

Present: Councillor Paul Goodale (Chairman), Councillor Stephen Woodliffe (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Anne Dorrian, Viven Edge, Neill Hastie, Brian Rush and Yvonne Stevens

Officers –

Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure, Deputy Chief Executive (Programme Delivery & SIRO), Local Communities Development Officer & BTAC Grant Administrator and Democratic Services Officer

**43 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were tabled for Councillors Alison Austin, Alan Bell, Katie Chalmers, Anton Dani, and Martin Griggs.

**44 MINUTES**

Committee agreed the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 24 March 2022.

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

No updates tabled.

**46 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None tabled.

**47 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions.

**48 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME**

No public representation received.

**49 UPDATE ON PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PROVISION BOSTON BOROUGH.**

The Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery provided committee with a brief verbal update in respect of the provision of Public Conveniences within Boston. Members were reminded that the Council had submitted a bid for Changing Places Toilets in September 2021.

Receipt of the outcome had taken significantly longer than had initially been expected and the brief update was to inform committee of the current position.

The £30million available nationally had been significantly oversubscribed. Lincolnshire had been awarded £860k and the partnership had received £660k with Boston being allocated £210k.

The bid was for the provision of extended disabled facilities at four sites within the town. Central Park, Bargate Green, Lincoln Lane and St. Botolph's / Blenkin Memorial Hall for facilities which would contribute significantly to the lives of those with restrictive living ability by providing a much needed facility for use within the town. The units were double the size of standard toilets.

As a result of the funding the Council had options including siting the pods within the facilities at Central Park and Lincoln Lane and having an additional building alongside the sites at Bargate Green and Blenkin Hall.

An independent review would be carried out in the near future to ascertain costs of full refurbishment of the existing sites and also to give advice on the provision of the disabled facilities.

The funding received would not be enough to pay for the disabled facilities at all four sites and the bid had been subject to part match funding by the Council. Indicative costs per facility were approximately £75000 with match funding for each being approximately £20000.

Once the review had been undertaken a detailed report would be tabled at BTAC to include the cost of refurbishment of the sites and match funding required to progress any provision of the disabled facilities.

Committee comments followed which included

Members were reassured that the disabled pods would only be sited at existing sites and there would be no new site provision of additional toilets. Reassurance was also provided officers would take the specialist advice on integration of any pods into any existing site. On questioning how the funding would be affected if the Council only supported two pods, Members were advised that the funding predicated on part contribution from the Council. Further comment sought possible visual documentation of the proposed pods to enable members to gain a perspective prior to receiving the final report and concern was tabled at the cost of each pod with a Member noted they felt it to be excessive. The Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery advised he would forward examples of the pods for reference and that the cost included ground works, all facilities and advanced technology within the pods.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for the update report and confirmed that whilst committee were interested in the provision of the four pods, their final decision would be dependent on the outcomes of the review and also the cost to BTAC for providing the facilities.

## **50 MEMBER WORKING GROUP. REVIEW OF BTAC TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Assistant Director – Culture and Leisure (Lead Office for the committee) presented the report and confirmed that BTAC's role was to exercise and perform the powers and duties of the Council in relation to the following functions in respect of the non-parished Boston Town area of the Borough BTAC Small Grant Scheme is for community groups and organisations wanting to contribute to their town centre community.

BTAC also took responsibility for the town's Special Area Expense Account, and reflected and represented the views of the town wards and its residents. The last review of the BTAC Constitution undertaken in 2005, was subsequently approved at the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2005 at Full Council, and came into force from April 2006.

Appendix A, detailed the current BTAC Constitution and Appendix B, the corresponding Terms of Reference. Since April 2006, BTAC had encountered a number of changes to its provision of services.

The first change was an agreement by BTAC to transfer additional Council services into its responsibilities in July 2016, which included services such as the management of Central Park and Town Centre Toilets and Events.

In August 2017, BTAC also agreed a recommendation to Cabinet to fund the provision of Events (with the exception of the Mayfair) and Town Centre Maintenance Operatives. In September 2020, Cabinet determined that it would remove the requirement for the Committee to seek Cabinet approval of expenditure over £10,000.

BTAC at its 3<sup>rd</sup> February Committee meeting discussed changes to its Constitution and agreed to undertake two reviews to report back to the 14th April meeting.

The first review would be the current grants scheme, which is subject to a separate report, and the second would be a review of the current Terms of Reference for BTAC. The agreed membership included the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Councillors Katie Chalmers and Martin Griggs and again facilitated by the committee lead officer.

The Working Group subsequently met on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February to review the Terms of Reference within BTAC's Constitution. It determined the current functions on BTAC and its delegations from Cabinet and put forward proposed changes for the Committee and Council to consider.

Appendix C to this report detail the proposed changes within the Constitution and Terms of Reference for BTAC.

