

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny - Environment & Performance Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Thursday, 5th September, 2024 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Claire Rylott, in the Chair.
Councillor Lina Savickiene Vice Chair.
Councillors Neil Drayton, Stuart Evans, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izard, Patricia Marson, Ralph Pryke, David Scoot, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe .

Portfolio Holder Councillor Callum Butler

In attendance:

Officers:

Assistant Director - Regulatory, Interim Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director - Assets, Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure, Scrutiny & Policy Officer and Democratic Services Officer.

66 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were tabled by Councillor Alison Austin with Councillor Stephen Woodliffe substituting, and by Portfolio Holder Councillor Anne Dorrian with Portfolio Holder Callum Butler substituting.

67 Declarations of Interest

None declared

68 Minutes

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

69 Public Questions

None tabled.

70 Member Working Group - Review of Car Parking in Boston

Councillor Stuart Evans a member of the review group presented the report supported by the Lead Officer for the review the Joint Deputy Chief Executive for Programme Delivery. Councillor Evans confirmed that Councillors Mike Gilbert and Ralph Pryke, both on the committee were also on the group and he would invite them to comment on completion of his representation.

Committee were advised that Following concerns in respect of ongoing decreases in car parking income, members of this committee agreed the convention of a Member Working Group to consider the decline in income across the Council's 22 car parking sites.

The Group also agreed to consider the condition of the sites and the provision and quality of the current signage to the sites, including the seasonal problem of certain signs being hidden by overgrown foliage, both within the town and also along the main arterial roads into the town centre. The group had further agreed that a review of signage with reference to signs routing visitors to its own car parks would be productive.

On receiving the relevant information sought from the initial scope of the review, the group held detailed discussions to identify the areas it wished to focus on and what, if any, changes it could successfully take forward.

Key areas identified had included agreeing a pilot car park to change the existing size of the “parking space” to better accommodate today’s larger vehicles. The group also recognised that certain sites were within highly prominent areas of the town which would benefit from some low-cost enhancements to create a wider amenity, supporting both nature and wildlife. Cllr Gilbert’s team are already engaged in several projects around the town.

The subject of providing free parking was considered, however once the group had considered the outcomes of a comprehensive financial modelling which had been undertaken by the transformation team on the benefits of free parking, they supported the outcome of that modelling in that no free parking outside of any ‘special periods’, be provided. Clarification was provided that the figures within the report were not current but were the figures used at the start of the review. In conclusion Councillor Evans advised that it was also agreed that a review of parking fees and charges be undertaken, to include exploring the introduction of shopper and commuter passes via the MiPermit app on the Council’s new parking machines.

Prior to opening up the meeting for committee comments, the Chairman invited Councillors Mike Gilbert and Ralph Pryke to comment who stated it was a comprehensive report and well covered and they both endorsed the report. Further comment noted that the group had considered free parking but had dismissed it, as free parking as often raised by the public was not actually on Council sites but on private properties such as Supermarkets.

Committee agreed the workings of the group and that the report produced was informative. In response to an enquiry seeking the costs of repairs for the car parks, a member was advised the information would be provided after the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Environment and Performance committee agree five the recommendations within the report to Cabinet for their approval.

71 Joint Scrutiny of the scope and proposed arrangements for a Sub-Regional Leisure Facilities Operator Contract.

The Portfolio Holder Councillor Callum Butler presented the report supported by the Assistant Director Leisure and Culture and the Scrutiny Officer.

Committee were advised that the Partnership Scrutiny Task & Finish Group were asked “to review the scope and proposed arrangements for a Sub-Regional Leisure Facilities Operator Contract.” Scrutiny Committees at all 3 Councils wanted to be reassured that any reports to committees contained enough information for Councillors to be able to make an informed decision at future meetings.

The S&ELCP Alignment and Delivery Plan for 2024/25 included the action to 'develop a sub-regional leisure and culture offer' by the end of Quarter 3. In considering the most appropriate scope and approach to a sub-regional leisure and culture offer, separate solutions for the delivery of leisure and cultural services are being pursued. All leisure venue operations were currently outsourced through various contracts. Most of the culture offer was delivered in-house through various mechanisms, in order to optimise cultural development opportunities.

It was proposed that the new contract would be a single operator selected for the sub-region with three contracts – one with each sovereign Council, using a Sport England standard form of specification & contract with bespoke adjustments.

All contracts would be prepared the same for consistency and effective contract management with contract drafting assuming contract payment in favour of Council.

All current arrangements would be protected with minimum opening hours etc. Flexibility for 'additional commissions' e.g. fixed term community sport/physical activity/health intervention projects etc. should the Councils wish to commission them.

Venue Repair & Maintenance responsibility with new/redeveloped venues - Operator being responsible on full Repair and Insuring basis. Older venues the Operator to be responsible for Planned Preventative Maintenance and Re-decorations for life of contract and the Council to be responsible for end-of-life replacement items.

Key points discussed by the Task Group had included the feasibility of a 'one size fits all' approach: the benefits of an aligned contract and the expectations for operators, for example maintenance, particularly with regard to some of the older buildings.

Further information had been required on who would be involved in the process (internal and external) and also clarification on how the 'Active Communities' agenda will be encouraged by any new operator chosen.

It was agreed that background research on companies expected to bid for the contract would be sourced and that further details on how the contract(s) would work in practice, having a common core contract, with specific bolt-on' for each sovereign Council.

The group discussed comparative costs between current contract(s) and potential future costs and also sought explanation of the 3 Stages of the procurement process, including evaluations, negotiations and cool off period. They agreed to ensure that a clear, open, and transparent procurement process took place and sought assurance that the procurement process had been carefully designed to ensure that the bids matched what had been asked for.

The group further discussed the need for confirmation that the recommended supplier would be named in committee reports with the involvement of the Portfolio Holder throughout the process.

A legal point of clarification was made in respect of the possible involvement of Full Council, in that lawfully it was an executive decision, and the Council could not make executive decisions. Should the executive/cabinet wish to consult all Councillors before taking its' decision that was an option open to them.

No discussion took place, but a member of the working group noted that they felt very reassured that Councillors would be kept well informed as the project moved forward and stated they felt the work to be a good example of how the democratic process should work.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Environment and Committee agree the recommendations within the report.

72 Work Programme

Members noted the work programme.

The Meeting ended at 7.20 pm.