

SOCIAL IMPACT OF **POPULATION CHANGE**

A REPORT OF THE TASK
AND FINISH GROUP
BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

ADOPTED BY FULL COUNCIL ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2012

FORWORD

**From: Councillor Paul Kenny, Task and Finish Chair
Councillor Peter Bedford, Leader, Boston Borough Council**

Since the accession of the A8 states into the European Union on 1 May 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), the UK has seen a significant change in the way in which its labour markets operate. Boston, a traditional small market town in the heart of an area containing much prime agricultural land, has experienced unprecedented population change during this time.

This change brings with it not only opportunity and cultural diversity but challenge. The situation in Boston is not unique as other towns and cities have also experienced population change following the arrival of high numbers of European migrant workers. Whilst other areas have their own experiences and issues our situation is particularly striking because of the sheer scale of change that has occurred. 2001 Census figures showed Boston as having a population of 55,750 with 98.5% indicating they were White British, ten years later, the 2011 Census showed that our official population had risen to **64,600**. Many people believe the *actual* population figure to be much higher than this and use patient registration data and national insurance number issue to support their assertions, others openly share their belief that many migrants were deterred from completing census forms by landlords.

Changes are noticeable by all. There has been an emergence of European Convenience Stores serving not only the transient population but the European families who have made Boston their home. Birth rates have increased locally and school admission numbers have gone up significantly. Many languages are now spoken in the town. There is no doubt that the scale of in-migration we have experienced means that Boston is now a very different place today than it was a few years ago. The change is viewed positively by some and neutrally or with concern by others. Community tensions have increased and are reflected by how parts of our community feel towards other parts. There is a strain on local services and we are often the subject of high media interest because of the impacts that migration has had locally.

Against this backdrop, the Council established a Task and Finish Group to listen to the views of local service providers across all sectors but most importantly to listen to the views of *local* people. Throughout the process we heard from people who have lived here all of their lives and from people who have chosen the Borough as their home.

In developing this report we have considered how to better organise the services provided to the people of Boston, have made observations for others to consider and sought to escalate comments to both National and European Government. What is clear is that the recent changes are set to continue. Our report does not, nor cannot contain all of the answers as there is no single **deliverable** solution to the pressures placed on Boston society. Everyone has their part to play in our continually changing social landscape. We must use resources more effectively, we must embrace and cherish cultural change and we must retain traditional heritage. We must be understanding, tolerant and most importantly we need to work together to find solutions to our challenges, ensuring that we secure our fair share of dwindling finances.

It is with this call for action that we present this report to decision makers, service providers and the people of Boston.



Councillor Paul Kenny
Task and Finish Chair
Borough Council



Councillor Peter Bedford
Leader
Boston Borough Council

BACKGROUND

Many of our residents have strong expectations of immigration policy; many believe that there should be a cap or limitation on free movement of labour into the UK and many believe that most of our social challenges are a direct result of EU migration into our town and rural parishes. Residents are however at pains to explain that their views are not based on matters of race or discrimination but on what they see, hear and observe.

Some residents believe that the scale of inward migration has a detrimental effect on the Borough and on the town of Boston in particular. Some feel that resources are too thinly stretched because we simply don't have a handle on how many people live here; whilst others feel that additional resources are not the solution and that changes to immigration freedom are necessary.

Opinion is hugely influenced by what residents believe to be true and how this makes them feel. Evidence gathered during the review has on occasions contradicted 'local' viewpoints. 'Mythbusting' is limited in effectiveness and needs constant, repeated effort.

We want everyone to have a stake in our society. Key to avoiding increasing tensions is recognising that our local economy by default supports and needs transient labour from wherever that source may be.

As a successful community Boston has to be a place where:

- everyone feels they have a stake in society
- individuals respect each other and the place they live in
- opportunities are available to all, especially young people
- everyone discourages activity which supports community division
- parents and schools ensure children develop the values, skills and character to make the right choices at crucial moments
- misconception and myths are robustly and repeatedly challenged
- local employers strive to support local employment
- public and voluntary services work together

Our report sets out **28** recommendations for consideration and action by the Council, local residents, politicians, voluntary and private sector service providers.

Introduction

Following on from our two year 'Good Relations' project, the Council established in late 2011 a Task and Finish Group to examine the Social Impacts of Population Change within the borough. The Group was drawn from Elected Members from each of the political parties that make up Boston Borough Council.

The Group set itself two main tasks, these were to:

- Seek to address any public perception that “the Council” is not in tune with public opinion by focussing on future policy and service delivery arrangements and to,
- Hold other Civic Leaders and organisations to account in addressing public concerns and needs through their own service delivery and partnership models.

