

Proposed changes to beach hut licences and fees

FAQs – October 2023

What is the beach hut transfer fee?

The council is proposing to introduce a transfer fee which will be payable by the beach hut owner to the council on the sale of their beach hut or upon transfer of their beach hut in specified circumstances (see below).

Where did the proposal to introduce a transfer fee come from?

The proposal is being considered as part of the council's annual review of finances.

How have you made sure all beach hut owners know about the consultation?

Emails have been sent to all beach hut owners who have provided the council with an email address. Officers are monitoring bounce backs from incorrect email addresses and updating records.

Letters have also been sent to the home address (held on record by the council) of each beach hut owner to ensure that everyone receives the information and has an opportunity to feedback on the proposals.

Do you think you have allowed enough time for the consultation process with the owners?

This consultation provides an opportunity for all beach hut owners to input into the proposed changes.

There is no legally defined, nor council defined, requirement around the length of a consultation.

The council has extended the consultation period until 9am on Monday 23 October 2023 to allow time for any additional responses following the Hove Beach Hut Association's Annual General Meeting on Saturday 14 October.

Where will the money from the fees be spent?

The council spends significant sums each year maintaining and improving the seafront. While our budgets have been reducing, the seafront remains a priority area of spend for the council.

Income from the annual licence fee already contributes towards the seafront service which funds the lifeguard service, as well as maintenance and improvements to the seafront.

Any additional funds from transfer fees will also go towards the seafront service.

How have you come up with the 10% fee?

It is proposed that the transfer fee would be a 10% of the sale price or 4 times the licence fee, whichever is greater. No VAT will be charged on this sum.

This fee is comparable to fees charged in other south coast local authorities and the amount payable will adjust to fluctuations in the market price.

What happens to my existing beach hut licence if the proposed changes are agreed by the council?

The original/current licences would be terminated in accordance with the notice provisions set out, and new licences granted.

From 1 April 2024 any beach huts without a new licence in place would be unlicensed huts and would need to be removed by the owner.

Will the council sell my beach hut for me?

The council would not get involved with the sale transaction between the outgoing owner and the new beach hut owner.

The council will issue a licence to the new owner on receipt of details of the transaction including price, proof of residency and the fee.

Can huts be passed down to relatives on death?

As the proposed new licence is drafted, the hut owner can pass down their beach hut on the event of their death without payment of the transfer fee to a beneficiary who is a resident of Brighton & Hove.

If the only beneficiaries live outside of the city, then the beach hut would need to be sold by the executors (to a Brighton & Hove resident) and a transfer fee paid. If the beach hut is sold, then the transfer fee is 10% of the sale price (or 4 times the licence fee if this is greater).

If the hut is transferred to a family member or to a third party (who must be a Brighton & Hove resident) at any time other than the death of the hut owner for no cost then the latter transfer fee of 4 x the licence fee applies (this is currently £1,678 based on this year's licence fee).

How do the proposals benefit the beach hut owners?

Under the current beach hut licence, the council may require hut owners to remove their hut without specifying a reason for doing so.

The new licence states that the council will require the hut owners to remove their huts from council land for the following reasons:

- in the event of redevelopment of the land
- for public safety reasons.

This provides more certainty for the beach hut owners than under the current arrangements.

We are also seeking to improve communications with Beach Hut owners, using email and more modern forms of communication.

How much is raised per year by the licence fee and the transfer fee?

The license fee is an annual cost to beach hut owners to keep their hut on council-land.

The annual beach hut licence fee is lower than that charged by other south coast local authorities. In some cases, such as Worthing and Bournemouth, it is several hundred pounds lower.

The licence fee income for the year 23/24 is £192,628.

Beach hut owners only need to pay the transfer fee on the sale (or transfer in specified circumstances) of the hut. If no huts are sold (or transferred) in a particular year, the council will not receive any additional income.

How often will you review the licence fee?

All existing beach hut licences are subject to an annual revision of the licence fee to be agreed by elected Members at Committee and notified to beach hut owners two months in advance of 1 April in any year. This is a standard requirement for all non-statutory council fees and charges.

How do I respond to the consultation?

Please email your comments to the Seafront Office at seafrontoffice@brighton-hove.gov.uk

