

The Harbour Master presented a report that informed Members of the issues surrounding the operation of the Boat Park, and in particular, winter storage. He stated that in essence, there were two substantive issues for consideration:

- The fragmented nature of the operation of the boat park between the lifting contractor, Winters Marine Ltd, and the Council, and the risks that this posed from a health and safety perspective; and
- The business case, should the Council consider making the investment in equipment in order to undertake the operation of the storage facility in entirety.

During the discussion, the following matters were specifically raised:

Consultation: It was confirmed that proposals to improve the boat park had been previously considered by the Harbour Board in 2007 and by the local town council during 2009. In terms of consultation with the local boat owners, the Harbour Master said he had not consulted with them in the last eighteen months.

The key issue was felt to be that local contractors and boat owners seemed to use the Council Car Park similar to a village green which was Council owned but currently used free of charge by boat owners when servicing and cleaning their boats, which included using the Council's water supply. The Council also had to maintain the land and clear the rubbish generated by the boat owners. It was suggested that a small administration charge be levied for those contractors registering for insurance and for using a prime council asset.

Costs to Improve the Car Park: A Member questioned whether the costs of improving the car park, such as resurfacing, would negate any benefits of the Council taking on the entire operation. In reply, the Group was informed that income was declining as the boat lifting service was currently very expensive. As a result, the Council could, in the long term, lose the £65,000 income altogether, yet still have all the management responsibilities of the boat and car park. Therefore, it was clear that a decision had to be made as to whether the Council or a suitably qualified boat yard operator managed the entire operation outright as neither would be able to survive financially on half of a diminishing income. He also highlighted that owners of very expensive boats expected excellent facilities and therefore a strategy was needed in terms of either giving a licence to operate or the Council operating the service. In the absence of a clear strategy the facility could be lost altogether.

Some Members were unhappy of the prospect of a private sector monopoly and the potential impact on small boat operators whose livelihoods depended on the facility. The Harbour Master also highlighted that a lease, if granted, would require a life span of at least twenty years to be viable to an operator and they would require the car park to be resurfaced and made good immediately.

He further informed Members that if the Council was to take on the entire operation, it would be for the Council to run as the asset owner (i.e. Property Services) and Street Scene from the car parks perspective. The Harbour staff could operate this facility on behalf of the District Council.

It was then **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and on being put to the vote declared **CARRIED** by a majority vote of 5 in favour to 1 against that it be:-

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** that:

1. The Group note the report and acknowledges the difficulties and risks being managed by the Council of the winter storage operation; and
2. Approval be granted to proceeding with the proposal whereby the Council provide the service of winter storage at Shadycombe / Batson Car Park in house.