* Those individuals from organisations recognised as being influential in supporting and delivering Boston's needs (Councils, the Police, the business and faith communities, the voluntary sector and others).

We set about the task in three stages:-

Stage 1 - Listening. The Centre for Good Relations, with whom the Council had worked since 2009 on a civic mediation programme, facilitated workshops involving Civic Leaders, migrant workers, service providers, the voluntary sector and the Boston public throughout 2011. Towards the latter stages of the programme, the Centre also engaged the Boston Protest March organisers to ensure that they also had the opportunity to be heard and participate in our process. Our Good Relations Project culminated in a very well attended Civic Workshop in January 2012 which helped us set the scope of our Task and Finish Group and identify some of the key individuals and organisations that we needed to listen to further.

Stage 2 – Evidence Gathering. Stage 2 led us to take evidence from a broad range of contributors; local people, economic migrants, the Police, Employers, Unions, Landlords, Education, the Media, other Local Councils, our local Member of Parliament, the Voluntary Sector, Protest March Organisers, the Gangmaster Licensing Authority, Job Centre Plus, Health, Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC), The UK Border Agency (UKBA) and a range of Council Officers. It is the evidence from all of these individuals and organisations that has been critical to this process. The full notes of the evidence gathered are available on the Council's website (with this report in full and in summary) at www.boston.gov.uk under *Your council / Councillors and democracy* or copy this link into your web browser:

<http://www.boston.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4629>

Stage 3 - Conclusions and Recommendations. The final stage of the process was perhaps the most difficult because we needed a period to consider and reflect on everything we had heard in order to make some sort of sense from it all. We used the summer recess of 2012 to deliberate and reach a Task and Finish Group consensus on our recommendations. The 28 recommendations have been classified for action as requiring either a local, regional, national or European response.

It's at this early point in our report that we need to give you a clear message, if you have not been part of our process then you really do need to read all of the evidence; if you don't, it will be difficult to appreciate our journey and understand the context within which we have made our recommendations. It is only by having heard the evidence that we ourselves have been able to distinguish perception, popular belief and indeed myth from the facts that have been presented to us about many issues to do with the impact of population change locally.

It's also at this point that we need to openly recognise that in addition to all of the positive impacts that population change has had within the borough, there have been and will continue to be many challenges that our residents, our partners and we need to understand and seek to address. The overriding thing we have come to appreciate is that our key role is not to simply try and convince people that they are wrong in their views or in the way they feel. Rather it is, within reason, to **challenge** and **task** ourselves and others to **support** our community by implementing the recommendations within this report.

We appreciate all of the help and contributions from all of those who have taken part in this review; their contribution assisted us greatly in arriving at our recommendations.

There is no quick fix solution to the challenges we face and the recommendations should not be at the end of our journey. Achieving success will entail hard work and constant review. We will monitor progress and reconvene within the next 12 months to adapt, respond and critique the process.

Members of the Task and Finish Group



Councillor Paul Kenny (Chairman)

Councillor Paul Gleeson

Councillor Paul Mould

Councillor Gurdip Samra

Councillor Judith Skinner

Councillor Elliot Fountain

Councillor Richard Austin

Councillor Richard Leggott

Councillor Mike Gilbert

MAIN REPORT

Although we hope that you will find the evidence we gathered all consuming and read it in detail, it is essential that this document makes a difference so we have summarised some of the key evidence which helped shape our recommendations. To ensure that there is sufficient context to our recommendations, we have set them out throughout the body of the main report rather than presenting them in a single location.

At each meeting, our guest speakers responded to a vast range of pre-submitted questions and follow up questions posed by members of the public and by members of the Task and finish Group, the report follows the same chronology as our evidence gathering timetable and presents key information and recommendations under each of the topics we explored.

LAW AND ORDER

On 22 March 2012 the local Chief Inspector answered a number of questions posed to him about the impact that migration had had on policing locally. Throughout the session we heard that:

- There was a 0.2% reduction in crime in the last 12 months, indicating that the situation is similar to that of the previous year. There was a reduction in violent crime over the last 2 years, which was 8% last year. There had been no change in the number of police on the streets and this will not change.
- Translation costs have increased for police generally over the last 10 years, but it has not had a significant adverse effect.
- Police intelligence and experience shows that knife crime is in the same proportion across nationalities and there is not thought to be a problem of knife crime or knife culture locally. Officers will however stop and search anyone where they have a reasonable suspicion that they may be carrying a knife.
- The problem of those charged with an offence not turning up at court is prevalent across all communities, not just eastern European communities.
- The trouble in 2004 was caused by drunken football fans, it could not be linked to tension.
- The Crown Prosecution Service was not satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to bring anyone to court for the distillery explosion in Boston.
- A Designated Public Place Order (DPPO) is not a drinking ban. It gives powers to deal with people drinking when anti-social behaviour is involved and officers use those powers proactively, there has been a steady decline in incidents since the DPPO was introduced with less than one call a day. The police do not however keep records of when they use the powers the DPPO gives them unless there is an actual offence.

