

Present: Councillor Sue Ransome (Chairman), Councillor Ben Evans (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alison Austin, Anton Dani, Viven Edge, Paul Gleeson, Martin Griggs, Nigel Welton and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Chief Executive, Head of Place and Space, Head of Regulatory Services, Head of Environmental Operations, Local Communities Development Officer & BTAC Grant Administrator and Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: County Councillor Paula Cooper

**89 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Committee's last meeting, held on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**90 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The Head of Place and Space advised Members that he had no matters on which to update them.

The Town Centre Portfolio Holder confirmed that Cabinet had approved the Committee's recommendation for expenditure of £40,850 for play area improvements within the BTAC area.

**91 APOLOGIES**

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Stephen Raven, Brian Rush and Yvonne Stevens.

**92 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME**

Mr Darron Abbott addressed the Committee regarding the background to the Committee's decision to purchase the speed indicating device (SID), on which the Committee was to receive a performance update from the Head of Regulatory Services (Minute 95 refers).

**93 BTAC 2018/19 FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE**

The Committee received the regular update report on the BTAC financial position, which set out the budget and projected outturn (full-year spend) for the 2018/19 year, and the projected BTAC reserve at the year end.

The budget and projected outturn position were detailed in Appendix 1. At the 10 months year to date, the projection for the full year was showing an under-spend of £73,752 and the report outlined the main reasons for this, primarily the amount of other expenditure of £48,664 to be allocated.

With respect to BTAC reserves, the opening balance held at 1 April 2018 was £286,667 (comprising £55,000 as the minimum to be held to allow for contingencies, as approved in the budget setting report, plus £231,667 for projects as listed in the Appendix). The closing balance on BTAC's reserve monies was projected as £206,385 at 31 March 2019.

**RESOLVED: That the projected financial position for the year and the reserve amounts at the year-end be noted.**

## **94 BTAC GRANT SCHEME**

The Local Communities Development Officer and BTAC Grant Administrator presented a report, which provided additional information requested by the Committee at its last meeting regarding a grant application from the Parish of Boston.

The full report submitted by the Parish of Boston was attached to the report at Appendix A and the original report submitted to the Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019 was attached for reference at Appendix B. The request was for a grant of up to £20,000 as a contribution to the overall redevelopment programme at St Botolph's Church, Boston. The Working Group supported this application, however, recommended that the Committee should decide on the amount to award and how it would be resourced.

The additional information provided by the Parish of Boston included specific detail as to what elements of the overall Passion for People project the £20,000 would contribute and a clear demonstration that if funding was given to these particular elements of the project how this would directly impact the residents of the BTAC area.

The individual projects were as follows:

- Work with local schools (£15,000) – a schools festival, specific school tours and 'Fun at the Stump!' craft and activity sessions.
- Community Building (£3,000) – the 'Boston Connected: Community Table' scheme and Volunteer Training
- Supporting the Arts (£2,000) – Lunchtime Concerts and Community Choir

The Committee was asked to note that the Parish of Boston had already been awarded £50,000 by the Council in respect of the Passion for People project.

During Members' debate, there were views that the amount applied for was too large and could fund projects for several community groups; that the Council had already contributed significantly; that the schools projects were part of the Church's normal pastoral work;

There was support in principle for the Community Building and Supporting the Arts projects, which were the type of project the grants scheme funded, but it was considered essential that the Parish of Boston should provide a breakdown of how they directly benefitted the residents of the BTAC area.

*[Councillor Stephen Woodliffe arrived at this point.]*

Some Members stressed the importance of 'The Stump' as the town's number one tourist attraction and it far more than a religious centre. The success of its activities was important and it would be the people of the town who would benefit;. The Community Table in particular was important to the community and the homeless, and many people had gained in confidence as a result of volunteering, which benefitted the town as a whole.

However, although commending the projects and the work of the volunteers, there was a view that the Church should be undertaking these activities and if funding was to be granted by BTAC then the Committee needed to see evidence of the specific benefit to the BTAC area in terms of the number of people from BTAC wards who were benefitting from the projects.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Grants Application from the Parish of Boston for £15,000 for work with local schools be refused.**
- 2. That the Grants Application from the Parish of Boston for £3,000 Community Building projects and £2,000 for Supporting the Arts Projects be deferred until the next appropriate meeting to enable the BTAC Grant Administrator to request further information from the Parish of Boston in terms of a breakdown demonstrating the proportion of residents of the BTAC area that will specifically benefit from the projects.**

**95      SPEED INDICATORS**

The Head of Regulatory Services provided Members with an update on the Committee's speed indicating devices (SID) and circulated a breakdown of the data obtained by the device in each of the six locations chosen by Members.

