

Present: Councillor Paul Goodale (Chairman), Councillor Colin Woodcock (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alison Austin, Alan Bell, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Viven Edge, Deborah Evans, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Brian Rush, Yvonne Stevens and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Head of Place and Space and Senior Democratic Services Officer

Guest: Inspector Fran Harrod, Boston's Policing Inspector, Lincolnshire Police

Observers: Councillors Tracey Abbott, Paul Skinner and Nigel Welton

Also in attendance: County Councillor P Cooper

32 APOLOGIES

None.

33 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on the 2nd October 2019, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Head of Place and Space reported that £333.40 had been received from the scrap value of the cast iron bins. Letters of thanks would be sent to express appreciation of the work of the volunteers involved with the Christmas events following the successful Switch-On evening. The remaining actions contained in the minutes had been carried out.

35 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Members who were also Cabinet Members made declarations as follows. Councillor Martin Griggs declared that he had attended the Cabinet meeting of 23rd October, but had taken no part in discussion of BTAC's recommendation on the Events Programme. Councillor Yvonne Stevens declared that, as she had not attended the BTAC meeting at which the recommendation had been agreed, she had taken part in Cabinet's consideration of it and, therefore, she would abstain in this matter.

36 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question from Mr Darron Abbott:

"Mr Chairman at the last meeting of this Committee a request for an additional £27,000 was requested by the relevant department at the Council to fund additional events for the year 20/21.

Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC)
27 November 2019

“This request was granted unanimously by the committee, as the chairman were you aware that at no time had a proper budget been drawn up to arrive at the amounts requested?”

“I have supplied you with a copy of an email from one of the Senior officers and the contents of that email states that there is no breakdown of how the whole £66,500 is to be spent. Are you aware of this fact and that no breakdown will be available until March of next year?”

Dear Mr. Abbott

I refer to your recent e-mail regarding your request for a breakdown of how the money for each event is going to be spent.

Cabinet at its 23rd October meeting was asked to approve the budget allocation for events within the 2020/21 financial year as the total exceeded the BTAC delegation limit. The Cabinet did not approve the recommendation and instead deferred its decision until the next Cabinet on the 4th December. The individual projects themselves are matters for BTAC, but at this point, the budget has yet to be approved and individual events developed. Officers will continue to develop detailed costings based on formal budgets that will be approved by Members in March 2020.

Regards
Phil Perry

Answer from the Chairman:

“I am aware. BTAC sets the budget parameters for Officers to work to and report back on as necessary.”

As a supplementary question, Mr Abbott asked whether the Chairman’s proposal (Minute 38 refers) was a deliberate attempt to avoid having to provide a financial breakdown.

In response, the Chairman explained that there had been no efforts to avoid scrutiny and the information was available for all to see. He had asked officers to provide him with full costings and he was confident his proposal could be delivered. BTAC’s recommendation for an additional £27,000 for the Events Programme for 2020/21 had been brought to Cabinet by the Portfolio Holder, but he then left and the Chairman did not know if he had had detailed proposals.

37 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

Mr Abbott addressed the Committee, again referring to the Committee’s decision at its last meeting to recommend that Cabinet approve an additional £27,000 for the 2020/21 Events Programme, asserting that the Committee should have asked for a detailed breakdown to check it was proposed to be spent properly and that that was the reason that it was deferred by Cabinet.

Mr Abbott then referred to the new proposal for £9,999.99 additional money and asserted that a breakdown of proposed expenditure should be provided to satisfy the Nolan Principles in terms of accountability.

Inspector Fran Harrod, Boston's Policing Inspector, then addressed the Committee and gave an update as follows.

General Policing

In October, there had been 1,245 calls to the police, which was a decrease. The number of crimes had also gone down to 545. Crime reporting online had gone up to 55, which was encouraging.

Many calls did not relate to police matters and often involved welfare matters, some of which were the responsibility of Social Services. One issue that persisted, and the highest number of calls, related to incidents involving mental health issues. About one-third of calls had an element of this. The suicide rate was high and many reports involved a crisis, which meant the police spent a significant amount of time keeping people alive.

Crime types

The top types of crime had changed very little. Assault accounted for 74%, showing an increase across the county. Of these, 26% were now recorded as a second crime under the new crime-counting rules in order to record crimes that involved *controlling* and *coercive* behaviour, which meant every domestic abuse case was recorded as two incidents.

Across Boston, there had been a significant increase in drug offences recorded; this was welcome news, as it meant that people were being caught and arrested.

Street drinking

Last month, under the incremental warning system operated with the Council's Community Safety team, six people had received the first warning letter and one person had been issued with a second.