- Lincolnshire police have no control over an extension of the DPPO, but could provide information for the Council.

Recommendation 1 - (Local)

Lobby Lincolnshire Police to **formally record** every time officers confiscate alcohol, move people on or otherwise deal with antisocial behaviour or the potential for antisocial behaviour related to alcohol consumption within the DPPO area.

Recommendation 2 – (Local)

Identify resources to gather information from the community about the current and future role of the DPPO or its successor, and seek MP support to lobby the new Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to adopt a ‘zero tolerance’ approach on street drinking and associated anti-social behaviour (ASB). We will also work closely with the PCC to ensure that the local impact of policing changes do not have an adverse effect within our community.

- The police are trialling a new ‘restorative justice’ system, especially regarding urination in order to deal with offenders more easily. It is easy to pay a fine, but the behaviour may continue. Where people witness urination in the street for example, victims can ask for an apology either face to face or in writing, which the offender does as well as being made to clean the area in which they committed the offence.

Recommendation 3 – (Local)

Lobby Lincolnshire Police to fully implement, in partnership with the Council, a Restorative Justice Programme for those who engage in antisocial behaviour

- A number of different factors are considered when assessing the number of police required in an area. Boston is unlikely to see an increase in resources under the current arrangements.
- The UK police do their job by consent not force. They are not armed in most cases. They do not stop vehicles, handcuff people and talk to them; in this country policing is much more consensual than in other parts of Europe. Comparing crime and detection rates, the UK stands up far better than any other European country. Forensic work and the court system in this country is the best in the world and miscarriages of justice are rare.
- Cars can be brought into the UK for six months without having to have UK road tax. If a vehicle is stopped because it is not showing a tax disc, or if it is a foreign vehicle, a form is completed to send to the Driver Vehicle Licence

Agency (DVLA) as notification that the vehicle is now in this country but the police do not know when a foreign registered vehicle first enters the UK.

- There is **no** policy nor practice in place regarding 'not' dealing with foreign vehicles.

Recommendation 4 – (National)

Formally request that the local MP asks Government to **review** the requirements for bringing vehicles into the country ensuring that they are **registered as they enter and leave the country**, that they have valid insurance covering their use whilst in the UK, that they have road tax covering their use in the UK (and where not, that they are charged a fee at the port of entry before being allowed to travel) and that they meet the UK's minimum MOT standards.

- There are nine police neighbourhood panels within the borough whose top concerns are the sort of low level issues that have a real day to day impact such as dog-fouling, parking and cycling on pavements.
- To find your own neighbourhood panel you can go to the Lincolnshire Police website and enter your postcode, ask at your local police station or ask a policeman. Events are held in the town and panels are advertised in the Boston Target and Standard newspapers.

Recommendation 5 – (Local)

Lobby Lincolnshire Police, through the Police and Crime Commissioner to review the operation of local Police Neighbourhood Panels to ensure:

a - That there is a **standard** approach which encourages greater engagement, inclusion **and agreement of priorities**; and

b - That there is wider coverage throughout the **town and more consistent presence at parish council meetings**.

- There is no evidence that a disproportionate number of crimes are committed by foreign nationals. It is the same misconception that more crimes are committed by people from social housing estates.
- More public order crimes are committed by indigenous people than by migrants
- Crime and anti-social behaviour is not acceptable to anyone and foreign nationals already know what acceptable behaviour is.
- Boston's Crime Reduction Initiative team (CRI) has repatriated the second highest number of foreign nationals out of six pilot organisations, coming second only to London.
- Drink driving is a serious offence regardless of who commits it.

Recommendation 6 – (Regional)

The Council leads the development of a protocol with the UKBA that clearly sets out how citizens not exercising their EU treaty rights are assisted and repatriated and, where necessary, deported with half-yearly monitoring reports to be made to the Council.

EMPLOYMENT

On 4 April 2012 the Group sought ‘employment’ related evidence and were pleased to hear from two Union representatives, the Chairman of the NFU Horticulture and Potato Board, our local Jobcentreplus Manager and the Chief Executive and local manager from the Gangmaster Licensing Authority.

