

## **Boston Borough Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC)** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Thursday 25th September 2025 at 6.30 pm.

### **Present:**

Councillors Paul Gleeson (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Emma Cresswell, Anton Dani, Neil Drayton, Anne Dorrian, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izard, Jonathan Noble, Barrie Pierpoint, Lina Savickiene and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance:

Officers:

Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services, Democratic Services Officer and Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL).

### **21 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Austin and Patsie Marson.

### **22 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **23 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to clarification that Councillor Jonathan Noble had asked Inspector Cotton about the rate of crimes solved and successful prosecutions rather than crime outcome rates, and that this information had not been provided.

### **24 Update on Actions from the Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services provided updates on matters not otherwise covered by the agenda:

#### **Tour of assets and open spaces**

Earlier in the day, several members of the Committee and officers undertook a tour of BTAC assets and open spaces, visiting seven sites. The outcome of the tour was that some painting work would be undertaken and the replacement of safety surfaces at certain sites would require investment. Other issues identified, during the tour, including dog fouling, bins and signage were already being addressed. A report on the tour would be presented to the Committee, most likely at the January meeting.

#### **Central Park security**

At the March meeting, the Committee agreed that the contract for security and gate locking at Central Park would not be renewed after 31<sup>st</sup> August and that a Working Group would be established to consider future arrangements. The Working Group met earlier in September following an extensive period of investigation by officers and Lincolnshire Police to explore alternative options that were both viable and affordable. Lincolnshire

Police had expressed concerns about the gates being left unlocked overnight, and options had been considered including the Police taking responsibility for locking the gates with Council staff unlocking them. Despite exhaustive enquiries, no operationally viable and affordable alternative had been identified.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> September, the gates had remained unlocked and the Council's Community Safety Team, CCTV Team and Environmental Health Team had monitored incidents. To date, there had been one report of alleged drug use in the park and no incidents recorded by CCTV or reported to Environmental Health. It was hoped that incidents would reduce further when British Summertime ended. A further meeting of the Working Group would take place before a report was brought to the Committee on long-term options. The Working Group comprised of Councillors Dorrian and Gleeson following Councillor Ghosh's resignation, and any additional members wishing to join were invited to notify Democratic Services.

### **Highways**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had invited Lincolnshire County Council's Portfolio Holder for Highways to attend a meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> September, but he was unable to attend due to ill health. It was now anticipated that he would attend in December, and BTAC members were welcome to attend.

It was also noted that Lincolnshire County Council's Road Safety Manager would be attending an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, which BTAC members were also welcome to attend.

### **Community Governance Review (CGR)**

The CGR Working Group met on 25<sup>th</sup> September to consider the outcome of the Phase One consultation. A total of 126 responses had been received, with a clear majority in favour of establishing a single parish council for Boston Town. The Group had agreed to progress to the next stage of the review, including drafting proposals for a single parish council based on the existing BTAC area, with consideration given to the inclusion of nearby unparished areas. Draft recommendations would be prepared for Full Council in November, with a second phase of public consultation planned for early 2026.

### **Green Flag Award**

The Green Flag Working Group last met on 10<sup>th</sup> September, when the Neighbourhoods Operations Manager and Volunteer Coordinator attended and provided updates on how their teams were supporting the application process. The Volunteer Coordinator had agreed to attend future meetings.

The Green Flag Management Plan was discussed, including the SWOT analysis and detailed history, which would be agreed at the next meeting. The Assistant Director and the Leisure Services Officer had also met Carl Beacock, the new Group Manager – Street Scene and Commercial Services, at Central Park to introduce him to the area. Carl brought extensive experience of the Green Flag Award process and would help shape the management plan and brief the Working Group at its next meeting.

### **Additional Query**

During discussion, a question was raised regarding the removal of graffiti from sheep sculptures on Bargate roundabout by BTAC operatives and the involvement of a councillor not on the Committee. The Assistant Director agreed to investigate and provide clarification.

