

Present:

Councillor Barrie Pierpoint (Chairman), (Vice-Chairman),
Councillors Alison Austin, Dale Broughton, Emma Cresswell, Anton Dani, Neil Drayton,
Anne Dorrian, Paul Gleeson, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Lina Savickiene and
Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure, Community Safety Manager, Events Manager,
Interim Cultural Services Manager and Democratic Services Officer

Guest:

Inspector Colin Clarkson – Lincolnshire Police

11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were tabled by Councillors Patsie Marson and Andy Izard.

12 MINUTES

With the agreement of the committee the Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on 28th September 2023.

13 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

No updates from the previous meeting.

14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Mike Gilbert declared he was a member of Boston Big Local and had been a member at the time when various funding streams and grants had been secured.

Councillor Stephen Woodliffe declared he was a member of the Crime and Police Panel.

Councillor Lina Savickiene declared she was a member of the Boston School of Mosaic

15 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No Public questions

16 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

No Public Speakers.

17 LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE

Inspector Colin Clarkson of Lincolnshire Police addressed the meeting and advised members he had been in his current role for just over a year, prior to which he held the position of Detective Inspector for Boston. A detailed presentation followed which included the following points of information:

Referencing the situation in the county, members were advised that Lincolnshire was one of the lowest funded police forces in U.K at just 45p per person per day as against the national average of 59p per person per day.

Most of the teams in operation were small in number and the previous year had proved to be very challenging not least with the loss of a large number of PCSO's. (Police Community Support Officers).

Addressing the team in Boston, Inspector Clarkson advised it comprised of PCSO's, Police Officers, Sergeants and an Inspector, and the team had lost two PCSO's due to the re-modelling.

Two serious crimes had taken place in the previous year. The first having been Operation Jadeite which was serious disorder and included three incidents of people being attacked and resulted in nineteen juveniles and one adult being identified within three days by a single PCSO. The outcomes of the incident led to ten people being arrested and interviewed and ten interviewed under caution. The key players were identified very quickly. The case was ongoing and under review by the CPS (Crown Prosecution Service).

The second serious incident was Operation Burnt, the unlawful encampment which received 59 calls for service for 21 crimes, with two people being arrested following 13 viable statements by the public. A number of witnesses had unfortunately refused to give statements of evidence and the case was ongoing and under review by the CPS.

Incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) linked to street drinking had reduced by 50% over the previous year, with enforcement by the PSCO's doubling, with 44 referrals in the previous six months, as against 22 in the whole of the previous year. Plans were also in place to continue working with Trading Standards to implement closure orders on shops.

Operation Plotting which had been presented previously to the committee, was an analytical package which looked at serious crime in Boston Town Centre. It had been re-visited and the criteria had been expanded to allow coverage of the whole of the Borough of Boston. Public opinion of Boston included concerns that it was dangerous and people did not feel safe and were worried about going out at night and in the daytime, with issues of concern about groups loitering and concerns for children being out and about.

Inspector Clarkson acknowledged the perception of fear was very real to the residents of Boston and he was not being dismissive of that perception, it was however unfounded when considering comparative data with other areas in the county. The highest category of crime in Boston was violence against the person at 43% of the total crime: there was no breakdown of the category but most was without injury with only a small percent being violence with injury.

Members were advised that when accessing the Police.Gov.UK website, it was possible to enter a postcode which would provide the crime statistics for that area.

Following the review four hot spot areas had been identified as having the highest crimes rates, West Street, Market Place, Wormgate / Red lion Street and Central Park, based on two and a half years data. On reviewing the statistics from November 2022 to May 2023 three of the four hot spots remained the same which corroborated the initial findings. Closure of Central Park in the winter months was attributed to the reduction in that hot spot. The team would concentrate their resources on the four hot spot areas, with additional data collected providing

The feedback to a recent community engagement survey which had been deployed in eight languages and carried out over a six week period, had provided the Police with a greater understanding in respect of the public's perception of crime and of what the community thought overall about policing in Boston. There had been a good response to the survey with 1029 responses equating to 1 in 69 of the residents.