The discussion around local employment stemmed from a number of often quoted assertions such as: local people can’t get jobs because they are filled by migrant workers; that this situation is exacerbated because migrants are exploited by gangmasters and will work for less than the national minimum wage and that migrant workers know how to exploit the benefit system and are draining the public purse. The evidence we heard from our speakers portrayed a very different story.

From our Trades Union speakers, we heard that:

- They do not support the notion that immigration has a negative effect on unemployment/work numbers nationally and locally.
- They represent **all** workers in the UK and do not promote the interests of one demographic group over another.
- They will continue to campaign to increase the minimum wage and the introduction of a fair wage for all employees, migrant or otherwise.
- Their engagement and involvement with foreign nationals is quite small. However, generally issues include fair rates of pay, grievance and disciplinary as for all Union members.

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority told us that:

- There are 1200 registered agency/labour providers/gangmasters nationally of which only 10% operate without a licence.
- As at June 2012 there were 57 licensed gangmasters in the Boston area. Since 2006, 48 other licences had expired and 17 had been revoked for a range of reasons.
- The GLA now only has 60 staff nationally.
- GLA produce information on minimum standards required to protect vulnerable workers, labour users and the exchequer.

- Most licence holders in Boston are local but there are some foreign nationals.
- GLA are able to control the amount of rent a worker pays if their gangmaster is also their landlord.
- The minimum wage is applicable to **all** employees.
- The GLA have no evidence that employers do not employ or otherwise limit use of local labour.
- The GLA have a ‘rogue gangmaster’ hotline that anyone can use to report concerns about labour providers.

Recommendation 7 – (National)

Lobby the local MP to press government to protect the powers and the resources of the Gangmaster Licensing Authority, as their role is critical in protecting vulnerable workers from exploitation in a generally unregulated labour market. Consideration should be given to the extent to which regulation is required throughout other sectors (e.g. hotel, leisure, care).

Recommendation 8 – (Local)

Promote the ‘Rogue Gangmaster’ hotline number on the Council’s website and request the GLA to undertake more promotion of the hotline through community notice boards in supermarkets and other locations frequented by migrant workers.

JOBCENTREPLUS

The local JobCentreplus Manager gave the Group a valuable insight into the role of JCP and answered questions from members of the public and Councillors. The key points he raised were as follows:

- As at February 2012, there are 1,518 people claiming Job Seeker’s Allowance (JSA) due to unemployment in Boston.

The breakdown per ward was:

Central	105	Kirton	120	Staniland South	105
Coastal	60	North	60	Staniland North	35
Fenside	205	Old Leake & Wrangle	50	Swineshead & Holland Fen	65

Fishtoft	95	Pilgrim	100	West	15
Five Villages	80	Skirbeck	155	Witham	130
Frampton & Holme	15	South	30	Wyberton	80

- There are very few economic migrants claiming JSA.
- At the time of the meeting, 245 people in Boston had been unemployed for 12 months or more; 320 for between 6 and 12 months and 950 for less than 6 months.
- JCP have a target to get 53.4% of new claimants back to work within 13 weeks of claiming; 75.4% within 26 weeks and 91% within 52 weeks – all targets had been achieved the previous year.
- To receive JSA a person has to be actively seeking and available for work.
- JCP don't tend to many migrant workers in job centres, the few who do go usually go to get national insurance numbers
- JCP use little translation, when they do they use The Big Word.
- There is no evidence to support the argument that migrant workers take away local jobs and the level of unemployment in Boston is similar to that of the East Midlands and National picture generally
- Although there were 151 job vacancies listed on the Job Centre's free website, Mr Southall explained that local employers don't use the website to advertise their vacancies.

Recommendation 9 – (Local)

Write to all local employers encouraging them to advertise all of their local job vacancies through JobCentre Plus.

The Chairman of the NFU Horticulture and Potatoes Board and a local farmer answered questions from members of the public and Councillors which gave a valuable insight into the local supply and demand for labour in the agricultural sector:

- The lack of permanent full-time employment **is** a very big barrier to attracting labour in the farming community. There is a lot of concern about the availability of labourers because of the seasonal nature of the work and this itself prevents direct employment.
- The perception that unscrupulous gang masters exploit migrant labour is far greater than the reality of the matter.
- Health & safety signage is universal, there are inductions for all workers and health & safety regulations are specific to a business and are very firm. Workers have to demonstrate that they understand and individuals sign to say so. It is a requirement of employers that their employees can understand.

There is a lot of effort by businesses and, where necessary, requirements are translated. Workers have a basic level of English; it is difficult to get by without.

