

**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY - ENVIRONMENT &
PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

13 February 2024

Present: Councillor Claire Rylott (Chairman), Councillors Anton Dani, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izzard, Patricia Marson, Ralph Pryke, David Scoot, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe,

Portfolio Holders:
Councillor Dale Broughton
Councillor Anne Dorrian

In attendance:

Officers –
Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure, Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership, Interim Cultural Services Manager, CCTV Manager and Democratic Services Officer

41 APOLOGIES

Prior to accepting apologies the Chairman confirmed that in the absence of the Vice Chairman Councillor Lina Savickiene, she had invited Councillor Anton Dani to support her in the role of Vice Chairman for the meeting.

Apologies were tabled by Councillor Alison Austin with Councillor Stephen Woodliffe in Substitution. Apologies were also tabled from Councillors Neil Drayton and Lena Savickiene and further apologies were tabled by the Lead Officer for the Committee the Assistant Director – Regulatory, with the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture substituting.

42 MINUTES

With the agreement of the Committee the Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting.

43 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None tabled

44 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None Tabled

45 MARKETS PROVISION

The report was tabled by the Portfolio Holder who advised that the report sought to provide an overview on how Boston's regular Wednesday and Saturday markets had been performing and it proposed actions for the further development of the service. Markets were one of many industries that suffered during the COVID pandemic with only essential stalls allowed to stand. Since then markets across the country have adapted and tried to recover following the lifting of national restrictions.

The Council had an aim to move the Markets Service to a break even position and find savings year on year, and the Partnership Annual Delivery Plan included two projects for the Boston Markets Service to undertake during the 2023/24 financial year. Those were to review the Markets Policy and to undertake a review of the Markets Service, seeking to deliver savings, whilst also growing the Markets Service. The Council had also launched a Boston Town Centre Strategy, and the Development/Action Plan aimed to support the strategy's aim to regenerate the town centre.

The new dedicated Market Manager had been in post since July 2022. The Manager had now had the time to grow into the role, establish positive relationships with traders and had started a full service review of both the Markets Policy and Markets service in line with the Partnership's Annual Delivery Plan.

The purpose of the Market Policy was to set out the matters the Council would take into account when considering and undertaking its duty to provide and manage its markets. It detailed the responsibilities of the Council in official guidance of the policy for the Council to act in a particular way and the expectation set of the traders. Market Stalls are provided by a team of eight erectors. Seven of which are on ten hours per week contracts. One is on fourteen hours but also helps the markets officer for two hours on the morning of each market.

The current pitch fees are similar to other markets in the area. Boston regular traders pay £22 per stall or £1.50 per foot of frontage. While casual traders pay £25 and £2 per foot frontage.

The Boston Markets had operated in its current format for over five years, and now required both investment due to the current stalls coming to the end of their life cycle, and savings were needed to achieve a breakeven position. The service was therefore reviewing its operation. The Development/Action plan has written to achieve these outcomes and sought to focus on: delivering modern traditional markets that were cost efficient delivering the best value for money; delivering vibrant attractive markets that appeals to visitors and residents alike, attracting new young traders and Increasing marketing activity, whilst finally working with the Council's Events Team and local partners to add value to markets with entertainment and events. The Boston Market Action Plan has been developed as a "live document" to be continually developed in order to support accountability within the service to strategically and operationally deliver what is required from this important Borough asset.

The action plan had been developed to facilitate residents and visitors in deriving as much benefit as possible from Boston Market whilst achieving this through an approach that supported the most economic, efficient, effective working practices possible.

Member deliberation followed which included:

Members praised the quality of the report stating it was comprehensive and detailed.

Suggestions raised included the need to expand the publicity beyond that of social media and to publicise in various trade magazines to reach a wider range of traders. Members also suggested the need for officers to visit larger markets outside of the County to try to encourage trader's to Boston. There was overall support for the move of the Bargate Green Market into the Market Place, including the re siting of the auctioneer, which members agreed would increase the volume of stalls in the market place and also free up the Bargate Green car park to provide an additional income stream from that site on market days. Scheduling live activity performers to support the markets in the Spring and Summer was further agreed as a way forward to offer visitors a wide ranging experience on market days.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that a variety of such acts was already confirmed including jugglers and stilt-walkers and further suggestions of dance and musical themed activities would be considered. In addition members were advised that the market place was able to accommodate 54 stalls.

In response to a number of general questions the Portfolio Holder advised that the £5mil public liability insurance was standard across the Country and was not expensive to secure and those standing as a teenage trader on the teenage markets did not need such insurance, and were covered by the Borough's insurance in the event of any incident arising. Further responses confirmed that any stalls selling vaping products would be subject to being compliant to the new rules on such products and the siting of the auctioneer within the market place had not been agreed but would likely be around the Saver shop area.

Addressing the free allocation of stalls to the charitable organisation, a member questioned if it was publicised widely to all the various charitable organisations across the Borough and not just those well-known within the town, and further sought clarification on the ban on any use of the market for political promotion questioning if it included a ban on any campaigning activity for non-political purposes. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the local charitable organisations used the market regularly and that further contact would be made to ensure all were aware of the option to stand. In respect of the issue of campaigning, members were advised it was treated the same as political promotion and not permissible.

