

## **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 22nd January 2026 at 6.30 pm.

### **Present:**

Councillor Patricia Marson, in the Chair.

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

### **Officers:**

Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services, Democratic Services Officer, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL), Operations Manager, Group Manager - Community Leadership, Leisure Services & Contracts Manager and Director of Finance.

### **42 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **43 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

### **44 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **45 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:

#### **Central Park security**

Following the decision not to renew the security and gate locking service at Central Park, the gates had been unlocked since the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. Since then, Democratic Services had been liaising with the Council's Community Safety Team, CCTV Team and Environmental Health Team to monitor the situation with any reports of criminality at Central Park.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> September and the Committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025, eleven reports of alleged criminal behaviour had been received, ranging from anti-social behaviour to unconfirmed reports of a man with a knife. None of those reports had been during the period when the gates were previously locked.

Since the last Committee meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025, there had been no reports to the Police, the Community Safety Team, CCTV team or Environmental Health Team.

## **Highways**

Members had expressed an interest in hearing from the County Council's Portfolio Holder for Highways. Confirmation was provided that he would attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026 and members would be invited to attend the meeting.

## **Community Governance Review**

At the meeting of Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026, members had noted the outcome of the Stage 1 consultation and approved the draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group as set out in the report to Full Council.

The Working Group last met on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and agreed the provisional terms of the Stage 2 consultation plan and communications strategy. The consultation documentation would be presented for approval at the next meeting of the Working Group on 12<sup>th</sup> February. If approved, the consultation would be launched shortly after and remain open for a minimum period of six weeks. Members would be invited to promote the consultation in their respective wards, Parish Councils and through their community organisations.

### **46 Public Questions**

No public questions were received.

### **47 Public Speaking Time**

Mr Jonathan Wolf addressed the Committee. He thanked the Committee for pursuing the commitment it had previously given to him to contact Lincolnshire County Council regarding the display of flags from lampposts.

### **48 Review of 2025 events and funding proposal for events in 2026/27**

The Committee received a report from the Assistant Director - Communities and Housing Services, which was presented by Councillor Dale Broughton, Leader of the Council, supported by the Group Manager – Community Leadership.

The report provided a comprehensive review of the 2025 events programme and two budget options for the 2026/27 programme.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that BTAC funding continued to underpin a diverse, inclusive and well-attended programme of events across the town, which in 2025 had included the Central Park beach, Skate Jam, children's activity days, Boston's Strongest and Food Fest, and the Christmas Festival, all of which had enjoyed strong public support and engagement. Those events had supported community cohesion, increased town-centre footfall, strengthened partnerships and improved perceptions of the town.

Confirmation was provided that the proposed 2026/27 programme was built on the success outlined above while responding to operational requirements, including compliance with Martyn's Law (Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025). The new

legislation required enhanced event security planning proportionate to expected attendance, and that associated costs had been factored into future budgets.

Two budget options were presented to the Committee:

- Option 1 – £41,500: to retain the established programme including the six-week summer beach, Skate Jam, community events, Boston’s Strongest and the Christmas Festival (with a £17,000 BTAC contribution).
- Option 2 – £65,500: to include all of Option 1 plus an additional £24,000 to support a large-scale music event in Central Park.

For the next year, events such as Boston Bike Night, Boston Running Festival and Mayfair would continue and those events would be funded externally.

Deliberation by members occurred in relation to the two options set out within the report and the following points were raised:

- Appreciation of the Events Team’s work throughout 2025 was expressed, including the professional delivery of events.
- The public now expected a strong annual programme and BTAC’s investment had significantly improved the town’s offer.
- There was broad support for Option 2, on the basis that the proposed music event would:
  1. attract large numbers of residents and visitors,
  2. strengthen community cohesion through music,
  3. promote local talent and broaden the town’s cultural identity,
  4. build on the success of past events and the sense of expectation that successful events had been delivered by the events team.
- Members debated the estimated £24,000 cost for the music event, including whether it could be delivered for a lesser sum. The Group Manager – Community Leadership and the Leader of the Council explained that the cost reflected essential operations including staging, PA equipment, security, first aid and logistics.
- It was confirmed that event sponsorship discussions were underway.
- A Member noted the recent publication of a “save the date” message on social media referring to an August event. A range of views were expressed about the importance of ensuring that public communications did not create assumptions about decisions that rested with the Committee. The Leader of the Council clarified that no specific content, format or location had been committed by the message, and it was intended only as a general promotional placeholder pending Committee approval of the budget.
- In relation to whether the 2025 Pride event would be repeated, it was confirmed that the music event was the focus for 2026 but, if an event organiser wanted to include a Pride event in the future, it would be considered.
- Several Members reflected on BTAC’s broader role in supporting events that enhanced Boston’s identity, community spirit and economic vitality.
- There was general consensus in favour of Option 2.

**The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Paul Gleeson and seconded by Councillor Anton Dani.**

**Resolved:**

**That Budget Option 2 - £65,500 including £17,000 funding contribution for a 3-day Christmas Festival and a further £24,000 contribution towards an inclusive music event, be approved.**

#### **49 Draft Budget Setting 2026/27**

The Committee received a report from the Director of Finance (S151 Officer), which was presented by the Head of Finance Delivery (PSPSL).

The report set out the Draft Budget Setting Report 2026/27 and the accompanying Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31. A recommendation was sought from the Committee in respect of the 2026/27 precept and Band D Council Tax level, and the report provided updated financial assumptions, service cost projections across each service area and reserve requirements.

Members noted that the report should be considered in the context of continued financial pressure on local government, incorporating national inflation assumptions, pay award expectations, revised recharge allocations and operational cost changes.

The BTAC precept funded a wide range of visible frontline services, including open spaces, Central Park, public conveniences, town centre maintenance, events and allotments. The proposed precept requirement for 2026/27 was £779,470 reflecting a Band D charge of £82.44, an increase of 1.67% (approximately 3 pence per week). Nearly 70% of BTAC households fall within council tax Bands A and B, where the weekly increase would be around 2 pence.

Members were advised that the BTAC tax base had decreased slightly for 2026/27, and that a prudent collection rate assumption of 97.82% remained in place. Inflation of 3.7% had been applied for 2026/27, reducing to 2% in later years.

A detailed review of service budgets had resulted in revised cost allocations, particularly for grounds maintenance, public conveniences and support services.

Table 4 on page 35, indicated the budget for 2026/27 by expenditure and income with the 2025/26 budget as a comparison. The total expenditure would be £708,450 and the total income was £21,130. As the net expenditure was below the budget requirement, a contribution of £92,150 was proposed to be made to reserves. Although this was the current budgeted position, during 2026/27 a wider review of recharges and BTAC expenditure would be undertaken which may result in further reductions or potential increases.

The Head of Finance Delivery summarised each of the tables appended to the report in relation to each of the Committee's service delivery areas. She also indicated that the report proposed increasing BTAC's minimum reserve level from £70,000 to £100,000,

reflecting the scale and risk profile of BTAC services and aligning with professional advice from the S151 Officer.

Deliberation by members occurred and the following points were considered:

- There was detailed discussion on the appropriate level of the precept increase. Some Members questioned whether the recommended 1.67% rise was necessary, suggesting that a 1% increase would still maintain a healthy level of reserves. It was noted that even under a reduced increase, the projected reserves for 2026/27 remained in surplus.
- Some Members cautioned against adopting a lower increase, stressing the importance of long-term stability and avoiding a scenario where minimal increases now could necessitate much larger increases in future years. Reference was made to previous periods when council tax freezes had later created financial pressures. The impact of the Community Governance Review and the difficulty with predicting unforeseen expenditure and the impact on the budget was considered.
- Members discussed the justification for increasing the minimum reserve level.
- Service delivery was considered. Members considered whether there would be an impact on services should a lower increase be chosen.
- Clarification was provided that BTAC determined its precept annually and could review its approach each year. However, adopting the recommended increase at this stage would provide a stronger financial foundation.