- Boston has always had migrant labour; the level of demand and where it comes from is all that has changed –it is a lack of permanent employment that is the main barrier to British people.
- In very general terms it's been evidenced by work carried out by the NFU that the work ethic of many indigenous people is very poor. There are examples of where employers have gone above and beyond to employ UK citizens and they have got nowhere. It appears to come down to three factors: a lack of work ethic (time-keeping, shoddy workmanship) and a lack of enthusiasm or engagement (for example, with piece work, momentum is needed to keep up with the rest of the group) is lacking. Many of these issues are discussed in the report '*The Horticultural in the East Midlands*' commissioned by Grow EM.
- One of the issues affecting the popularity of careers in the agricultural sector stems from the modern school curriculum and the fact that the profile of food and farming is very poor. Over the past two years there have however been efforts to project the sector in a better light with the importance of food, food preparation and its impact upon health being key drivers, more still needs to be done to change a perception that the farming and agricultural sector provide inferior career pathways.

Recommendation 10 – (Regional)

Work with the NFU and representatives of other local industries to develop a method for engaging with schools in order to promote the career and employment opportunities available within all local industries.

NB – Whilst not discussed to any extent as part of the T&F process, the growing tendency for employers to issue Zero Hour Contracts was highlighted as being a significant barrier for local people seeking to access employment. At the meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 7 November 2012 it was agreed that this note be added into the report and that the issue of Zero Hour Contracts be considered further as part of the review process of this document.

EDUCATION

On April 26 2012 the Group's discussion focussed on the impact that migration had on education locally. The questions posed to the speakers covered a wide range of issues including the financial impact of migration on education, the implications of migration on the availability and sufficiency of school places, the integration of

children from different backgrounds and the role of the education system in supporting young people into the agricultural industry.

We heard evidence from primary school staff, secondary school staff and college staff in order to cover the full local education offer. A summary of what we heard and the recommendations we have reached as a consequence of the evidence is set out below:

- Children who have English as an additional language is no longer the challenge for the local education system that it was five years ago but that is not to say that language barriers do not bring certain pressures.
- Schools have sharpened their practices, strengthened the quality of leadership and management and focussed on the quality of teaching to ensure they drive up standards. The arrival of non English speaking children has not had an adverse effect upon attainment, for example, at Park School where 62% of the children are from migrant households, the SATs results for 2011 were 85% in English and 91% in maths giving a combined result of 85%.
- Between 2007/08 and 2011/12, Boston schools received an additional £1.19m to support children who had English as an additional language.
- The percentage of children for whom English is an additional language in local schools ranges from significantly from virtually none to 62% at Park Primary School.
- School admissions are controlled by Lincolnshire County Council, selection criteria are strict, after considering any statement of special educational needs, the County Council's Admissions Policy prioritises places in schools for children who already have siblings at the school and then by the distance by public highway to the school, those closest getting first preference.
- Many younger children considered by many to be 'migrants' are in fact born locally!
- There are now very few tensions amongst school children and parents anymore because of population change. Primary schools, secondary schools and the college are all proactive in promoting integration and sharing cultural experiences.
- Lincolnshire County Council has a duty to ensure that sufficient school places are available for all children and have invested heavily in schools in Boston to ensure that most children can attend a school close to where they live – there are a few exceptions to this general rule and no one underestimates the angst that this can cause parents.
- The arrival of non English-speaking children has made schools raise their game; it has quite clearly not had a negative effect. All young children have an appetite to learn and language is often only a minor barrier. Language can, however, be a greater barrier for older children, especially where children join a school part way through a year because no additional funding is made available to support such children until the following full year.

- Contrary to popular belief, migrant children receive **no** priority for local school places and may in fact be prejudiced because of the difficulty in picking up any additional educational needs they may have at an early enough age.
- Schools receive substantial funds to support migrant children that are used without disadvantaging British children. However, there is a trigger to the funding, which is that there needs to be 15 or more non-English speaking children at a school, or they need to be 5% of the total number of children. As smaller schools expand, they won't activate that trigger even though there can be as much of an impact.

Recommendation 11 (Regional and National)

Request that Lincolnshire County Council and/or the Education Funding Authority:

a – Ensures that additional funding is paid to secondary schools that take children with eastern European languages half way through the year.

b - Reviews the trigger mechanisms for funding for schools and reviews them annually in future.

c - Makes admissions guidance clearer by explaining the reality about choice when parents and carers are selecting schools for their children, i.e. more clearly set out that if parents or carers choose a school at which they already have a child, as their first preference, they will almost certainly be allocated a place at that school for their next child, however, after the 'sibling rule', school places are then allocated purely on the distance that a child lives away from the chosen school; the greater the distance, the less likely (as a general rule) that a place will be offered.

d – Ensures that an adequate number of places are available at local schools so that very young children do not need to travel long distances in taxis or other forms of school transport.

e - Provides additional English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses.

