



The purpose of this Report is to provide an update on discussions about the future funding of the Haven.

No. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) In the summer of 2010 the Haven's seaweed accumulations revealed the extent of the existential threat to the town resulting from the Hydrogen Sulphide produced by the seaweed as it rotted.
- b) In response the Isle of Wight Council began funding Cheetah Marine to be responsible for the regular operation of a dedicated boat fitted with a pump to suck up the seaweed, chop it up and eject it back over the Haven's north wall and that has continued to the present time.
- c) Three recent developments have put that solution at risk:
 - o the Budget cuts to the Isle of Wight Council have now become so acute that it finds the £75k cost of the seaweed removal unsustainable;
 - o Cheetah Marine's boat and pump now need replacement at considerable capital cost; and
 - o the Royal Hoskaning's Report on the issue has judged that there is no other solution than continuing with the present arrangements.
- d) The issue was considered at the Town Council meeting of 8 July and resulted in the following decision as recorded in its Minute 89/19:

It was proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Jason Mack and unanimously resolved that the Town Council:

- i) authorises its Mayor and Clerk to continue informal discussions with the Isle of Wight Council's political leadership and relevant officers respectively; encourages the Clerk and his colleagues to explore potential sources of external – including government – funding, and explore any potential sources of increased income;
 - ii) authorises continuing informal discussions with Sean Strevens and Geoff Blake; and
 - iii) requires regular reporting to and updates from the Assets and Services Working Group.
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2) MEETINGS

- a) The Mayor had an informal initial meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Isle of Wight Council on 24 July that agreed a follow up meeting of Members and Officers from both Councils on 4 September, as reported to the Town Council meeting of 12 August.
 - b) Councillor Jason Mack, Assets & Services Group member Jim Toogood and I have met three times with Cheetah Marine's Sean Strevens and Blake Fisheries Geoff Blake to discuss a range of options for the future funding and management of the Haven and another is planned for 11 September.
 - c) There has also been a meeting with another local company that does not wish to be identified at this time but has expressed an interest in the Haven's future.
 - d) The 4 September meeting involved the Isle of Wight Council's Deputy Leader and Finance Portfolio holder Stuart Hutchinson with officers Alex Minns and Sean Newtown with the Town Council's Mayor, Councillor Jason Mack, the Clerk and Nick Cox.
 - e) The discussions were based on a shared commitment to resolve the issues working collaboratively as partners.
 - f) Further discussions between the relevant officers of both Councils are being arranged.
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3) PRIORITIES

- a) The Town Council's priorities are a sustainable and effective treatment of the
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hydrogen sulphide producing seaweed and the maintenance and development of local employment.

- b) There is also a preference to agree a form of local ownership of the Haven in the medium to longer term.
 - c) However, the present situation requires an urgent response as the current contract with Cheetah Marine ends on 31 March next year.
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