

## **LGA Coastal Issues Special Interest Group**

### **Beach Safety: Position Statement**

Adopted following the meeting of the LGA Coastal SIG on 14 February 2006

#### **Responsibility/liability:**

The Coastal Local Authorities require confirmation from Government that local authorities are not the bodies responsible for, or liable for coastal safety and that the provision of lifeguards is a discretionary service. The current position is that local authorities provide beach safety management, including lifeguards, as a discretionary service and whilst there is an acceptance of responsibility for safety on local authority-owned beaches these services are provided in response to an assessment of risks and are proportionate to the risks identified. It is considered important that all owners of beaches, both private and public should be advised to carry out individual risk assessments and be encouraged to act in accordance with the findings of these assessments.

#### **Funding/resources:**

The Coastal Local Authorities would welcome a review of the funding streams available to local authorities to enable beach safety services, including lifeguards, to be financed. In particular a view on the feasibility of increasing Central Government support or introducing a levy on Business Rates in coastal areas is sought. The current position is that the resources required for these services are met by the local community through the payment of council-tax and where partnership arrangements exist part of this resource is provided by charities or voluntary bodies such as the RNLI and local lifeguard clubs. Local authorities are operating in a climate of increasing budgetary constraint and at such times their ability to deliver such discretionary services can be severely curtailed.

#### **Service delivery:**

Subject to clarification of responsibilities and funding issues, the Coastal Local Authorities would wish to maintain a flexible approach to the delivery of beach safety services, formulating their individual responses in the light of risk assessments. Currently Coastal Local Authorities adopt such an approach and this ensures that the beach lifeguard service, where required, is integrated into the wider local authority beach management services & safety initiatives. Beach lifeguard services are provided through a variety of means involving 'in house', voluntary or private services, often in combination. There is a recognition that a standardized Service Contract or Agreement that would clearly specify roles and responsibilities, standards of service and the scope of the provision would conform with financial regulations by allowing the service to be offered for tender if necessary. In this way the Local Authorities could demonstrate value for money.