- Young adults show little interest in careers in agriculture and food processing and the changes to the Connexions service are likely to impact on the ability to schools to ensure all students receive adequate careers advice. This is perhaps because many jobs in agriculture are not open to young people and it is difficult to get anyone from agriculture to come and talk to students.
- There are very few young people who go through the college that are anything other than **desperate** for work and really want to work, unfortunately there just aren't the jobs available.

Recommendation 12 – (Local)

Lobby county level organisations, e.g. the Chamber of Commerce, the Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Defra to promote local employment opportunities to people, including young people, living in the locality.

- There is a real opportunity for the farming and agricultural industry to engage with the education sector and offer work experience and part-time job opportunities to post 16 year old students. Many students would be very keen and it could help encourage them into what appears to them to be a 'closed house'.
- With the increasing costs of going to university, there is an opportunity for the agricultural industry to promote careers in agriculture to young people as an alternative to going straight into higher education.

Recommendation 13 – (Local)

With the rise of the age of participation to 18, encourage local schools, colleges and employers to work together better to make work experience opportunities available to post-16 year olds. This would result in employers who cannot take children under the age of 16 into their premises offering valuable work experience to young people aged 16 – 18 as well as helping to promote their own industry, e.g. pack-houses and other food processing establishments. Schools, colleges and employers should also look to introduce new and innovative schemes for securing and providing work experience.

NB – Whilst not discussed to any extent as part of the T&F process itself, the future requirement for employers to provide basic skills training to anyone aged 16 – 18 seeking to become a full time employee could, at the local level, have the unintended consequence of making 16 – 18 year olds seeking full time employment an unpopular choice for local employers. At the meeting of the Council's Cabinet on 7 November 2012 it was agreed that this note be added into the report and that the issue of having to provide basic skills training to 16 – 18 year old be considered further as part of the review process of this document.

THE MEDIA

The media play a significant role in shaping public opinion and have a significant impact within any community. On 22 May 2012 the Task and Finish Group had the

opportunity to hear from key staff from our two local newspapers, the Boston Standard and the Boston Target.

Boston regularly makes the news, unfortunately it is not always positive news and the editorial slant given to any story by the media influences how people think and how some behave. The balance between social responsibility and the freedom of the press is often a very fine line; especially at the local level and even more so when the story or issue is one that relates to population change.

The debate at the meeting was full and frank and we offer a summary in the following pages.

- The local media have full control of everything that they print, there is NO external censorship or influence.
- The local media were of the opinion that Boston does have a complex picture when it comes to local tensions but it is improving. The media don't however look at immigration in isolation; they look at how it impacts on jobs, the economy, schools and service provision and see it as an important element of many discussions.
- When asked about why the media introduce contradiction into so many debates, especially around population change, they clearly stated that people simply have many different views.
- As with many other public and private organisations, the media's engagement with different organisations and parts of the community is very mixed.
- The national media take a very different stance on articles about Boston than do the local media, Peter Hitchin's article was written for a specific purpose and for a specific audience – it was always meant to be a narrow look at a very complex issue.
- The subject of population change has been a constant topic of reporting in the local and national media for the last decade.
- When it comes to crime, the local media report the cases that they heard at the Magistrates Court – they only normally attend on a Wednesday and do not target foreign national related cases only, they simply report the cases listed.
- Both papers covered the work of our Group and want to see something positive come from the process as they are as much a part of the Boston community as anyone else.
- The local media always try to take a responsible position over every article and try to corroborate any intelligence given to them.

Recommendation 14 – (Local)

Continue to work with the local media to promote Boston in a balanced light.

- Social media has a real place but is a very different thing to the printed word, it far more responsive and time sensitive, it's a very popular form of communication that should be used to maximum extent.

Recommendation 15 – (Local)

Make better use of social media to promote Boston, e.g. set up a virtual tour of Boston as a web clip on the Council's website to cover the whole borough.

- The media use 'editorial judgement' and always try not to alienate any particular group; however, they were keen to point out that different people will always reach different conclusions!
- The media have a key role in promoting community cohesion and publish many things from many different perspectives, for example, they ran a piece about the Alchemy Project and promoted the Latvian Festival held at PRSA and are very keen to attend other community events. However, they are a business and have to act like one; publishing material in other languages just isn't viable for them.