Finally Inspector Clarkson advised on the success of joint Lincolnshire Police and Boston Borough Council bids which included £100k for additional CCTV within hotspot locations; £28k for interactive display boards and funding for both a community worker and two community wardens.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Clarkson for his presentation and committee members for their submission of questions in advance of the meeting ensuring detailed responses were provided.

General committee deliberation followed which is collated and included:

Members noted their appreciation of the in-depth level of detail provided within the presentation, agreeing it addressed many of the concerns raised within the initial questions tabled.

Referencing the perception of crime within the town by residents for a number of reasons, members stressed it was very real for many and recognised the need for a narrative to address the underlying reasons. Inspector Clarkson advised that the perception of crime also extended to specific incidents including those of speeding, whereby vehicles were not moving at the speed perceived. The forthcoming consultation would help to identify the reasons for the perception of crime enabling the Police to actively move forward in dispelling the fears.

On questioning whether the perception of crime could be routed in the reality of the situation that the Police were forced to scale back their responses to certain crimes, to enable others to be scaled up, a member was advised that whilst all crime reported was reviewed, there were not sufficient resources to attend every incident and the Police had to focus on key crimes.

Members realised the need of the Inspector to deploy resources in a smart manner to key areas and agreed the need for smaller incidents including cycling and shop lifting, to be evidenced based when initially reported, to support any investigation.

Referencing the intention of the Police to focus on the Hot Spots identified, members overwhelmingly agreed the work, acknowledging that all of the areas had been trouble spots for a long time with known crime taking place at all the sites. On being asked how BTAC could practically help the Police, Inspector Clarkson advised that capable guardianship was an area by which the public could supported the police, who could not be relied on all the time. It had been proven that the impact of having outreach workers presence within a community was beneficial to the community for a number of reasons.

Members further voiced support at the funding received which they agreed would assist the residents and they further recognised the reduction in police officers over the last thirty years balanced against the huge increase in population within the borough.

Noting the issues experienced in reporting crime, Inspector Clarkson was asked if a QR Code could be produced to enable direct reporting of a crime as it took place, supported by photographic evidence. Concerns were further noted at the response time to telephone calls to report incidents, in particular to the 101 service. Inspector Clarkson advised that Lincolnshire Police telephone response times were in the top five in the U.K and that he would look at the cost of reporting on line.

In conclusion members voiced their support of the Police and recognised the strength of the partnership working with Boston Borough Council.

18 EVENTS BUDGET 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder presented the report advising that In 2023, the events provision had returned to pre-COVID levels. However, changes in personnel had resulted in the hoped for expansion of the programme not being realised, but the programme of events delivered had been well received and truly appreciated. Previous years had seen a large support from BTAC Members to enable the events team to run a series of successful events and whilst it was anticipated that events would proceed without limitations during the 2024/25 financial year, that position could change.

Option One at a cost of £41,500 and within the annual baseline budget for events, focused on a more limited programme with the Easter Bunny Hunt; 1940's event; Classic Car show; Celebrate Boston Day, incorporating an International Food Festival; Halloween in the Market Place; Christmas Light switch on, Santa Fun Run and Christmas Market.

The second option would cost BTAC an additional £16,250 for the financial year and was subject to a further £55,250 of external funding. That would provide an enhanced programme of events in addition to the existing community based events. The option aimed to keep all the free kids fun events, which people have enjoyed previously, it also added some of the larger events that have shown a large footfall and benefitted the Town including the Classic Car Show to move to the Central Park along with a Vintage Festival instead of the 1940's event; the Beach in the Park with full programme; a Boston Big Local Legacy and Music Festival in the Central Park; a Ska and Reggae Festival in partnership with Endeavour Radio; Christmas Light switch on, Illuminate Parade and accompanying events including a Santa Fun Run and Christmas Market.

Boston Big Local (BBL) had been a key supporter of events for Boston residents and its' funding had enabled additional community based events in previous years. This funding would cease at the end of March 2024, however they were contributing to the Boston Big Local Achievements and Legacy music event in July. The Boston Beach event had also been added to the list of events to be considered by BTAC.

Community events had taken place across the Borough with the support of the Safety Advisory Group. The Events Team also provided advice to external providers on how to run safe events. Potential events for 2024 were Indian Holi Festival in Central Park and Boston's Strongest (14th July in the Market Place).

