

## **NEW BRIGHTON, PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE LIFEBOAT STATION**

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### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of a request from the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) and to consider granting it an option to lease a site for a replacement Lifeboat Station at New Brighton.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1. Cabinet may be aware of the existing lifeboat station at Kings Parade, New Brighton. The building is owned by the RNLI but the site is leased from the Council for a term of 50 years from 3 November 1988, at a current rental of £200 per annum (p.a.). The site is indicated as 'Site 1 Existing' on the attached plan.
- 2.2. The lifeboat housed in the building is a rigid inflatable boat carried on a trailer and launched by a specially adapted tractor. The launching sites are off the ramp immediately opposite the lifeboat station into the Irish Sea, or off the ramp near the former New Brighton Pier, into the River Mersey.
- 2.3. In addition, the RNLI operates a hovercraft, which is also trailer mounted. That is housed in a building adjoining the Coastal Drive/Harrison Drive "Pitch & Put" course, on a site also leased from the Council.
- 2.4 From the RNLI's point of view, the present operational arrangements are unsatisfactory. Apart from the disadvantages of a split site, in recent years the lifeboat's launches have tended to be centred more towards the River Mersey. This involves a road journey along the Marine Promenade for the tractor and launch trailer. Apart from the sheer size of the vehicles in question, in summer the route can be very congested, with slow moving traffic and obstructions caused by visitors' cars manoeuvring into and out of the roadside parking spaces. Considerable pedestrian movement across the roadway adds to the difficulty. Also, the new Neptune development, currently under construction may be anticipated to generate additional traffic when it is completed.

### **3. Present Position**

- 3.1 Accordingly, the RNLI has now approached the Council to see if the Council might assist in providing a site for a new Lifeboat Station in a more convenient and practical location for the River Mersey, at the bottom of the former Tower Grounds site. The site is shown as 'Site 2 Proposed' on the attached plan. The site is currently zoned as urban green space. However, informal discussions with the Director of Technical Services indicate that it may be possible to establish a case for a site to be allocated, given the special requirements of the proposed use.

- 3.2 The alternatives for locating a new lifeboat station are severely constrained by the presence, in the Tower Ground, of the underground infrastructure, comprising United Utilities' storm water holding tanks. The proposed site close to the bottom of Egerton Street is therefore considered the only practical location.
- 3.3 At this stage, the future of the existing building has not been considered in any detail. This will be the subject of negotiations with the RNLI, if it is agreed to take the proposal forward.
- 3.4 Having regard to the above, it is considered appropriate to ask the Cabinet whether it is prepared to grant an option to lease this site as a possible future lifeboat station. The option period will be 3 years. The RNLI will be required to pay the Council's costs in preparing the option agreement. Any actual future disposal of this site will be subject to the grant of planning permission and satisfactory terms being agreed in respect of a premium for lease. Any provisionally agreed terms will be reported to Cabinet.
- 3.5 The reason for seeking such a resolution, at this time, is to enable the RNLI to decide how it will put in priority and commit its future capital investment programme. If the Cabinet is minded to grant an option for this site, the future development of lifeboat facilities in New Brighton will achieve a higher priority.

#### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1 None to be reported at this stage.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 As the proposed site for the new lifeboat station is designated urban green space it will be necessary to make it a pre- condition of the option to lease to advertise the disposal of this site pursuant to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by paragraph 14 of Part V of Schedule 23 to the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980.

#### **6. Staffing implications**

- 6.1 There are no staffing implications arising (at this stage) from this report.

#### **7. Equal Opportunities implications**

- 7.1 There are no equal opportunity implications arising at this stage from this report.

#### **8. Community Safety implications**

- 8.1 The development of a new lifeboat station in the location suggested would improve the RNLI's response time to the majority of incidents requiring its services.

#### **9. Local Agenda 21 implications**

- 9.1 There are minimal Local Agenda 21 implications, in terms of the reduced need for the trailer and tractor to travel along Marine Parade.

## **10. Planning implications**

- 10.1 The site is shown as green space on the approved plan, under Proposal GR2/105 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Under normal circumstances, UDP Policy GR1 indicates that development, other than for facilities for visitors, sport or play would not normally be permitted unless alternative provision of equivalent community benefit is made available. In the event of any planning application being submitted for a relocated lifeboat station on the Tower Grounds site, The RNLI would have to demonstrate that there are special circumstances for the use of the site for its proposed purpose, as was the case with the relocation of the Hoylake Lifeboat station onto a site which was similarly designated as urban Greenspace.

## **11. Anti-poverty implications**

- 11.1 There are no anti-poverty implications arising from this report.

## **12. Human Rights implications**

- 12.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

## **13. Social Inclusion implications**

- 13.1 There are no social inclusion implications arising from this report.

## **14. Local Member Support implications**

- 14.1 The proposed site is in the New Brighton ward, as is the existing main lifeboat station. The current hovercraft building is sited in Wallasey Ward.

## **15. Background Papers**

- 15.1 None.

## **16. Asset Management Implications**

- 16.1 The proposed site is operational and held for leisure purposes.

## **17. Recommendations**

- 17.1 That Cabinet approves the grant of an option to lease, to the Royal National Life Boat Institution for the site identified and in accordance with the terms set out in this report.
- 17.2 That the Director of Law HR and Asset Management be authorised to execute the necessary documentation.

### **Bill Norman**

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management  
Ref AM/AMN