

Present: Councillor Paul Goodale (Chairman), (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alistair Arundell, Alison Austin, Alan Bell, Viven Edge, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Brian Rush, Yvonne Stevens and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –
Head of Place and Space and Senior Democratic Services Officer

13 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian and Colin Woodcock.

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the Committee's last meeting, held on 12th June 2019, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question from Mr Paul Palmer, a member of the public, submitted in accordance with the Council's constitution:

"Are the gates of the central park left open due to cost cutting at the council or just that they don't care about the residents that live around the park that have to endure the constant Anti social behaviour? "

Answer to the public question by Councillor Paul Goodale:

"Thank you very much for your question Mr Palmer.

Following a request by Members of this Committee at their meeting in January this year, a report was presented to the February Committee meeting to specifically consider security of Central Park and if there was any evidence to suggest that the decision to leave the park open at all times had resulted in an adverse impact on crime and anti-social behaviour. Evidence provided by the Police to inform the report identified that crime and antisocial behaviour reports were lower in 2017 and in 2018, than when the park had been locked at night. The Police also reported that the type and number of complaints concerning Central Park did not provide any concern to Lincolnshire Police.

Whilst the decision to keep the park open and accessible to the public 24 hours a day has delivered financial savings, there were operational reasons that necessitated the decision, such as the difficulties encountered when ushering the public from the park prior to locking up on light summer evenings. The boundary fences around the park also provide little deterrence to any individual steadfastly determined to commit crime or anti-social behaviour, hence BTAC determined to divert resources from other parks in the Borough to the enhancement of the CCTV capability in Central Park. I am pleased to report that an order has been placed for this work and solicitors instructed.

I would also like to take this opportunity to share my appreciation for the work undertaken by Council staff who maintain the Central Park facilities each and every day, work that Committee Members will understand would need to be done, whether the park remained open 24 hours a day or was locked at night."

Invited to ask a supplementary question, Mr Palmer asked whether the enhancement of the CCTV system meant there would be more cameras and extra lighting, because when reporting incidents through the 101 service, people could not give a description of the people involved because there was insufficient lighting.

In response, the Head of Place and Space explained that the enhancement would not mean extra cameras and lighting; there would be an upgrade of the system, which would take place in the next month or so, adding that lighting was also known to attract people into parks.

16 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

Mr Abbott addressed the meeting about the gates of Central Park being left unlocked and suggested that there be a trial period, perhaps over two months, using volunteers to lock and unlock the gates. He volunteered to do so one day a week and he was sure that other volunteers would easily be found to support this trial, which would allow BTAC to assess whether this made a difference.

17 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 project BTAC reserve at the year-end. The budget and project outturn position were detailed in Appendix 1.

Members commented that the change of the report's format made it easier to understand.

<p>RESOLVED: That the projected financial position for the year and the reserve amounts at the year-end be noted.</p>
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18 UPDATE ON WORK OF BTAC OPERATIVES - STANDING ITEM

The Head of Place and Space presented the regular update on the work of the BTAC Operatives, which set out the details of work undertaken during May to July 2019 with 'before and after' photographs to illustrate particular jobs.

Members commended the work of the operatives and the significant impact of their work in improving the appearance of the town centre.

In response to questions, the Head of Place and Space explained that the operatives' equipment and vehicles were stored at the Council's depot and there had been some relocation recently. The operatives helped set up and clear away after events in line with BTAC's original request that they be involved in all operations; it would be very difficult to hold some events without their help.

Action: PP

Examine the software that details the locations on the 'before and after' photographs.

The Head of Place and Space explained that the CCTV system in Central Park was quite old and due to be upgraded in the next few weeks. The new cameras would have infra-red capability which would mean they would perform better in lower light as well as improving images. There were three cameras covering Central Park and the improvements should increase the hours covered. The upgrade would be complete in the whole of the BTAC area in two to three months.

Action: PP

1. Report back to the Committee on the light levels and whether they will identify faces at night, and whether they will be multi-head cameras.
2. Report back on requirements in terms of insurance and training etc. if a volunteer group was to be formed to lock the gates of Central Park.

19 WORK PROGRAMME - STANDING ITEM

Members considered the work programme and put forward the following items:

2nd October

- Invite Boston's Policing Inspector to attend, though Members were reminded that questions should be submitted in advance of the meeting.
- Report back from the Committee's Tour of Assets.

27th November

- An update on alternative sites for the speed indicating device (SID)
- (Possibly January) Report on an upgrade of Fenside.

The following matters would be investigated and reported back to Members:

- Where to direct requests for street lights to remain switched on in particularly dangerous areas and, if it should be the Committee to deal with these, whether it should do so in the same way as parish councils.
- Funding for CCTV cameras for Fenside to address public fears since the housing association previously funding them took the decision to switch them off. This was to form part of a review of CCTV provision for the whole borough that would be reported to the relevant Scrutiny Committee and BTAC would wait for the outcome of that review.
- Costing of the provision of jet-washing streets in line with many other authorities.

In addition:

- Councillor Brian Rush volunteered to join Councillors Martin Griggs and Alan Bell on the Open Spaces Working Group.
- Details of crimes outlined by two Members had been forwarded to Lincolnshire Police.
- It was noted that there would be an update on the Night-Time Economy Task and Finish Group at the next meeting of the Environment and Performance Committee, to be held on 24th September.

The Meeting ended at 7.35 pm