Recommendation 16 – (Local)

Request the Alchemy Project team to:

a - explore opportunities to secure funding to develop a 'community news sheet', perhaps monthly, to include relevant local issues about Boston in English and other popular European languages and,

b – to promote engagement and support for other local events and campaigns such as the Community Showcase and Boston in Bloom.

- A good story is one that's relevant and interesting, which is different to different people, we have diverse news features and comment pieces for as many readers as possible. We follow national stories if they are relevant.
- The media often report nationality simply because it is often given in mitigation for certain issues and offences.
- The local media thought that the Council was easy to engage and communicate with, which is not their experience of some other organisations.

A LINCOLNSHIRE PERSPECTIVE

For a number of years following the accession of the 10 countries into the EU in 2004, the issue of migration was talked in a 'South Lincolnshire' context, that is to say that we were often seen to experience the same issues as our immediate neighbour, South Holland District Council. Whilst this may have held true in some areas, there has been a significant divergence between the impacts of population

change in more recent years. In order to assess the impact that population change, driven by EU migration has had on other areas in Lincolnshire, we invited representatives from all of Lincolnshire's District Councils, the County Council and a representative from East Midlands Councils to come and meet with us on 30 May 2012.

What we heard was really quite interesting and in many ways acted to set Boston apart from the rest of the county; however, it was clear from our discussions that we have an opportunity to work with other authorities on common issues that are affected by migration.

Those giving evidence to the Group were:

- City of Lincoln Council (CoLC): Councillor Brent Charlesworth, portfolio holder for Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion, and Paul Carrick, Neighbourhood Manager
- East Lindsey District Council (ELDC): Councillor Sandra Harrison, Portfolio Holder for Communities
- East Midlands Councils (EMC): Sarah Short, HR and Development Manager
- Lincolnshire County Council (LCC): Councillor Peter Robinson, Executive Member and representative on the East Midlands Councils - EM Strategic Migration Board, and Councillor Andrea Jenkyns, Executive Support Councillor for Community Safety and Social Cohesion
- North Kesteven District Council (NKDC): Councillor Mike Gallagher, Deputy Leader and chairman of the NK Community Safety Partnership.
- South Holland District Council (SHDC): Councillor Nick Worth, Deputy Leader and portfolio holder for Community Development and Anti-social behaviour.
- West Lindsey District Council (WLDC): Councillor Paul Howitt-Cowan and Rachel North, Director of Community & Localism

We heard that:

- Official population figures don't reflect what many of us believe to be the real number of people living in our area.
- The impact of population change is very different in different districts, whereas we estimate the number of new arrivals to be in the high thousands, others, North Kesteven for example, think their figure to be only 500.
- Many councils are experiencing pressures on their housing stock if for different reasons, for example, Lincoln's main pressure comes from students, whereas ours is from EU migrants.
- The demand for school places is influenced by migration and by the rising birth rate, however, for Lincolnshire as a whole, 93% of all children were offered their first preference school for September 2012, in Boston this figure was slightly lower at 88%.
- Lincolnshire County Council is investing £4.8 millions into new school places in Boston, this is 25% of the budget earmarked for the whole of Lincolnshire.

134 new reception places were generated for the September 2012 intake in Boston.

- Valuing, celebrating and championing diversity and cohesion was a thread common to all councils.
- Developing cohesive communities is often about small projects using grass roots community groups to bring people together.
- DPPOs are not a panacea solution for to controlling street drinking and alcohol fuelled anti-social behaviour. Other solutions should be explored though our licensing function and powers vested in us by the Localism Act.

Recommendation 17 - (Local)

Work together with other Lincolnshire local authorities to tackle common issues brought about by population change, e.g. pressure on housing, education and employment, new community trigger mechanism re anti-social behaviour and to lobby for further funding. In addition, we will:

- a - Request East Midlands Councils to provide copies of their past work on population numbers in the EM and continue to lobby for additional funding for the region
- b - Request East Midlands Councils to provide case studies and best practice examples of their work on integration and cohesion
- c - Seek support from South Holland District Council for more local discretion to cap licensing applications for the sale of alcohol and,
- d – Present this report to the National Migration Group in December 2012.

When we met to reflect on the content of our discussion with other councils, it led us to explore further how some of the ideas and initiatives used by others could have an impact locally, as a result, we formulated the following four recommendations.

Recommendation 18 – (Local)

Work with Boston Business Improvement District to:

- a - Support eastern European shop owners to make their stores more welcoming to the local population and promote their wares to all people in the Borough, not just their own communities.
- b - Promote Boston on the internet and via other media as a multi-cultural town with an eastern European food offer and a strong heritage.

c - Encourage local European food businesses to take spaces on Boston market and consider holding a 'multicultural food fair'.

