

Present: Councillor Nigel Welton (Chairman), Councillor Sue Ransome (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alison Austin, Paul Gleeson, Martin Griggs, Brian Rush, Yvonne Stevens and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Chief Executive, Head of Town Centre, Leisure, Events and Culture, Principal Officer, Bereavement and Cleaning and Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: County Councillor Paula Cooper

59 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the following addition to Minute 50, that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman and the correction of the name of one of the guests, Adam Kelk.

60 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Anton Dani, Viven Edge and Stephen Raven.

61 POLICING ISSUES - STANDING ITEM

Inspector Morrice was unable to attend and no issues were raised.

62 BTAC 2017/18 FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Financial Services, which provided an update on the BTAC financial position, showing the budget for the 2017/18 year, and the projected reserve at the year end.

63 PUBLIC TOILETS UPDATE

The Committee received an update from the Principal Officer, Bereavement & Cleaning on the Council's provision of public toilets, as requested by Members following their tour of the facilities during a general tour of the town centre.

The Council operated three public toilet sites, now funded by BTAC, all located within the town centre: Lincoln Lane, Central Park and Wide Bargate (Cattle Market). Details of provision at each site, opening hours, staffing and operational issues were set out in the report.

The facilities had been refurbished four years ago and payment mechanisms had been installed charging 20p. This charge had created an income stream of around £23,000 per annum and had reduced antisocial behaviour, particularly vandalism and drug-related behaviour.

The Prosperous Boston Task and Finish Group had identified a need for increased public toilets provision in the town, a positive outcome of which was the introduction of a Community Toilets Scheme (CTS), which currently involved Oldrids, St. Botolph's Church and ASDA. The availability and location of all 6 facilities were published on the Council's website.

The level of formal complaints about the Council's toilet facilities was low. However, although the reporting and follow-up system had been strengthened and there were currently fewer issues, problems still occurred almost daily. Attendants dealt with minor repairs; more complex repairs were resolved as quickly as practical using the Council's nominated contractor within existing budgets. All the facilities suffered petty vandalism and theft (toilet rolls and soap), particularly the disabled persons' facilities.

Entry doors were frequently broken due to attempted forced entry and income was lost whilst repairs were organised. Coin mechanisms were troublesome due to their frequency of use and the specialist parts took quite a while to obtain. Also, attendants often found entry doors wedged open by users to allow others free entry.

Entry to disabled persons' facilities was by use of a RADAR key, obtained from the Council upon proof of eligibility, allowing access to facilities 24-hours a day. However, it was impossible for the Council to control access, as the keys were available on the internet and could be cut to pattern. Subsequently, the facilities were often used by rough sleepers overnight, and sometimes during the day, and drug users tended to use them.

Annual income for 2016/17 from the three Council facilities was £23,000, equating to around 115,000 users per year. As at the end of October, income was on course to be down by approximately £2,000 against the previous year, which could be due to downtime of paying mechanisms or increased usage of the CTS toilets.

It was pointed out that usage of the CTS facilities could not be monitored and that the unusually high water usage relating to the Central Park toilets was being investigated.

In response to questions, it was reported that the Waterfall Plaza had originally participated in the CTS scheme, but had since withdrawn from it and now charged for the use of their facilities. The impact of the CTS scheme had not been officially assessed; anecdotally, the church had mentioned there had been a few more visitors who had then looked around. Feedback had not been received from members of the public about difficulty accessing toilet facilities; cubicles at Central Park were compact, but people could use the disabled persons' facilities if the attendant was present or use the toilets at Wide Bargate.

Members commended the provision of facilities, but expressed concern about vandalism. Various suggestions were put forward for consideration, though one Member urged caution in terms of potential costs. It was agreed that details and costings be investigated and circulated to Members or reported back to the Committee at a future meeting.

Action: MP

To report back to Members on the following –

1. The details and costings of:
 - Provision of CCTV cameras outside toilet facilities;
 - Anti-vandal toilets, sinks and soap/toilet roll dispensers;
 - Improvement to general water usage, e.g. eco-systems, in terms of impact of cost and impact on the environment;
 - Alternative door mechanisms that may be more robust and save money;
 - The possibility of adding locks to disabled persons' toilets to reduce use by rough sleepers.
2. The outcome of the trial period of opening Central Park 24 hours a day;
3. Consideration of a further round of communications with businesses regarding the CTS scheme.