Urination and defaecation

This had been discussed with the Community Safety team and the plan from now on was that, where there was a photo or video of an incident, the offences would be treated as littering, which the Council could prosecute. Details could be provided by email and the press could publicise offenders in the same way as the "name and shame" littering offenders. A fixed penalty ticket of £150 was issued. Members were urged to encourage members of the public to make reports. It would be well-publicised and it was hoped it would make a difference.

Anti-social behaviour reports

From 15th November, improvements had been put in place to update people who reported anti-social behaviour should receive a call back to update them on what action was taken as a result and what action they could take themselves. This would be monitored by the Community Safety team.

Homelessness

Following a conference organised by Boston's former Policing Inspector, and the hard work of the Council's Housing Solutions Manager, there had been significant progress in dealing with homelessness through joined-up work with the police and relevant agencies. A system of colour-coded cards was being considered: first green, yellow then red. The green card advised people that an outreach support worker would come to see them. The second letter/ yellow card would warn that unless they engaged with help being offered enforcement was likely. A community protection warning would be the next step.

The annual homelessness count had recorded 18 people, though a few more were known to agencies as being homeless. Prosecution was pointless; it was better for them to have help, but there were sanctions if this help was not taken up.

Youths on bikes

Working with the Community Safety team, 20 youths had been identified causing problems on bikes in the town. The majority had attended the station with their parents to watch CCTV that had recorded their anti-social behaviour and were then served with anti-social behaviour letters. They were advised about the *Positive Futures* project, which would show them what other activities they could get involved with, but they were also warned that if youths continued to terrorise people, enforcement with partner agencies such as housing could see any tenancies put at risk. A civil injunction was the next step if needed.

Clean up Boston

The Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner Safer Together Research Panel was for anyone who wanted a direct voice. People could sign up and give their opinion whilst retaining anonymity.

Recruitment

Boston would receive 50 new officers in the first year of the current recruitment process. After that, figures were not yet known. Inspector Harrod was extremely keen to secure local people to the posts and work continued with Boston College to this end.

Licensing

Inspector Harrod reported significant progress with respect to dealing with premises selling illegal cigarettes. The Council had refused two more premises licenses following

hearings based on police evidence and the police were in the process of preparing more evidence for further hearings/ reviews.

Community Alcohol Partnership

The latest work involved students carrying out licensed premises checks and training shopkeepers.

At the end of the update, Inspector Harrod urged Members to contact her should they have any questions.

Members' questions

A Member had submitted a question prior to the meeting regarding the public's view of "the actual or perceived invisibility of the police on the ground", and explained that this was particularly in the Market Place and the importance of dealing with minor crime before it escalated. Another Member referred to recent incidents of purse-snatching in the Market Place and Aldi and how people felt unsafe getting money from the cash point.

In response, Inspector Harrod agreed that, ideally, there would be more police officers out in the community, which was a general view expressed by the public, but there had to be a balance of resources. The force also often received thanks and, at times, even queries as to why there was a police presence. It was important to raise awareness of how much was being done, as a lot of police work was not highly visible.

The fear of crime in town centres was understandable. However, a team of five officers patrolled the town centre every day; three in Fenside and two to the east going through the town centre. Also, ongoing work with the homelessness was important to ensure people were not loitering.

In response to other questions, Inspector Harrod explained that it had not been possible to train up a member of staff to deal with social media with respect to the types and numbers of crimes, as that person had had to replace another on higher priority work. However, it was still hoped that this would happen.

Young people were referred to the *Positive Futures* programme of activities by organisations such as the police and schools etc.

Inspector Harrod was thanked for her attendance and input.

38 2020-21 EVENTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

[The Members who were also Cabinet Members made declarations as follows. Councillor Martin Griggs declared that he had attended the Cabinet meeting of 23rd October, but had taken no part in discussion of BTAC's recommendation on the Events Programme. Councillor Yvonne Stevens declared that, as she had not attended the BTAC meeting at which the recommendation had been agreed, she had taken part in Cabinet's consideration of it and, therefore, she would abstain in this matter.]

The Chairman presented a report which provided an update on the outcomes of BTAC's recommendation to the 23rd October Cabinet Meeting, when it considered the planning programme of events for the 2020/21 financial year, with an increased budget of £27,000 to support the delivery.

The Chairman advised BTAC that he had attended the meeting to address Cabinet when it was decided that the request for approval of an additional £27,000 expenditure for the 2020/21 events programme be deferred until the next meeting of the Cabinet, for a detailed report on the proposed events and associated expenditure to be considered.

The Chairman commented that he had no more detail than BTAC had and did not know what information was wanted; therefore, as he was unable to report to Cabinet, he asked officers to draft an alternative proposal that did not require Cabinet's approval as an alternative option and this was attached to the report.

The proposal was based on Option Two, which would have cost an additional £12,000. Where Option One aimed to keep all the free community events and add/combine some of the existing larger scale events, Option Two focused on larger scale events within the BTAC funded events programme with a more limited programme of smaller scale community events delivered principally through the Boston Big Local funding stream. The revised Option re-profiled some events to reduce the Option Two additional cost by £2,000 to keep within the £10,000 BTAC delegated authority.

