contractual obligation for casuals to accept a shift and the risk of not staffing overnight remains.

2.8 The business case for the overnight opening has recently been reviewed. The average income for overnight periods, which includes combined day/night and overnight tickets between 01/04/2016 and 31/03/2017 amounts to £45.07. The total average cost to the council is £116.33, demonstrating that retaining current overnight opening arrangements is not financially viable. Income and usage during the overnight period remains low during the current calendar year.

2.9 Consideration to the ceasing of overnight opening involved formal staff consultation undertaken in consultation with EKHR and the Union, given the impact on employment contracts. Feedback from this exercise indicated that staff were generally accepting of the changes of overnight opening arrangements on their contracts and suggested some improvements that could be introduced to the service. Stakeholder engagement was also undertaken inviting clubs, retail units, town and

parish councils to comment. A total of four formal responses were received and were not in favour of ceasing overnight opening and expressed concern at this proposal. See appendix one for more detail.

### **3. Identification of Options**

3.1 **Option 1:** To retain existing overnight opening.

3.2 **Option 2:** To cease overnight opening.

3.3 **Option 3:** To reduce overnight opening to once a month from April to November.

### **4. Evaluation of Options**

4.1 Option one to retain existing overnight fishing is not recommended. The records of fishing income and usage levels for overnight opening are significantly low. It is not financially viable and given staffing challenges to cover this period under current arrangements it is not preferred.

4.2 Option two to cease overnight opening is not recommended. The pier is very high profile among the local community and people outside the district. Particularly following recent Member approval to proceed with significant investment in the Pier over the coming year which will undoubtedly attract more users. Although the pier can continue to be hired during this period by parties or groups at a cost of £200, this is not an affordable route for the smaller pairs or groups of sea anglers for overnight usage. More affordable prices will encourage more frequent usage with improved promotion. Stakeholder consultation indicated they were not in favour, this option would see the council face significant public criticism and is not preferred.

4.3 Option three to reduce overnight opening to once a month from April to November is recommended. This option is a reasonable compromise that seeks to facilitate overnight fishing once a month. With the forthcoming investment proposals that will involve continued engagement with sea angling clubs, a once a month overnight opening will potentially see growth in usage and income. Better promotion will also help to attract significantly more users by way of improving the DDC website. This includes highlighting the overnight opening dates, the costs, promoting the health benefits & well-being angling can offer and communicating these changes to Sea Angling Clubs and others to share and promote the service. The service would be more affordable by individuals or smaller groups of sea anglers and encourage more frequent fishing in contrast to hiring the pier at a cost. It would help to reduce public criticism and to alleviate concerns from stakeholders. The changes to staff contracts would see this option covered only by contracted staff in contrast to current staffing arrangements.

### **5. Resource Implications**

5.1 The average income for the overnight periods, which includes combined evening/overnight tickets between 01/04/2016 and 31/03/2017 amounts to £45.07 per overnight period.

5.2 The basic hourly rate including national insurance and superannuation for staff is £12.34, equating to a total of £98.72 for overnight opening. Average utility costs equate to £17.61. The total average overnight cost is £116.33.

### **6. Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comments to add. (DL)
- 6.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications, however in discharging their responsibilities members are required to comply the public sector duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>
- 6.4 Other Officers (as appropriate):

7. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Summary of Consultation & Engagement Exercise

8. **Background Papers**

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