**25 Public Questions**

No public questions were received.

**26 Public Speaking Time**

The Committee was addressed by two public speakers: Mrs Hazel Webster, followed by Mr Jonathan Wolf.

Mrs Webster gave a presentation and spoke about Boston town centre, public transport in the town and the re-routing of the Fenside bus service which had occurred approximately one year ago. She explained that the removal of the bus route through Straight Bargate had caused considerable inconvenience and physical difficulty for passengers, many of whom were elderly or had mobility issues. She highlighted the lack of consultation prior to the change and described the challenges faced by residents in accessing essential services and shops located along Wide Bargate, including medical facilities and food stores. Mrs Webster argued that reinstating the original route would significantly improve quality of life for affected residents and suggested alternative routing options via John Adams Way if a full reinstatement was not possible. She also raised concerns about the current bus stop arrangements near Boots, describing them as congested and unsuitable, and proposed reinstating the former stop near Savers to alleviate these issues.

*[A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.]*

Following Mrs Webster's presentation, the Committee discussed the points raised. Members acknowledged the concerns expressed and noted that responsibility for bus services rests with Lincolnshire County Council. It was agreed that a copy of Mrs Webster's presentation would be forwarded to the County Council for their consideration. In addition, Councillor Gilbert undertook to write to Mrs Webster in response to her concerns. During discussion, Members highlighted that the Council had previously explored options with the bus operator and the County Council, including the reinstatement of the Savers bus stop, but these had not progressed. Members also noted that the County Council had invested in the CallConnect service as an alternative to traditional bus routes and suggested that further information on its usage could be sought.

Mr Jonathan Wolf then addressed the Committee regarding the display of England flags on lampposts around Boston. He expressed concern that the flags had been placed without permission and were being used as a form of intimidation towards foreign nationals, which he considered unacceptable and damaging to community cohesion. Mr Wolf asked what steps the Council intended to take to remove the flags and prevent similar occurrences in the future.

The Committee discussed the issue raised by Mr Wolf and acknowledged the sensitivity of the matter. Members confirmed that responsibility for lampposts lies with Lincolnshire County Council and that BTAC does not have the authority to remove items from County Council assets. It was agreed that Mr Wolf's comments would be forwarded to the County Council, requesting clarification on their approach to the removal or maintenance of flags should they become worn or damaged. Members emphasised that this was not a request for immediate removal but for clarification on the County Council's policy. During discussion, Members noted the importance of promoting community cohesion and agreed

that the Committee should represent the views expressed by Mr Wolf while recognising that opinions on the flags varied among residents.

**Resolved:**

1. That Mrs Webster's presentation be forwarded to Lincolnshire County Council and that Councillor Gilbert write to her in response; and
2. That Mr Wolf's comments be forwarded to Lincolnshire County Council, requesting clarification on their plans for flags displayed on lampposts.

**27 2025/26 Quarter 1 Financial Position**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Finance Delivery (PSPSL) which provided an overview of the financial position of BTAC as at the end of the Quarter 1 for the financial year 2025/6. The purpose of the report was to ensure that the forecast position for the year was considered and that reserve sums held were noted, supporting Members in maintaining financial probity and making informed decisions regarding future spending within the BTAC area.

The report summarised the position across all service areas and highlighted a forecast overspend of £907, as detailed in Appendix A – Table 1 attached within the report. The anticipated reserve balance at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 was **£289,192**, which included the minimum required reserve of £70,000. The opening reserve balance on 1 April 2025 had been £293,825.

The Head of Finance Delivery explained the main variances:

- **Open spaces and play areas** showed a projected overspend of £12,130, primarily due to additional employee costs following a staffing role change from Events.
- **Central Park** reflected a surplus position of £8,734, largely due to the cessation of the gate locking service from August.
- **Public Conveniences** had an overspend of £11,339, attributed to increased material costs and an anticipated shortfall in income from fees and charges, based on Quarter 1 actuals. This was partly offset by income from Mayfair and the Autumn Fare events.
- **Events** showed a forecast surplus of £22,676, resulting from the movement of employee costs to Open Spaces and additional income of £8,000 from space hire for the Autumn Fair.
- **Administration** recorded a saving of £26,144, primarily relating to the street cleaning service review.