**The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Barrie Pierpoint and seconded by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe.**

**Resolved:**

- 1. That BTAC noted the 2026/27 budget and MTFP position and recommended to Cabinet and Full Council that it be approved for inclusion within the Council's Annual Budget Report.**
- 2. That BTAC recommended to Cabinet and Full Council the level of its Special Expense precept for 2026/27 at £779,470, together with a Council Tax Band D charge of £82.44; and**
- 3. That BTAC recommended to Cabinet and Full Council an increase in the minimum reserve balance from £70,000 to £100,000 for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31.**

*[Councillors Anne Dorrian and Emma Cresswell left the meeting at 7.19pm, following consideration of the above item.]*

## **50 Central Park Green Flag Application**

The Committee received a report from the Leisure Services & Contracts Manager, supported by the Operations Manager (Neighbourhoods). The report set out a proposal to submit a Green Flag Award application for Central Park. The report explained that the Green Flag Award was the national benchmark for well-managed public parks, which

assessed criteria including safety, maintenance, biodiversity, community engagement, environmental management and long-term planning.

The Leisure Services & Contracts Manager reminded the Committee that it had first expressed an ambition to pursue Green Flag status in July 2023, followed by a detailed report in February 2024 and the creation of a Working Group, which had met regularly to develop the Central Park Management Plan, a core requirement for accreditation. The Plan had been developed with Member and public participation.

The award of a Green Flag would provide national prominence, increased community involvement and help support future investment and improvement. If the application was unsuccessful, detailed feedback would be provided by the accreditation team.

Significant improvements had been delivered in Central Park over recent years, including enhanced CCTV, Community Safety patrols, inclusive play equipment, expanded outdoor gym provision, biodiversity initiatives, community and nature garden development, public art, reduced herbicide use and installation of a Changing Places facility. Pathways and access routes had been identified for future improvement along with tree planting and increased bulb planting. Improved educational signage would be implemented to stimulate curiosity about the natural world and help to create a more engaging, attractive and meaningful environment.

Confirmation was provided that the deadline for submission of the application was 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026, with results expected in July 2026.

Deliberation by Members occurred and the following issues were considered:

- Members expressed strong support for the application, praising the dedication and hard work of officers and the operational team. Several Members noted that the Working Group had originally expected the Management Plan to take much longer to complete and commended officers for delivering it sooner.
- A number of Members described Central Park as a “gem” and highlighted its transformation, increased community use, and importance as one of the few large central parks in the region. They discussed the benefits of the Green Flag process as a driver of continuous improvement and civic pride.
- Reference was made to increased use of the skatepark, multi-use games area, children’s activities and park-run events.
- The educational and heritage value of the park was also discussed, with suggestions to reflect the park’s history through improved signage.
- There was support for applying “lessons learned” in Central Park to other BTAC green spaces and treating the application as a template for future applications.

**The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Paul Gleeson and seconded by Councillor Anton Dani.**

**Resolved:**

**That BTAC supports the submission of the Green Flag Award application for Central Park and endorses the continued implementation of the Central Park Management Plan to maintain and improve standards.**

**51 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.

The Assistant Director – Leisure & Local Services confirmed that the Parks and Open Spaces Review, following the tour of assets in September 2025, would be included in the next meeting.

A detailed discussion took place regarding the inclusion of Central Park security within future reporting. Several Members expressed concern that although the Central Park Security Working Group had not met recently, the ongoing monitoring of anti-social behaviour should continue during the Green Flag assessment period. It was agreed that the Working Group would be disbanded and that the Committee would continue to receive regular incident updates.

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services reiterated that the reporting mechanism was already in place through standard Committee monitoring reports.

Members also highlighted the importance of aligning the Work Programme with the Green Flag Management Plan. The Green Flag Working Group would continue to meet and could consider information about ASB issues in Central Park.

**Resolved:**

**That the Work Programme be noted, with the inclusion of the ongoing monitoring of crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Central Park.**

The Meeting ended at 7.48 pm.