

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Report of Executive Director (Adults & Communities)

To

Cabinet

On

1 July 2022

Report prepared by: Scott Dolling, Director of Culture and Tourism

Agenda
Item No.

6

Dog Friendly Beach

Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s) – Place Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Carole Mulroney
Part 1 (public agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

To update members on proposals for a dog friendly beach in Southend.

2. Recommendations

That a dog friendly beach is not introduced at Shoebury East Beach.

That Cabinet notes the Dog Friendly Beach consultation feedback and continues to review the situation for an appropriate location.

3. Background

3.1 There has been growing interest and campaigns for Southend to provide a dog friendly beach area.

3.2 The Council has considered feedback and following legal advice, commissioned a specific public consultation for an area of Shoeburyness East Beach to be considered for a dog friendly beach trial.

3.3 Consultation responses overall were in support of the introduction of a specific beach for dogs, however there was considerable negative feedback from the local community on the location suggested.

3.4 Representations were also made from Natural England and Essex Wildlife Trust regarding the detrimental effect of the proposal on the special environmental considerations.

- 3.5 The feedback included confirmation that East Beach falls within the SSSI, Ramsar, and SPA area. The section of beach being considered is the last fragment of dune habitat in the Southend area with many scarce and rare plants and invertebrates. There was concern raised by Essex Wildlife Trust that increased nitrogen and phosphorus from dog urine and faeces and increased trampling would have significant detrimental impact on this very sensitive and rare habitat.
- 3.6 Further information outlined that Increased usage of the Boom area will also impact on the wader roost on the MOD land and the waders using the mudflat. The critical time for feeding and roosting birds is between July and May as the birds return from the breeding grounds and stay the winter before they return in spring, which increases the importance of this currently protected roost and feeding area.
- 3.7 Feedback from Shoebury residents association was significant about the detrimental effect this decision would have on regular users of the beach and concerns about the ability to segregate dog friendly from dog controlled areas within a close proximity.
- 3.8 The initial consultation showed the preference for Jocelyn Beach, Thorpe Bay and Cinder Path to Gypsy Bridge as the preferred locations. There was local resistance from the communities represented for these proposals being progressed.
- 3.9 Despite a majority of respondents in the consultation wanting dog friendly beaches, local residents in any of the recently proposed areas are not supportive. In this most recent consultation East Beach residents feel that they should not be the only place where dog friendly beaches should be allowed.
- 3.10 To maintain blue flag status for our beaches which are an important factor for our tourism credential, dog control orders need to be in place.
- 3.11 There is a continuing demand for dog friendly beaches all year round however at this time a suitable location has not been agreed.
- 3.12 Some of the environmental issues raised in this consultation could remain an issue in a different location selected and for any future proposed area a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) would be required to ascertain the relevant issues.
- 3.13 Officers will continue to seek an alternative solution and will report back options.

4. Other Options

The dog friendly trial could proceed however this is not recommended given the strength of feeling from local residents through the consultation process and the environmental representations.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

Compelling feedback from residents in the immediate area and environmental representation has been drawn from the consultation to inform the recommendation.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1

6.2 Financial Implications

A future location would require a Habitats Regulation Assessment which would need to be procured.

6.3 Legal Implications

N/A

6.4 People Implications

N/A

6.5 Property Implications

N/A

6.6 Consultation

The public consultation has concluded (attached).

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

N/A

6.8 Risk Assessment

N/A.

6.9 Value for Money

N/A

6.10 Community Safety Implications

N/A

6.11 Environmental Impact

Feedback on the impact on the local habitats has been provided by Natural England and helps inform the decision

7. Background Papers

N/A

8. Appendices

8.1 Consultation pack