Committee comment and questioning followed which included:

There was agreement by Members of the change in liaison with Cabinet in that the Chairman of the BTAC also be the Liaison for Cabinet. The Chairman confirmed he had questioned the role of liaison officer for BTAC stating he always addressed anything for BTAC at Cabinet. He further advised he had written to both the Leader and Deputy Leader seeking their feed into the change but noted that no response had been received.

Members were advised that final agreement would be via Full Council agreement of changes to the Constitution. On questioning why Portfolio Holders did not attend to present reports to BTAC the Chairman agreed that they should be asked to do so moving forward.

Clarification was also given that the deletion in respect of provision and maintenance of urban open play areas was to clarify the position of not being prescriptive on what BTAC maintained and did not maintain as the situation did change.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That BTAC having considered the proposed revisions to the BTAC Constitution recommend the revisions go forward as part of the ongoing review of the Constitution for approval by Full Council.**

## **51 MEMBER WORKING GROUP - REVIEW BTAC SMALL GRANTS SCHEME**

The Local Communities Officer and Administrator of the BTAC Small Grant Scheme presented the report confirming that a review had been undertaken of the Small Grants Scheme with the options for recommendations noted for committee determination.

The BTAC Small Grant Scheme was for community groups and organisations wanting to contribute to their town centre community. The scheme was operated using BTAC's Small Grants Policy with a scoring matrix based on the requirements of the Committee that it be consistent with BTAC's Terms of Reference and constitution respectively. It was easy to understand; flexible and inclusive; and included a pre-assessment process carried out by officers so that only those applications scoring above a defined threshold are considered by a Working Group of up to 5 members of the committee which makes decisions on awards offered which are then submitted to the full committee for endorsement.

Community Groups and organisations could apply for funding up to £1,000 through the submission of a simple application form. Community groups and organisations are also able to apply to BTAC for grants in excess of the £1,000, which the small grant scheme allows if the project directly benefits the town centre wards of Boston and is innovative and supports the objectives of the Committee.

This process, currently, invited applicants to write directly to the Chairman of the Committee and it was at the Chairman's discretion as to whether it is submitted to the full committee for consideration.

There were currently no checks or balances and it was not reviewed through an application form or considered by the Small Grant Working Group.

Each financial year £9,000 was committed towards offering small grants to community groups operating in and for the benefit of the 8 Town Centre Wards of Boston. The scheme had been in operation since 2005. Prior to 2019/2020 all BTAC small grant underspend was returned to the BTAC reserves at the end of each financial year, with £2,046 being returned in 2017/2018 and £3,368 in 2018/2019.

In 2020, due to Covid-19 and the following restrictions, the small grants programme was effectively halted for the entire year. A small number of applications were process from the previous financial year.

Therefore £18,000 (including the £9,000 from 2020/2021 budget), plus underspend from 2019/20 was made available to spend in 2021/22. A Record of 13 applications had been submitted in Round 1, where £12,680 worth of grants was awarded. Projects did not have to fit any new criteria for covid-19 recovery but this was taken into account when reviewing applications.

At the end of the financial year, the scheme has £3,698 of unallocated funds to carry over into 2022/2023.

During 2021/2022 The Chairman of the Committee received 3 requests for funding in excess of the £1,000 maximum allowed for the small grant scheme. All 3 requests were for funding up to £5,000.

2 out of the 3 applications were rejected by the Chairman who had followed the basic principles of the small grant scheme guidelines. The 3<sup>rd</sup> application was considered by full committee but had not been supported.

BTAC currently had no budget allocated to support applications for funding in excess of £1,000 maximum per grant and any funding agreed in excess of £1,000 maximum per grant has to be found from their main budget.

Committee deliberation followed which included:

On asking how frequently applications for larger grants were submitted, the Local Communities Officer and Administrator of the BTAC Small Grant Scheme advised that it was infrequent but that three such applications had been received last year for up to £5000. The Officer further noted that they were unsure as to why applicants thought they could apply for funding in excess of £1000. When a project would have an effect across the whole BTAC area there was the facility to bring it to committee for consideration however there were no such checks or balances required for such submission.

In response to what checks were made on applications that had been granted the Local Communities Officer and Administrator of the BTAC Small Grant Scheme confirmed that for the small grants each scheme was followed up 3 months after it was granted and evidence of the event taking place was sought. That included proof of spend, invoices, beneficiary support such as letters of thanks and also photographic evidence if available. However, no request had been made to the Officer to provide any reporting on funding in excess of £1000.

Committee agreed the need to be cautious in not increasing the budget being mindful of the current economic climate and of the unallocated funds currently available. However, they further noted the potential need for increased applications due to the same economic climate in that more small organisations might need to submit applications. As such whilst they agreed no increase in the £1000 budget per application, a suggestion of increasing the actual amount of funding to £12000 from £9000 was agreed to enable more applications to be tabled.