All six locations were 30 mph zones. The data showed the number of vehicles going through the SID, their average speed, the number and percentage of vehicles over the speed limit and the maximum speed recorded with the time at which the vehicle was travelling. The data varied significantly by location.

Inspector Morrice was going to update Members on where speed traps had been located. It was known that the devices should not be located repeatedly in the same areas.

One of the cameras had stopped working, but its battery had now been replaced under warranty and the minimum speed was being increase in order to prolong battery life.

In response to questions, the Head of Regulatory Services explained that it was difficult to compare the figures with previous data in order to ascertain the full impact of the devices; it would need to be professionally analysed. However, a trend was showing in that the percentage of vehicles over the speed limit had come down in some areas. There had not been a significant reduction in the maximum speed. The devices produced a considerable amount of data, which Members were welcome to view or, alternatively, the Committee could commission an in-depth analysis.

The devices had been operational for approximately 18 months. They were to be placed in 12 locations to begin with, but Members had only put forward six. Ideally, the

devices would be operational for 10 days and then the batteries would take 2 days to recharge; however, this was not standard as it was subject to staff availability.

There was concern that over one-third of vehicles were travelling over the speed limit in four of the locations and at the level of the maximum speeds. The Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that the devices might be recording how much each vehicle was travelling over the speed limit, but it was not known how to draw out this information. It had been suggested that the maximum speed recorded could have been Police vehicles in some instances.

The data did show where it was more useful to site a device; at Spilsby Road vehicles were approaching traffic lights and a lower percentage were over the speed limit, whereas, on London Road, vehicles were transitioning from a 40 to a 30 mph speed limit and the number of vehicles over the speed limit was one of the highest.

There was a view that the effect of the devices was sufficient to demand action from the County Council in terms of speed cameras and traffic calming measures. There was a request that the County Councillors present should ask the County Council to take the matter very seriously.

Following discussion of the need for expert advice on the impact of the devices, it was agreed that the Road Safety Partnership, of which the Police and the Highways Authority were members, be invited to a future meeting to analyse the data and remind Members of the costs for other locations.

**RESOLVED that the Committee welcomes the update and the information provided and:**

- 1. Seeks a report from individual BTAC Members on alternative sites to Staniland Road and Spilsby Road, where there is a low percentage of speeding vehicles;**
- 2. That monitoring of roads continues where over 30% of vehicles have been speeding;**
- 3. Invites representatives from the Road Safety Partnership to attend a future meeting to advise the Committee on what action can be taken to reduce speeds further.**

**96 CENTRAL PARK SECURITY - UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a report by the Head of Environmental Operations, requested by Members at the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January, regarding the decision to leave Central Park open at all times of the day and night and any evidence that might exist demonstrating this decision had had an impact on crime and anti-social behaviour within the park.

The report concluded that no factual evidence was available to support the assertion that leaving the park open had caused or increased crime or anti-social behaviour in the park. In fact, reported incidents were higher in 2016, when the park was locked, than since the time the park had been left open.

Evidence would suggest that reintroducing locking of the park would have no impact in reducing incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour. Consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and Open Spaces had revealed that Inspector Morrice had

suggested that if the gates to Central Park were locked it could make matters (of crime and anti-social behaviour) worse not better.

Alternative options were available to the Committee to increase opportunities to deal decisively with individuals who committed offences by installing more effective CCTV systems, which could be funded from budgets already approved.

Leaving the park open delivered a recurring annual budget saving of £8,100. If a decision was taken to lock the park each evening, the cost of providing this service could be provided for consideration by BTAC Members, however the crime and anti-social behaviour evidence did not support this.

BTAC Members might wish to consider the option of investing in CCTV camera technology to help identify individuals who committed offences, caused damage or anti-social behaviour. A budget of £10,200 was provided by the Committee to fund installation of CCTV cameras at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Road play areas. This budget remained unspent due to technical difficulties preventing these installations progressing; therefore, an opportunity existed to re-allocate these funds to upgrade existing CCTV equipment in Central park.