Additional suggestions agreed the need to encourage residents and visitors' alike back into the town, with acknowledgment of the ongoing Operation Plotting underway to improve the town and reassure residents it was safe to visit. The idea of a crafters charity challenge was tabled, which would see a number of charitable stalls at the same market bringing in additional visitors from their various supporters. The use of window vinyls was further agreed as a way to brighten the street scene and encouragement of extending the café culture of the town with additional pavement side businesses.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that a further intent was to encourage the market day coach tours from the coast and further afield, back into the town with promotion of the town ongoing with the various coach operators. Hard copy booklets were being produced to hand out to visitors on their arrival at the train station / bus station on market days

Questioning the possibility of incorporating a car boot provision in alongside the market, or using the Market Place on a Sunday for a full car boot, the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture confirmed that the Council was subject to the Charter in respect of the market which directed that no car boots be permissible on either public or private land within 6 & 2/3rd mile of the town on market days and no car boots were permissible on the Council's car parks at any time. Any use of the market place for a car boot on a Sunday would be subject to road closures and other regulations. Further confirmation was provided that members of the public could apply to stand on the market and sell their own wares but they would be subject to public liability insurance.

A final comment raised by a member questioned the potential of any future provision of toilets within the town centre due to the traders stating they experienced difficulty in leaving their stalls with the distance to the current provision. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that consideration had been given to the use of portable toilets on market days, but would obviously be subject to a cost issue. Historically there had been an agreement with a number of businesses in the town to use their facilities and the facilities at St.Botolphs' were still available at no cost for use by the traders.

In conclusion the Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for the detailed report tabled and addressing the recommendations agreed the report and appendices had been challenged, and that feedback had been provided.

46 OVERVIEW OF THE CCTV FUNCTION AT BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Portfolio Holder presented the report and advised that following an all-member briefing on 16th October 2023 which covered the functions of Community Safety provided by the Borough Council, the Environment and Performance Committee had requested further information specifically in respect to the CCTV system. Members were advised that the use of CCTV cameras within the Borough played an important role in addressing community safety issues; being utilised to deter and detect crimes as well as directing an effective response across a number of agencies if required. In turn, it supported communities to feel safer whilst they went about their daily activities. Whilst CCTV systems were an important tool in providing the most effective solution to community safety issues, they had to be used alongside other measures and intelligence in providing early intervention and prevention activities to reduce crime. The CCTV system was managed and monitored by the Community Safety Team at Boston Borough Council. The service supported approximately 300 cameras across Boston, South Holland, East Lindsey and North Kesteven. 16 large screens formed the video wall each displaying several images. Opportunities to invest in the equipment and service overall were proactively sought, to help ensure that it met the needs of the communities from a quality and surveillance perspective. All cameras were carefully positioned, taking into account lines of sight and the wider environment. A maintenance contract was in place to ensure any faults were dealt with in a timely manner. Weekly maintenance took place and remote access allowed for quick fixes. Through £396,945 of 'Safer Streets' funding (*a Home Office fund supporting local authorities to invest in crime prevention initiatives*) the Borough Council had developed a programme of works which included undertaking several significant upgrades to the system. That work would continue throughout 2024 and included increasing the number of cameras to provide further surveillance opportunities, whilst improving lines of sight, the quality of images and recordings. The range of cameras used included multiple HD static cameras which recorded the area all the time, upgraded wireless antenna units for extra bandwidth for higher definition and HD PTZ camera which were movable and zoomable for monitoring ongoing incidents. Hot spot cameras would be supporting Operation Plotting in Wormgate, Central Park and West Street. A new maintenance contract would also be procured alongside to ensure continued proactive maintenance and timely repairs should they be required. There were five full time staff at the centre, which operated on a 24-hours a day, seven days a week basis. These staff concentrate on rotas within the working week whilst a further six part time staff covered weekends. In addition, the centre had five staff members that operated on a flexible basis, covering annual leave and other absences. Adding further opportunities into the suite, the team were undertaking a 'Trusted Volunteering Programme' in collaboration with Lincolnshire Police. Commencing in April 2024, which would provide an opportunity for individuals to be involved in supporting their local communities through proactive surveillance, in a flexible way that matched the commitment they were able to provide. Those volunteers would be supported by existing team members with all suitable training provided to learn new skills and knowledge in respect of CCTV surveillance to ensure the experience would be positive and fulfilling, and benefit the town and also the Police and the community.

Member deliberation followed which included:

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for the detailed and interesting report.

Concern was noted that not all those who pay to use the Council's CCTV service, were informed of issues affecting the service level of the cameras under their use referencing a particular issue which had been ongoing, without the customers - a parish council – being made aware of the problem. Reassurance was provided by the portfolio holder that a maintenance contract was in place with weekly checks undertaken on all cameras. The CCTV Manager confirmed that the location of the parish site in question was subject to growth of trees and it was the responsibility of the parish to address these issue but acknowledged they needed to be made aware of any obstruction to the cameras. The Portfolio further noted that as at the date of this meeting all cameras were performing to the level expected.

A further question referenced another camera which had been inoperable at the time of the members visit to the CCTV Suite and the Portfolio Holder confirmed it had been an issue with the electricity supply which had been addressed and the camera was now fully functional.

The Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Community Leadership addressed the meeting at this point in the proceedings and advised members that should they be aware of an issue with any camera, that they contact her, or the CCTV Manager or the Community Safety Manager direct to report it.

At this point in the meeting Committee agreed to move the meeting into private session to enable questions of an operational matter to be discussed.

A separate minute is lodged with the Council for this private item.

47 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the work programme for the next meeting and a member requested an update on the situation in Central Park. The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture advised that due to ongoing weather conditions the grounds staff were still waiting to sow the seeds.

The Meeting Closed at 8.10 pm