64 BTAC ASSETS / TOUR OF OPEN SPACES

The Committee considered report by the Head of Town Centre, Leisure, Events & Culture, which set out the details of routine maintenance undertaken on public open spaces within the BTAC area during 2017/18; options and costs for new play equipment and facilities; and potential further naturalised planting development.

BTAC Members had attended a tour on 27 September 2017 to discuss current maintenance arrangements and to identify if any improvement opportunities might be available and subsequently requested that this report be brought to the Committee.

The Council was currently seeking quotes to address the findings highlighted within the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) inspection reports. A number of routine maintenance needs were also highlighted during the latest tour and were set out as Project One in Appendix 1 to the report. These would be funded from existing budgets.

The tour also discussed the addition of new playground equipment and prospective playground development projects, set out as Project Two in Appendix 2, and in total would equate to an estimated £91,286 capital cost to BTAC, as yet unbudgeted. In addition to this, external funds already approved would add £93,000 to the total spend.

Naturalised planting developments had been well received by Members during the tour and it was determined that the remaining open spaces should also benefit from such planting. Based on a combination of trees, wild flower/perennial plantings and labour across six sites, officers had priced the work at a total of £8,910. A breakdown was set out as Project Three in Appendix 3.

The St John's Park & Burgess Pit Fitness Zone project, agreed at the 31 May 2017 BTAC meeting, had undergone a procurement exercise. The Sub Group was to meet the preferred bidder to finalise the project details, aiming to complete the project by the end of March 2018, funded from the £41,000 previously approved.

Further reports would be submitted to the Open Spaces Working Group at the earliest opportunity with respect to taking forward the new sports/recreation multi use games facility, funded through a local Section 106 Agreement, on the Garfits Lane Playing Field; the additional maintenance costs of new equipment; updating and replacing signage; the County Council's budget decisions, when finalised, in terms of the Council's

delivery of grass cutting and weed control; and the County Council's weed treatment programme, which might revert back to two treatments per year.

It was proposed that officers should proceed with the work, subject to consultation and investigations, with priority given to work outside of Central Park during the current financial year, with the work inside Central Park to be carried out in 2018/19. In addition, three elements of proposed work inside Central Park – the goal posts, bins and fitness equipment – also be carried out in the current year.

The majority of Members agreed that the proposed investment in the open spaces was essential.

[Councillor Rush left the meeting at 7.15 pm]

Members discussed the impact of delaying elements of work inside Central Park in view of a potential development nearby. Officers assured Members that the indications were that this matter would not cause delay and they would be kept informed of progress.

A further proposal was put forward that all elements of work in Central Park should be undertaken in the current year except for the multi-use games area, but this was not seconded.

It was then proposed and seconded that all elements of work in Central Park should be undertaken in the current year except for the extension to the path and roundabout area, but when put to the vote this proposal fell.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive advised Members that it was quite in order for a Member who was also a Member of the Planning Committee to take part in the discussion and vote as a planning application was not being considered and they could take part in consideration of planning applications in the proximity of Central Park as long as they retained an open mind.

A vote was then taken on the original proposal as amended and this was carried and put to the vote as the substantive motion.

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet that officers proceed with the work, subject to consultation and investigations, with priority given to work outside of Central Park during the current financial year, with the work inside Central Park to be carried out in 2018/19. In addition, three elements of proposed work inside Central Park – the goal posts, bins and fitness equipment – also be carried out in the current year.

65 UPDATE FROM EVENTS WORKING GROUP

The Head of Town Centre, Leisure, Events & Culture advised Members that officers would be holding a debriefing meeting on 4th December regarding the Christmas Switch-On event, which was considered to have been successful.

The Events Working Group, comprising the Chairman, two other BTAC Members and six members of the public, had met four times. The Chairman reported that, at the first

meeting, the group had considered existing provision. At subsequent meetings, they had put forward a range of interesting and feasible ideas and more details would be reported after further planning and costings. The membership of the group was fluid and more members of the public would be welcome to join, bringing new ideas with them.

The members of the public were congratulated. *Christmas in Boston* had demonstrated what the public could do. Getting people involved was the way forward in making the town an attractive place to live in and visit and further thought should be given to how groups were established and maintained to run future events.

66 WORK PROGRAMME - STANDING ITEM

Members considered the work programme and agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 3rd January 2018, as the business for that meeting could be postponed until the next meeting on 31st January.

Action: PD/JC

- Make arrangements to cancel the meeting scheduled for 3rd January 2018.
- Write to the *Christmas in Boston* community group and request a formal written report, including a financial report, for representatives to present to the Committee on 31st January 2018.

The Meeting ended at 8.15 pm