Committee deliberation followed which is collated and included:

Overall members voiced their support for the report and the offer of an extended programme of events to include those subject to the external funding.

Concern was questioned the loss of the Boston Bike Night event which members agreed had been very successful and had grown over the years, bringing visitors into the town from far afield. A member suggested that negotiations with those who managed the event should take place, and when setting the budget for the forthcoming year, if financial support from BTAC was required to secure the event, it could be considered.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed they had immediately contacted the organisers when the news broke and that further negotiations would be taking place with options to include potential sponsorship for the event.

The Chairman voiced concern at the negativity the loss of such a popular event would have on the town, and further supported moving forward with sponsorship across a number of events, citing the benefits for sponsors and the opportunity for local businesses to be a part of a successful events programme.

Referencing the event in the park which was lost due to severe weather, officers were asked if the Council had risk insurance to such cover events and was advised that no such insurance was in place, but was something to be looked into in order to safeguard risk moving forward.

Responding to queries in respect of how the Council monitored its success of the events, members agreed that feedback and attendance data enabled positive publicity for the Council. The Events Manager confirmed that a combination of measures were in place including footfall and feedback from traders, and in respect of the Christmas Event Transported has used an external organisation to evaluate the events with Boston College students carrying out their own evaluation. A member suggested that the market traders who stood throughout the four days should also be undertaken.

Moving forward further suggestions including the effect of events on local businesses and also individual groups and communities. Members were advised that at a recent Halloween event, sessions laid on specifically for children with additional needs had been very well received by their families, and negotiations were taking place with the May Fair organisers to consider the possibility of providing a quiet two hours for families without the noise and flashing lights.

In conclusion the Chairman requested that his thanks and those of the committee be tabled officially to the events team for their work in facilitating the four day Christmas Market along with other events throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That BTAC having considered the event programme have agreed their preference of option 2 £57,750 (BTAC) + £55,250 (external) for the 2024/25 financial year.

19 BTAC FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Culture and Leisure advised the update was for members information of the financial position at the current time, prior to receiving the budget at the next scheduled meeting.

Committee noted the report.

20 BOSTON SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

The Assistant Director for Leisure and Culture presented the report confirming that six applications for funding had been received by the Small Grants Scheme all of which had been approved:

Butterfly Hospice Trust – Therapy Service	BTAC Small Grant Scheme	contribution towards therapy service provision at Butterfly Hospice, Boston	£1,000
Boston & South Holland Talking Newspaper	BTAC Small Grant Scheme	contribution towards 1 quarter rent of rooms at Len Medlock Voluntary Centre	£573.78
Boxes of Hope	BTAC Small Grant Scheme	contribute towards the cost of supporting people within the BTAC area to access furniture and other goods from their Holbeach Hub	£1,000
Boston School of Mosaic	BTAC Small Grant Scheme	contribution towards 6 month’s rent of Fydell House and the purchase of materials such as nippers, glue, substrate and tiles	£1,000
Pilgrim Hospital Radio	BTAC Small Grant Scheme	To purchase 3 office chairs for radio station at Pilgrim Hospital	£618.69
Boston Hakusan City Exchange	BTAC Small Grant Scheme	contribution to costs towards UK side of Exchange programme	£1,000

Committee noted the decisions of the Small Grants Group.

The Assistant Director for Leisure and Culture addressed the meeting further. Members were advised that due to a recent lack of availability by the existing members of the Small Grants Group to determine applications, the situation had highlighted the need for a wider scope of members to ensure the submissions were determined in time with the directives of the scheme. As such, committee were asked to agree that for future determination of grants applications, the Small Grants facilitator would circulate the date and time of the proposed meeting of the group to all committee members seeking responses by those available and willing to sit and determine the applications. This would ensure that with the increased number of members included, that the meetings would always be quorate and the applications determined within the requisite time scales.

RESOVED:

To ensure that all applications submitted for consideration by the Small Grants Group, all committee members would be invited to attend the scheduled meeting to ensure a quorum of members are available to determine the applications. The Small Grants Administrator to facilitate.

21 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 8.15 pm