Members sought clarification on several points during discussion:

- The overspend on the cash collection service for public conveniences was explained as resulting from a change in collection arrangements, moving from in-house collection by Council staff to an external provider. Officers agreed to explore whether a return to the previous, cheaper method was possible.
- Questions were raised regarding the agency costs for a vacant post within Public Conveniences, the removal of the Markets Officer post, and the nature of the Autumn Fair income. Officers undertook to provide further details outside the meeting.

- Members also queried the absence of expenditure against the street cleaning budget line, which was clarified as a saving following a service review that determined the charge was not necessary for BTAC.

Further discussion took place on the reserve position. Members noted that the current reserve balance was significantly above the minimum requirement and considered whether some of the funds could be used to promote Boston town centre or enhance tourism as part of BTAC's legacy. It was agreed that this matter would be considered during the forthcoming budget-setting process, alongside advice from the Section 151 Officer. Officers reminded Members that the figures presented were Quarter 1 projections and did not reflect commitments for the remainder of the year.

#### **1. Resolved:**

**That the forecast overspend of £907 for 2025/26, as detailed in Appendix A – Table 1, be noted; and**

**That the forecast reserve balance of £289,192 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 be noted.**

### **28 Work Programme**

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services on the current and forthcoming items scheduled for inclusion in the Boston Town Area Committee's Work Programme for the 2025/26 municipal year. Members noted that the Work Programme had been updated to include a report on future BTAC events, which was originally scheduled for this meeting but would now be considered at the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025. It was also confirmed that Lincolnshire Housing Partnership had agreed to attend the November meeting to provide its biennial update.

During discussion, Members considered additional items for inclusion. Councillor Lina Savickiene raised a previous request from a local student regarding the provision of a bike/skate park in Boston and asked whether it could be incorporated into the Work Programme. It was agreed that the matter would be included within the report scheduled for January 2026 on the tour of open spaces and assets, allowing Members to consider options and associated costs.

Members also reflected on the arrangements for the recent tour of BTAC assets and noted that the minibus provided had not been fully utilised. It was suggested that, for future tours, Members might consider sharing cars as an alternative to hiring a vehicle. This would be reviewed when planning the next tour.

The Committee noted the updated Work Programme and agreed the proposed additions.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of a report on the potential provision of a bike/skate park within the January 2026 report on open spaces and assets.**

### **29 BTAC Small Grant Scheme**

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services on the status of the Small Grant Scheme for Round 2 of the 2025/26 financial year.

It was reported that a total of four eligible applications had been received during the most recent round. The recommendations were presented to the Committee in line with its delegated authority to make community development grants to town-based organisations and events.

It was confirmed that approval would be provided to the applications contained in Appendix 1 within the report, as follows:

1) A grant of £1,000 would be awarded to Citizens Advice Mid Lincolnshire Contribution towards the cost of translation services currently provided by Language Line, to support clients from within the BTAC wards of Boston, whose first language was not English.

2) A grant of £950 would be awarded to Fenside Community Centre to cover the cost of small capital costs associated with putting on a Halloween and a Christmas event at Fenside Community Centre in 2025.

3) A grant of £975 would be awarded to Taylor Itex CIC Contribution towards the cost of running their autistic adult support group for a 10-week period in 2025.

4) A grant of £1,000 Boston Wheelers would be awarded to Go Ride Project Contribution towards the cost of small capital and small revenue costs associated with providing free cycling classes to young people from within the BTAC area.