The Chairman stressed the report had not been submitted in order to avoid scrutiny. Officers had been asked to provide detailed costings, which they had done, though this was a budget and the amounts might not all be spent. He had tried to include as many events as possible within his proposal; in particular, *Party in the Park*, which the Committee had been in favour of. The Committee had already committed to holding the *Through the Ages* event, though Members could discontinue the event after 2020 if they wished.

The recommendation was for the Committee to determine the way forward and the Chairman welcomed debate, adding that he had previously supported Option Two, for an additional amount of £12,000 and that the former Portfolio Holder had supported the option for an additional £27,000. A decision needed to be made as delaying the matter until January would leave too short a timescale for arranging events.

The Chairman proposed that the proposal set out in the appendix to the report for £9,999.99 for the 2020/21 Events Programme be approved and this was seconded.

During debate, a Member queried the need for £27,000 and referred to events that ran at a loss. It was suggested the Committee look at increasing income by scaling-up events and increasing publicity, and that Members needed to wait until a new Portfolio Holder was in place.

The Chairman pointed out that most events were aimed at local people and that the Portfolio Holder was a Council role, separate from BTAC.

Another Member asserted that, although the Committee had to have regard to costs, its role was strategic, not operational. It was for officers to know the operational details, for which they were accountable, and the system of checks and balances was already in

place. It was agreed that advertising should be increased, but it was pointed out that although some events made a loss, they were not held to make a profit; they were held for the people of the town area, who were already paying for events by way of the precept, and particularly for those who could not otherwise afford to attend.

An amendment was then proposed and seconded to refer the Committee's original recommendation for an additional £27,000 back to Cabinet, as Cabinet might have approved this had a Portfolio Holder been in place, in the hope that the new Portfolio Holder would have a full understanding of the matter and be able to answer Members' questions; then, if Cabinet did not approve the recommendation, that the Chairman's proposal for £9,999.99 be approved so that the events programme was not held up.

This was seconded with the assertion that officers could be trusted and relied upon to carry out their operational role, that £27,000 was not a significant sum compared to other costs and that Cabinet had to trust BTAC to spend money wisely.

Members all commended the quality of the events, which were lifting the town, and were not put on for profit, but to enhance the town and serve its population. They were satisfied with their evaluation of the option for £27,000 to be added to the budget and frustration with Cabinet's decision to defer the matter in order to receive more information, when Cabinet had been supplied with the same information as BTAC had received and could have requested whatever they needed before the meeting.

It was remarked that care would have to be taken in choosing events would not go ahead, if that was necessary, and to continue to examine what had worked well. The *Christmas Market*, *Illuminate* and *Christmas Lights* had improved significantly; it was regrettable that the Controlling Migration Funding was ceasing and an evaluation should be arranged as soon as possible to ensure the event was of the same high standard next year. Other smaller events, such as the *1940s Event*, would be improve in the same way and the returning *Party in the Park* event would not be large-scale to begin with.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive explained that Cabinet had delegated executive decision-making to BTAC for the functions and activity funded by the BTAC precept.

A Member commended the quality and volume of the work of the Head of Place and Space, Town Centre Services Manager and the Chairman.

The Chairman then confirmed that he was happy with the amendment and withdrew his original proposal and his seconder agreed.

Invited to address the Committee, another Cabinet Member explained that Cabinet was fully behind everything the Committee was doing and commended what it had achieved. At the Cabinet meeting there had been insufficient details of the proposed expenditure and he had made a subsequent request for this.

The Chairman reiterated that Cabinet had received the same information as BTAC prior to its meeting.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Committee's previous recommendation, that an additional £27,000 expenditure be approved in order to go ahead with Option One for the 2020/21 Events Programme, be referred back to Cabinet in the expectation that the new Portfolio Holder will be able to answer any questions from Cabinet Members.**
- 2. If the previous recommendation is not approved, the Chairman's proposal for £9,999.99 for the 2020/21 Events Programme be approved in order that the programme is not delayed.**

39 SETTING UP A TOWN COUNCIL

The Committee looked at the background information attached to the agenda pack, which had been requested by the Chairman in response to requests from some Members, to assist the Committee to consider whether BTAC should be a Town Council before asking for a report to be drafted with detailed information.

It was noted that the process for setting up a town council had to be triggered by a 1,800-signature petition followed by a Governance Review, which would take a year.

One Member who had requested the information expressed the view that a Town Council was needed in order to address a "democratic deficiency". Other areas in the borough were covered by parish councils, but the town wards were covered by BTAC, which did not have the same powers, and more needed to be done for the residents of the town.

