

Present: Councillor Paul Goodale (Chairman), Councillor Stephen Woodliffe (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Deborah Evans, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Martin Howard MSc. PCGM, Cert Ed, Brian Rush and Yvonne Stevens

Officers –

Assistant Director - Support Services & Partnership, Assistant Director - Regulation, Section 151 Officer, Accountancy Manager (Revenues and Systems), Senior Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Apprentice

96 APOLOGIES

There were apologies for absence from Councillors Viven Edge, Alison Austin and Alan Bell.

97 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2020 were agreed as a correct record, to be signed by the Chairman.

98 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Members were reminded that a Member Briefing would be held on 8th February at 6 pm to discuss the protocol for dealing with illegal encampments, which representatives from Lincolnshire Police would be attending.

99 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

100 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

101 TASK & FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS - REGULATING AND SAFEGUARDING THE ECONOMY

Members debated the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group review of *Regulating and Safeguarding the Economy* and agreed that they be included in BTAC's work programme, to allow the Committee to consider:

- Locking Central Park gates overnight to address on-going issues of anti-social behaviour (ASB) within the park;
- A trial period of four months to allow monitoring of incidents during that time to either support, or not, the closing of the gates permanently overnight;
- Funding the cost of closing the gates for the trial period or on a permanent basis;
- Funding a service for Central Park to address ongoing ASB in the park.

Action: CA

Prepare a detailed report with costs and options relating to locking the gates of Central Park and the provision of a service to address anti-social behaviour in the park.

102 PROPOSED BTAC BUDGET 2021/22 AND FORECAST TO 2025/26

The Section 151 Officer presented a report, which set out options for Members to consider in order to make a recommendation to Cabinet and Council on the precept and Band D Council Tax levy for properties in the BTAC area for the 2021/22 financial year.

The report detailed the current position and the proposed levy for the Council to approve for 2021/22. BTAC Members had increased the precept in recent years to help make the town a better place and initiatives had been progressed to fund public conveniences, Central Park spend, footway lights and open spaces, events and town centre operatives. The proposed budget included an inflationary increase this year, which included an unallocated sum to enable members to support further measures to improve the town.

The level of Council Tax was a key factor for the Committee when considering its future aspirations.

BTAC Members had attended a budget workshop earlier in February. Based on feedback from Members on the preferred scale of future BTAC operations and Council Tax levels going forward, the report set out the effects of changes to the assumptions Council Tax and implications for the Committee's resources if the precept was increased by 1.91%, 0%, 0.5% and 1% and then 2% per year in each case.

The report concluded with the recommendation for BTAC to recommend to Cabinet and Council the level of its Special Expense precept for 2021/22 at £731,479, and the Council Tax charge of £76.95 at Band D.

During debate, Members made the following main points:

- It was not clear what the recharges for Support Services related to;
- The cost of maintenance of public toilets seemed excessive, particularly the charge for water rates;
- The amount charged for use of the toilets should be reconsidered.

In response to these and other questions, the Section 151 Officer advised that:

- Each 1% increase in the precept would equate to approximately £7,000 additional money in the budget;
- Support services costs included officer time spent on writing reports and associated administration;
- A report on the Events budget would be submitted to the next meeting;
- The charges for the toilets were currently 20p per visit and produced an annual income of £14,000.

Action: AS/PP

1. Provide a breakdown of support charges;
2. Establish whether the water rates charge related purely to the toilets;
3. Request details of rent charged for the café unit in Central Park.

It was then proposed and seconded that it be recommended to Cabinet and Full Council that there be a 0% increase in BTAC's precept in order to give members of the public some respite from the financial impact of the pandemic.

The Section 151 Officer referred to the recent Audit & Governance Committee meeting, when a proposal for a 0% increase related to the increase in Council Tax. A 0% increase in BTAC's precept would not affect the amount of funds the Council would have and BTAC's budget could withstand a precept freeze.

Other Members agreed that BTAC had sufficient funds in reserves to be able to afford not to increase the precept and this would help residents.

Members discussed the charge for the toilets following a suggestion to increase it. One pointed out that the charge was set in order to cover the Council's costs and to prevent the facilities from being vandalised. However, some felt that this was unfair to those who used the facilities whilst visiting the park and that closing them at night would prevent vandalism.

The Section 151 Officer pointed out that if the precept was not increased and the charge for the toilets removed, then Members would have to identify how to replace that lost income or the budget would not balance.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To recommend to Cabinet and Full Council that the level of the BTAC Special Expense precept for 2021/22 be £702,696 and the Council Tax charge of £75.51 at Band D.**
- 2. To receive a detailed report with costs and options relating to the charge and opening hours of the public conveniences at Central Park.**

103 WORK PROGRAMME - STANDING ITEM

Members agreed that the Chairman would write a letter on behalf of the Committee to support Boston Squash Club's application for funding from the East Coast Communities Fund for the cost of upgrading their facilities, if requested by the funding body.

The Committee agreed to add the following reports to the work programme:

- School Street Application by Haven High Academy
- Events Review 2021
- BTAC Small Grants Scheme
- Community Champion's Funding
- Open Spaces Improvements 'Wish List'
- Central Park – Costs and options on locking gates overnight and provision of a service to address anti-social behaviour
- Public Conveniences – Costs and options on charges and opening hours

The Meeting ended at 8.35 pm