

Present: Councillor Paul Goodale (Chairman), Councillor Stephen Woodliffe (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alison Austin, Katie Chalmers, Anton Dani, Martin Griggs and Neill Hastie

Officers –

Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure, Community Safety Manager, CCTV Manager, Local Communities Development Officer & BTAC Grant Administrator and Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Paul Skinner Portfolio Holder

Councillor Jonathan Noble Portfolio Holder

96 APOLOGIES

Apologies were tabled for Councillors Alan Bell, Ann Dorrian, Brian Rush and Yvonne Stevens.

97 MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting.

98 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

No updates tabled.

99 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None tabled.

100 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions were tabled.

101 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

None

102 BTAC SMALL GRANTS SCHEME AND BTAC EMPOWERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANT SCHEME

The Local Communities Development Officer and BTAC Grant Administrator presented the report to the committee confirming that 3 applications had been received in Round 3 of the Boston Town Area Committee Small Grant Scheme, which had been considered eligible for consideration and 2 applications received in Round 3 of the Empowering Healthy Communities Grant Scheme, which had also been considered eligible for consideration.

BTAC Small Grants Scheme:

Transported Arts £1,000.00
Contribution to cost of Town Jewels conservation project

Headway Lincolnshire £958.00
Costs towards Support Group established to support brain injury survivors and their families from BTAC area

Zion Methodist Church £250.00
Contribution to 24 months energy costs to support the Warm Spaces Initiative

BTAC Empowering Healthy Communities Grant Scheme:

Health Watch Lincs £1,000.00
Contribution towards the cost of 2PEAKUP Project aimed at supporting people to have the confidence to speak out at public consultations – pilot project for Fenside area

GMLC £1,000.00
To support putting on 50 free self-defence classes to women and girls aged 12+

A member questioned the grant to the GMLC and asked if the defence classes were only for women and girls from BTAC area or from the wider borough and was advised that the GMLC would monitor the scheme to see how many attendees were from the BTAC area. In line with monitoring requirements, following three months delivery of the scheme research would be undertaken to see the scheme had reached BTAC residents. Confirmation was further provided that the funding was not for the GMLC but was for the trainer who would facilitate the classes.

103 CRIME AND DISORDER REPORT TO INCLUDE REPRESENTATION BY LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

The Chairman welcomed Superintendent Pat Coates and Inspector Colin Clarkson from Lincolnshire Police and Claire Seaborne the Safer Lincolnshire Partnerships Business Manager and thanked them for their attendance.

Prior to presenting the report, the Community Safety Manager thanked the Scrutiny Chairman for agreeing that on this occasion, that the report be brought to the BTAC committee to sit alongside the representation to be made by the members of Lincolnshire Police who had already been scheduled to attend this meeting. Confirmation was further provided that the annual reporting would once again be reinstated to the Environment and Performance Committee in June 2023 when the data would be up to date, but the data within the tabled report was very historic and the aim was for members to consider the actual new formatting provided, and comment and suggest any other information which may be required to enhance the proposed new structure.

The Community Safety Manager provided a brief overview of the report tabled and then invited the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership Business Manager to update in respect of section 5 of the report.

Members were duly advised that the a review had been carried out to capture what had happened over the previous 18 months which also ensured the SLP's compliance with its statutory duties and that it was efficient and effective in terms of growth and arrangements. The findings of the review were that the SLP was effective, complied with statutory duty and met its aims and finally was recognised as a true multi agency partnership. As the formal merger moved forward reporting on its progress would come back to the Scrutiny committee.

A strategic assessment had also been undertaken which was a statutory requirements and had proved a large undertaking. It had been an unprecedented approach which had also included assessing the Safe Guarding Adults Board and the Safeguarding Children's Partnership to enable an understanding across all boards effectively.

Members were further advised on a new duty coming forward with a Serious Violence Duty scheduled for January 2024.

At this point in the meeting the Chairman invited questions and comments from members in respect of the information received from the report tabled, whilst reminding committee that the data within the report was historic and no longer a reflection of the current position.

Serious concern was noted at the figures tabled for violence and sexual crime with the CCTV Manager advising that it could be due to how the incidents were catagorised when issues of affray could be included alongside serious issues of violence.

Responding to a question querying evidence packages, the CCTV Manager advised that they were only undertaken following a request from the Police with the evidence being provided on either a DVD or a USB stick. On occasion an evidence package would not be required due to how the Police case progressed but a log of all evidence was kept for six months and the Police were advised of any not collected. Confirmation was provided that the action plan would be returned in full once it was fully completed, reference to it within the report was purely informative as to what would be following once completed.

There was support of a suggestion to include schools and colleges in respect of events like ASB Awareness Week and the benefits of engagement with students either by invitation to the schools or with visits to the CCTV suite which always proved to be of great interest.

Members were advised that coverage of the CCTV Suite was via a rotation system with all operatives covering the night-time shifts. Over the weekend period there were two operatives on at all times. In the week from 11pm until 7am the suite was covered by two operatives and two operatives between midday and 8pm with the hours in-between having coverage by one operator. When a large event / occasion took place in the town there was capacity to have a further operative on site.