**The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Anton Dani.**

**Resolved:**

**That the grant funding award recommendations made by the BTAC Grants Working Group in respect of eligible applications, as set out within Appendix 1, be approved.**

At the conclusion of this item, Members were informed that a Mayoral Reception had been held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September to celebrate the achievements of successful grant recipients from the previous year. The event provided an opportunity for the Communications Team to conduct interviews and produce a promotional video to support the ongoing publicity for the BTAC Grant Scheme.

### **30 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Due to the Committee's approval of the previous recommendation, this item was not required.

The Meeting ended at 7.47 pm.

Exactly one year ago, with no public consultation, the Fenside bus stopped going through Strait Bargate to the war memorial, danger to pedestrians being cited as the reason. This caused considerable inconvenience and physical difficulty for passengers, many of whom were elderly and infirm. One year on those passengers, now older and even more decrepit, together with others as people age, are still facing the same problems. Regular use of Call Connect or taxis is not an option for many, and not everyone can afford to career around on geriatric chariots.

During a meeting I had with Anne Dorrian she told me she would not recommend a return of the service as she saw no need. Completely understandable. She is not elderly, or disabled, and she has a car.

There are at least twelve vital services and shops around Wide Bargate which without a car can only be reached by walking from the nearest bus stop near Boots. The most important is probably Parkside Surgery and pharmacy in Tawney Street. By definition, only those not at their best go to the doctor! Anne Dorrian's suggestion to me that as I live in the Sleaford Road area I should change to The Sidings practice was unhelpful.

Stephen Woodcliffe recently stated that people can make a choice about where to shop. It is difficult to make a choice if reaching those shops is restricted by lack of transport.

Boston Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan 2023-27 is entitled 'A Town Centre for Everyone'. With a town centre effectively split in two, with the Market Place offering few basic everyday items – not even a newspaper is on sale there – and Wide Bargate with its medical services, food stores, post office and so on, but no means of getting there except on foot, a 'town centre for everyone' sounds a bit hollow.

Reinstating the route through Strait Bargate would be the most helpful option. A few pedestrians complaining about harassment by the bus as they meandered carelessly through the precinct seeking the 'ambience of the town' should not take precedence over the needs of regular users of Wide Bargate. Even back in 2017 Mr Wheatley of Brylaine stated there had been no incidents involving buses in Strait Bargate, and there had been no conflict over bus stops with the County Council which owns the Market Place. The twice-weekly market with its greatly reduced number of stalls cannot claim to create a dangerous route – the bus ran safely through it when it was much livelier.

If this suggestion is not acceptable surely it would be possible to run the route along John Adams Way. The bus would stop in the marketplace, then go through South End, turning left onto John Adams Way. The road from South End to Wide Bargate is not congested, as has been claimed. The congestion starts just over the new bridge, with roundabouts and minor exits all the way to West Street, a route already taken by the Fenside bus. At the Georgians roundabout the bus could turn into Bargate, then travel down to the original stop by the War Memorial, where it would cause no problem to traffic and provide seating or shelter to passengers. This stop is already used by another bus. The return journey would follow this route in reverse. Passengers now boarding at Boots are heading home via the grand tour of Broadfield Lane or Fenside. The extra few minutes via the Memorial would be a price well worth paying for access to Wide Bargate.

It is appreciated that this service is barely profitable, if at all. However, the Boston town strategy states that we have been given £20million over time, partly to improve transport and



revive high streets. Surely the relatively small amount of funding needed to improve and sustain a passenger-friendly service can be found – there seems to be enough for less useful projects. A bus ‘service’ should not be for company profit or efficiency of schedules, it should serve the needs of its passengers. To quote Question 6 of the consultation paper on the amalgamation of councils, ‘town councils play a vital role in local life. They represent their communities and work to improve wellbeing and quality of life, having legal powers to do this’.