Clarification was also provided that the Small Grants Scheme did make the decision on the submissions: the only reason the report of their decision came back to full committee was for information purposes and for the committee to ratify the decision.

**RESOLVED:**

**That BTAC agreed that it retain current small grant offer of applications to a maximum of £1000 but that it increase the BTAC small grant budget to £12000 to allow more applications to be supported.**

It is noted that at this part in the proceedings Councillor Neill Hastie addressed the meeting in respect of a request to position a bench on a highway within the town. The Chairman confirmed that the highway belonged to Lincolnshire County Council and as such the applicant would need to apply direct to the Borough Council to seek a submission on their part. BTAC could do nothing to assist being a committee of the Borough Council.

The Local Communities Officer and Administrator of the BTAC Small Scheme confirmed at this point that she was aware of the request and that the applicant had initially been a recipient of a small grant which in the initial submission indicated placement on BTAC grounds. As this had change to a highway siting, she would look to steer the applicant to the correct department within the Council to take the matter forward.

## **52 BTAC PROJECTED FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2022**

The Assistant Director – Culture and Leisure (Lead Office for the committee) presented the report confirming he would take questions and feed back to finance if required.

The Chairman voiced his apology for the late tabling of the report and also his own disappointment that there was no representative from the finance department in attendance and his sentiments were echoed by Members. However, they all recognised it was a draft report for noting and requested that an officer from finance be in attendance to take questions, when the final annual outturn report was scheduled. Noting the reserves Members agreed it was a sizable amount, but were aware that the allocated reserves had not been taken from it at this point.

A further concern noted the lack of reference to BTAC reserves within the report which noted simply the word reserves. Members all agreed that the wording should read BTAC reserves with the reporting officer to be advised.

A request was made that a finance officer be in attendance at all future meetings, as had historically be the case prior to the changeover from the Council to PSPS.

Members noted the report.

## **53 UPDATE BY LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS FOR BTAC WARDS**

The Chairman expressed his disappointment at the response of the Lincolnshire County Councillors to his invitation to attend and update committee on the work they do for BTAC in the County roles, with a view to helping committee with evidence of case work and in turn seeking information from BTAC members of concerns in their own wards.

Hard copy representation had been tabled in advance of the meeting by Councillor Alison Austin and made available for Members at the meeting who tabled their thanks to Councillor Austin for producing such detailed information which was both of interest to Members and also educational in part with evidence of case work – albeit anonymised, which they had fully expected it to be.

A late submission email had been received by Councillor Martin Griggs and was read out by the clerk and Members noted their thanks but also agreed it would have been preferable to have had the members in attendance to ask questions of.

The lack of any submission or attendance by the other two Councillors Dani and Ashleigh-Morris was found to be dismissive to the committee. The Chairman advised he would be writing to the Councillors to relay his and the committee's disappointment and he would once again stress the value of their representation to the Members.

There was recognition that not all case studies could be anonymised, however those that could be would significantly help non County Councillors and be both informative and educational for them. As Ward Councillors didn't have the connections and knowledge of the County Councillors they would benefit significantly from the County Councillors sharing what information they could.

Further discussion noted seeking Full Council to agree reporting by all of the County Councillors which would be informative to all Ward Members, or seeking an official Scrutiny report to the Corporate and Community Committee. A further suggestion noted having one of each of the four County Councillors reporting to a meeting of BTAC at separate meetings to accommodate their availability.

It was agreed that the Chairman would discuss the options further.

## **54 WORK PROGRAMME - STANDING ITEM**

A representative of Transported had been invited to attend the next scheduled meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> May to provide an overview of their work within the town and report on partnership workings including those with the schools.

The Annual Financial Outturn report was to be confirmed for the next scheduled meeting.

A Member referenced the positive and significant work undertaken a few years ago within the community, to integrate with and understand the cultures of the various members of the Baltic states who had moved into Boston Borough.

It had allowed locals to understand their culture and their reasons for coming to the town and helped them to appreciate the differences in how they lived compared to the British culture. The Member questioned if any such similar work had been / was being undertaken in respect of those who had recently settled into the town from Bulgaria and Romania, to once again help the local population to understand the new communities being established in the town to both inform and to allow locals to integrate with them.

A second request questioned the Council's response to the Ukrainian crisis along with that of the local community. Would it be possible to hear from those who had actively taken supplies; those who have welcomed families into their own homes and also get an updated on what support the Council had given. It would be good for BTAC to gain an overall perspective of what the town had done in support of the ongoing crisis to date.

It was agreed that both suggestions be taken forward and scheduled over a staggered period across the work programme.

A further suggestion noted traffic concerns across the borough. It was agreed officers would look into the suggestion and the possibility of reporting prior to scheduling onto the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 8.20 pm