It would be possible to replace all three cameras in Central Park with new, night-capable cameras as soon as the Council's CCTV operating system had been upgraded, which was due to be in place by September 2019. Replacement of these cameras with new, 200m capable infrared units could be met within the budget previously agreed for cameras at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Park. New, infra-red cameras would provide CCTV Operators with enhanced low light capability that would enable more effective monitoring of crime and anti-social behaviour. Following the upgrade to the Council's CCTV operating system, set to be approved by the Council as part of the 2019/20 budget, night-capable cameras could be purchased, installed and commissioned for approximately £2,000 per unit (as opposed to equivalent Panasonic units at approximately £6,500 per unit).

The Council had continued investment in its CCTV systems, which regularly drove Police and anti-social behaviour operations, providing evidence in a wide range of crime and anti-social behaviour cases. Between April 2017 and January 2019, CCTV Operators dealt with 2,924 incidents, 2,805 out of hours' calls and contributed to 1,102 arrests. The Head of Environmental Operations confirmed that these figures were collected by the CCTV operators for the Boston area.

During Members' debate, the report was welcomed. There was a view that the decision not to lock the gates should have been taken in consultation with Members, but there was satisfaction that keeping the park open had not caused an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour.

There was support for the suggestion that funding originally ring-fenced for the installation of CCTV at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Road play areas, which could not be spent due to local technical difficulties, to be reallocated to fund the upgrading of the CCTV cameras in Central Park, though this could not take place until the upgrade of the CCTV operating system had been completed. This would help identify those who did commit offences, which often seemed to be during the daytime. It was felt that young

people using the park to play football would want to do so beyond the previous time for locking the park, particularly in the summer.

Members remarked that this report had been requested following the significant amount of comment on social media about not locking the park and yet not one member of the public had attended to express any concerns. It was believed that Inspector Morrice's comment that locking the park could make matters worse referred to the inevitable delay in Police accessing the park to attend incidents when the gates were locked.

**RESOLVED That:**

- 1. Based on the evidence before the Committee, Members are satisfied that the gates to Central Park should remain unlocked;**
- 2. The amount previously allocated to fund the installation of CCTV at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Road play areas, being £10,200, be vired in full to upgrade the existing CCTV equipment in Central Park as soon as the Council's CCTV operating system has been upgraded, which is due to be in place by September 2019.**

**97 UPDATE ON WORK OF BTAC OPERATIVES - STANDING ITEM**

The Head of Place and Space presented an update on the work of the BTAC Operatives.

Members commended the work of the BTAC Operatives and the difference they had made to the town.

It was confirmed that the Witham Central and Carlton Road Neighbourhood Groups purchased and anti-vandal paint and used it in their areas.

A Member reported that a member of the public had raised an issue regarding Royal Mail discarding a significant number of rubber bands and the littering problem this was causing.

In response to questions, the Head of Place and Space explained that the funding for equipment was being spent as expected and the financial report would continue to be updated. Processes were in place to enable quick purchases using procurement cards; there was a longer process for larger items of expenditure. The Operatives would attend any areas within BTAC in response to reports from Members and members of the public. Any reports made that were not within the Operatives' remit would be forwarded to the relevant department.

Members' comments included the importance of advertising the service and that the Operatives covered the whole of the BTAC area, as well as encouraging people to report work that needed to be done.

**Action: PP**

1. Compile a list of items purchased for the BTAC Operatives from the £5,000 allocated by BTAC for equipment;

2. Liaise with the Communications team with respect to advertising the good work carried out by the Operatives and to encourage members of the public to report requests for improvements needed, perhaps through an article in a local newspaper;
3. If possible, provide a breakdown of time spent by the BTAC Operatives in each ward.

**RESOLVED: That a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to Royal Mail to ask that more care be taken with the rubber bands used by postal workers, which is causing a littering issue.**

**98 WORK PROGRAMME - STANDING ITEM**

Members agreed to add the following items, with dates to be confirmed:

- Invitation to the Road Safety Partnership to discuss speed indicating devices
- The Community Hub on London Road, its use and its future
- Update on upgrade of CCTV cameras in Central Park

The Meeting ended at 8.05 pm