If, despite my hopefully persuasive argument, it is decided no change is necessary, at least reinstate the bus stop by Savers. It is difficult and unpleasant enough struggling the quarter . mile back from Wide Bargate, even without carrying shopping. Having to wait on the narrow pavement near Boots, the only seating a metal pole in a draughty shelter offering no respite from the bitter wind off the Haven, is the final straw. This bus stop is a fiasco. At least three buses, sometimes five, arrive at the same time, causing tailback on the road, obscuring the pedestrian crossing, and creating chaos as passengers scramble to find their bus. Passersby are caught up in the confusion and at school leaving time it is mayhem. The bus stop by Savers offers a concrete plinth for weary shoppers with no obstruction to passersby. The bus could swing round the end of Market Place and park at the original stop, which is still there, without affecting any traffic. Even the bus drivers complain about the present arrangement.

From the wider perspective, Boston is not a thriving and vibrant town. Citing the regeneration of Boston as a reason for stopping the bus is insupportable. The Boston strategy states that its objective is to ensure residents and visitors can access and leave the town centre easily and utilising sustainable forms of transport where available, and a retailing centre that serves the needs of the local community. What we now have is a town centre where half of it is effectively denied to regular users.

The Market Place is uninspiring, even the market has little to offer apart from the old stalwarts of fruit and veg, the flower stall, and the indefatigable underwear lady, other stalls being mostly cheap and anything but cheerful. There is little to suggest that a much better selection of vital and interesting shops lies at the other end of Strait Bargate. This much more attractive area has old-established small shops as well as Lidl, Iceland, the post office, even the only shoe shop in town. But for how long? Increasingly shopkeepers there are saying how hard it is to keep going. Admittedly the bus passengers aren’t going to revitalise the town but they need the facilities, particularly the Lidl and Herons. There is a carpark on the Green, but it is seldom full. Perhaps people with cars don’t need the cheaper shops and ‘make a choice where to shop’, probably Tesco and Downtown or further afield. .

When M & S have opened their new food store and a better bus service is provided there will be even less incentive to come to a town already dominated by east European food shops, barbers, and charity shops. As and when the promised delights of Rosegarth are a reality there will be little to encourage trudging over the pedestrian bridge and up to the marketplace, let alone as far as Wide Bargate.

This is particularly true with day trippers. After walking from the coach station along West Street to the marketplace they arrive to find nothing – nothing they couldn’t find in Skegness. Looking down Strait Bargate they would never realise the best part is down at the end. Don’t kid yourselves that most of them care about the historic Stump or the fantastic architecture – most of them only want shops and a coffee!



Unless a solution is found quickly to revitalise Boston, starting with reuniting the two halves, where reinstating the Fenside route could help, this town will decline even more. Even the brilliant flower displays around the centre won't save it.

I am not speaking for my own sake. I am here to represent most of the Fenside bus users who after a year are still unhappy with the situation but feel unable to challenge it. I appreciate the difficulties faced by the Council over this, what with cost benefit analysis and the like, particularly as most of you fortunately have no experience of being old or struggling with physical disabilities. However, you are elected to represent Boston residents and improve wellbeing and quality of life. Reinstating the bus up to Wide Bargate would certainly do that, even if for only a small percentage of people.

So, one year on, please stop muttering about 'reviewing the matter', retrieve the original request from its dusty 'no further action' corner, and use your 'legal power' to improve the wellbeing and quality of life for a small but important group of residents.

Thank you.

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## Public Speaking

Please may I ask the council members what are they are planning to do about the vandalism that is plaguing our streets, in the form of the flags on the lamp posts.

I am a patriotic man and I do appreciate the Cross of St George being flown at times of celebration and pride in our nation but this act of thuggery and racism is an offence to every proper UK citizen as well as being an offence in law, as I presume these people have not had permission to put these flags on the lampposts.

As we all know, these flags have been put there to intimidate the foreign nationals, trying to make them feel unwelcome and unwanted which, I hope you will agree with me, is not the case.

So, again I ask, what is the council doing about removing these flags from around Boston?

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