The Portfolio Holder voiced his support for the CCTV operation and the wide ranging variety of criminals it succeeded in identifying from the serious and dangerous to the small time. He further paid tribute to the introduction of the Mini-Police and its origins of evolving in the Borough and then being introduced further afield. Neighbourhood policing proved to be really important especially in within rural areas and he praised the introduction of the wrist bands for residents with dementia which enabled the Police and others to locate them speedily when reported missing.

The Community Safety Manager advised that was mindful of the concerns in respect of the proposed reporting and that amendments would be made to allow a greater understanding of the data identified, and also that comparative data would be provided giving a clear contrast over a period.

Superintendent Coates greeted the committee advising he was pleased to be able to meet members. He confirmed he started his new role at Boston on the 5th September 2022 but began his career previously at Boston 27 years ago and was pleased to be back in the Borough. He acknowledged Boston was a different town now but on walking through the town had felt there still to be a lot of good within Boston. He had a broad experience within the Police Force and advised he was keen to address safety issues and invest in neighbourhood and community policing.

Inspector Clarkson introduced himself confirming he had been a Detective Inspector in Boston prior to moving into neighbourhood policing. He had covered serious crimes and managed high profile investigations and his new role enabled him to see both sides of the community. He hoped to address the perception of crime within the town which he felt was unwarranted in some respect, but stressed that fear by both victims and witnesses to crime was very real. Members were further advised that Li

Significant member comment and questioning followed which is collated and included the following

In response to a question seeking a change to patrolling the park on foot as against driving by to enable engagement with the public, members were advised that walk-throughs did take place and engagement with this public did take place to allay fears. Whilst recognising that the public liked to see a physical presence, crime was now so diversified and resources were so stretched that it was not possible to provide continual foot patrols. The Police had to target resources and be more visible when needed.

A number of members voiced their concerns at the perception of crime within the town, stating that for some the negative perception was very real concern. There were residents' too afraid to go out in the evening and some who would not visit the town without somebody accompanying them... It was agreed that a greater understanding of the perception was required to allay fears and it was hoped that with public input into the panels, it would help in addressing the issue and community cohesion was required to help change perspective. The QR code enabled reassurance for those able to access it. Furthermore the Police would be carrying out door to door surveys and providing face to face engagements which could include discussions on the perception of crime. Intelligence was key in making the streets safer and the survey would help in establishing as such.

Referencing hot spots of crime within the borough, confirmation was provided that there was crime both within and around the car park at the Pilgrim Hospital and also within it's the A and E department with assaults on staff and visitors. Members were advised that there were was not the same amount of crime within the rural areas as within the town, albeit there incidents rurally but there was no common theme of crimes between the two.

Concern was noted at use of the Covid period as a reason for reductions in certain crimes. It was recognised that crimes including burglary at residential properties had reduced during that time due to lockdown, but members voiced concern at the number of crimes that were not reported due to the public's lack of faith in the Police responding, with no feedback to reports of crime. A suggestion was made that a simple email response to any report would reassure the sender that it had actually been picked up.

The Police stressed that all crime should be reported and whilst they had to prioritise resources in addressing the severity of a crime, if a series of burglaries was identified then it would trigger action in that area.

Further concern questioned the significant rise in the category of sex and violent crimes with the Police advising that whilst that was the category heading, it actually included a wide breadth of incidents some of which were significantly less serious including harassment and violence without injury.

Ongoing concerns in respect of high volumes of cycling within the town centre which was prohibited and caused distress to many elderly residents, and also ongoing issues of speeding cars within the market place were raised, with members questioning why no enforcement action was taken by officers who clearly saw the incidents on cycling on a daily basis. The Police confirmed they had to prioritise their officers however if the cycling was identified as an issue and causing problems then it could be looked into. In respect of speeding that advised that Lincolnshire had unsafe road networks and road safety was an ongoing priority. Perception of speeding was a problem as sometimes it could be perceived too fast for road conditions but still be under the limit. Enforcement was complicated as to secure a prosecution evidence was required of the speed from two speed cameras between a certain distance.

Ongoing concerns were tabled at the use of drugs within the town which members agreed was a deep seated problem and contributed to the perception of crime and fear by residents. The Police confirmed that whilst they could not reference specific incidents and ongoing cases, they did react to all intelligence which was key in securing prosecutions and had a number of tools to combat areas of identifiable drug use including Licensing powers and the public's own intelligence was also a key support in initially advising of incidents. Members were also advised that at the current time no County Lines were active within Boston.

Seeking clarification of the number of officers on duty at any one time as on occasion there appeared to be a significant number of cars within the Police Station car park, a member was advised that such information could not be divulged. On occasion there could be a number of cars in the car park, but it could be officers attending with perpetrators for the custody suite, attending meetings and other administration matters.

In summary the Chairman thanked Superintendent Coates and Inspector Clarkson for their time and it was agreed that Inspector Coates would attend future BTAC meetings once a schedule was agreed.

104 WORK PROGRAMME

Lincolnshire Housing Partnership to be invited to the March meeting if available.

The Meeting ended at 9.00 pm