Others agreed, particularly as the town's population was growing. It would be a significant step to take, but would achieve self-determination and it would be worthwhile investigating the options.

In particular, there was frustration that the Committee had to have Cabinet approval for higher levels of expenditure and that the Committee's recent recommendation to Cabinet for funding for the events programme had been deferred. However, it was suggested that the recommendation might have been approved had the former Portfolio Holder been present to present it and another suggestion was to ask that the limit on BTAC's expenditure be raised.

There was also a view that a town council would create another layer of government and additional work for officers when the Committee worked well as it was. The Committee currently had a good budget and officers; a town council would need new members, officers and clerk as well as a base to meet and would have to pay for services such as emptying litter bins and lighting the streets.

It was then proposed and seconded that the matter of setting up a town council should not be considered.

During further debate, the Chief Executive pointed out that BTAC had executive powers, delegated from Cabinet, and advised Members to consider what they believed they

could do as a town council that they could not presently do as BTAC. Officers would investigate the options if Members wished. It would be a decision for Cabinet to consider if BTAC wished to recommend that the financial limit on its expenditure be raised.

In response to a suggestion that the Committee could also investigate moving back to the full committee system, the Chairman advised Members that this would have to be considered by Full Council, not BTAC.

[The meeting adjourned temporarily and Councillor Viven Edge left at this point.]

An amendment was then proposed and seconded that the matter be deferred to a future meeting and when put to the vote this was approved as the substantive motion. A vote was then taken on the substantive motion and it was:

RESOLVED: That consideration of the possibility of setting up a town council be deferred to a future meeting.

40 BTAC 2019/20 FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2019

The Accountancy Manager presented a report which provided the Committee with a report on BTAC's financial position, showing the budget and projected outturn (full year spend) for the 2019/20 year, and the projected BTAC reserve at the year-end 31st March 2020.

A Member referred to the difficulty of understanding financial information.

Action: PJ/TS

Add a third sheet to the financial report to give a 'bottom line' statement.

Members were advised that a finance workshop had been arranged for the Committee, to take place on 8th January 2020.

41 UPDATE ON TOWN CENTRE OPERATIVES ACTIVITY

The Head of Place and Space presented a report which provided an update on the BTAC Operatives' Activity through October and November.

- £333.40 had been received for scrappage for the old litter bins, which would go to the Operatives' budget to carry out other work.
- 39 more bins had been refurbished, 110 new bins had been installed with cigarette reservoirs, (90 funded by BTAC and 20 funded by Town Centre improvement fund).
- Since the end of August, Local Authority Support, the Council's enforcement partners, had issued 161 fixed penalty notices for cigarette litter.
- The Operatives were working with "Voice From The Gutter", a lady who wished to remain anonymous who volunteered for 2 very early mornings each week cleaning various areas mainly around John Adams Way and Wide Bargate.
- 232 Volunteers had now signed up as Community Litter Champions, lots of these had been involved in the Big Boston Clean Up and decided they wanted to keep their own residential areas clean on a regular basis.

- From 1st November 2018 until 31st October 2019 1,255 fly tips were collected and
 - 211 were collected the same day they were reported
 - 977 were collected within 2 working days (approximately 77%)
 - 67 were outside of 2 days (this was primarily due to enforcement investigations and increased volume reported)

Members expressed their appreciation once again for the great work carried out by the Operatives and commended the Environment & Sustainability Officer. It was suggested the improvements achieved be publicised, in line with the feedback from the Peer Review.

The Head of Place and Space confirmed that Members could send details of any work required for the Operatives to carry out by using the BTAC enquiry email address: BTAC.enquiries@boston.gov.uk or they could speak directly to the Environment & Sustainability Officer.

Action: PP

1. Publish the list of improvements carried out by the BTAC Operatives on the Council's website.
2. Advise Members of the action the Council can take regarding littered private land.

42 PROPOSED REMOVAL OF BT PAYPHONES

The Council had been consulted by BT regarding proposals to remove eight payphones in the Borough. Three of these payphones were within the BTAC area and the Environment and Performance Committee asked the Committee to consider whether it wished to object to the proposals. Any comments had to be received by the Development Management Department in writing by 17:15 on 6th December 2019.

During debate, there was a view that one of the phones, located on Carlton Road, should be retained by BT, as it was in a key location and the consultation documents indicated it was used heavily. It was pointed out that the payphone was in a particularly poor condition; it was damaged as well as dirty.

Action: PP/JC

Write to BT to request that the payphone on Carlton Road be cleaned and repaired.

RESOLVED: That the Committee objects to the removal of the payphone on Carlton Road on the grounds that the high volume of calls indicates it is significantly needed and this objection should be relayed to the Development Management Department to be included in the Council's consultation response.

43 WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

A copy of the 2019/20 BTAC Work Programme was attached in the agenda.

The Meeting ended at 9.05 pm