Recommendation 19 – (Local)

Promote West Street as a great shopping opportunity for visitors by:

a - Requesting Boston Business Improvement District to develop a West Street Community Traders' Association to address safety issues, litter etc, working with EU retailers, perhaps utilising the Community Payback scheme and working with North Sea Camp to facilitate a neighbourhood caretaker role.

b - Working with the Highway Authority to establish a better balance for the pedestrian experience in West Street, e.g. perhaps with double yellow lines along both sides and improved signage to George Street car park and improved parking offence enforcement.

c – Working with CCTV, the police, Boston BID and local businesses to ensure that any incidents which happen in the area are recorded and addressed so that it is perceived as a safe and vibrant place to visit.

Recommendation 20 – (Local)

Encourage the owners of the Regal Cinema site, currently used as a temporary car park to improve the site.

Recommendation 21 – (Local)

When setting the budget, the Council should give priority to littering enforcement.

MARK SIMMONDS, MP

The debate that took place with our MP, Mark Simmonds on 8 June 2012 was as diverse as any within our entire process. To try and summarise our record of the meeting would be to do an injustice to the evidence he gave so we have chosen to present it all to you rather than confining it to an appendix. Whilst many questions probed the government's stance on a range of issues, others challenged his own role and position as our MP. The questions posed are set out in *italics*, his responses in ordinary case.

You have been our MP since 2001 and must have seen many changes in Boston in that time. What have changed for the better? What has changed for the worse?

The most noticeable is the significant increase in economic migrants to this part of Lincolnshire. But this has not just been since 2004; immigration was a significant part of the election in 2001, though it has come up the political agenda. The local population has become more used and accepting of the situation, which is positive.

My greatest disappointment is that Boston has not made significant diversification from agriculture since 2001. This is partly due to the recession. It is also because of the role of the Environment Agency in economic development in the last 5-6 years; it has not allowed development or business expansion, which would create more jobs. Through the hard work of Boston Borough Council and Lincolnshire County Council the Environment Agency now has much more of a partnership role and this will help with inward investment.

When you hold your constituency surgeries, what percentage of different nationalities come to see you? What kinds of issues are brought to you? Do you get many concerns regarding immigration issues?

Surgeries are not the only form of interaction I have with people; the bulk of it is through e-mail and letters. I receive 350 e-mails and 150 letters per day, mostly from my constituency, and they're mostly to do with the individual challenges people face in their own lives. The bulk of them come from UK citizens; a handful of foreign nationals come to see me, but their first port of call is the council or the Citizens' Advice Bureau who can pass on matters to me.

50% of enquiries are to do with benefits; access to benefits, loss of benefits or the proposals to change the benefits system to universal credit. 25% are about housing, access to social housing, of which there is a shortage in Boston; good and bad experiences of hospital; the child support agency; tax; social services; local authority services; and national issues. I try to ensure that the people who see me have exhausted all other channels in order to give the state a chance to respond. It is quite rare that someone comes to see me at the surgeries just to talk about immigration and only one letter or e-mail a month concerns immigration; it is a very small number. That doesn't mean it is not a serious issue, but it is not one of the top issues that people in the borough are concerned about.

When did you first become aware of the rise in tension within the community over migration from Eastern Europe?

Tension from immigration happened before the eastern European immigration in 2004/05, certainly with the Portuguese. The riots in 2004 were partly due to the heat and excess alcohol, but there was underlying tension too. There has been

significant effort from institutions leading to greater understanding and community cohesion. I think the tension has lessened; there is an acceptance by the majority in Boston that migrants are here to work and if they are here legitimately and pay their taxes they are welcome.

I think there was clearly a big mistake on the part of the previous Government in not taking on 'derogation powers' in 2004, which prevented people from the A8 countries that joined the EU from having free movement until 2011. Only the UK, Sweden and Ireland didn't take that on, so migrant workers were effectively funnelled into this country and it was significant in comparison. In April 2001 those derogation powers ran out so people can now work in the other EU countries and that is slowly starting to happen.

When did you first raise concerns in public – e.g. local newspapers etc and in the House of Commons?

In the 2001 General Election before I became an MP. I had a constant battle for Boston to ensure it received the requisite resources and that was with all-party support; this is an on-going issue still which we are working together to address. I raised it in my maiden speech in June 2001 and in Prime Minister's Questions in 2004 and on 16th December 2011 I raised the issue, solutions and high-lighted the issues across services with respect to the population far exceeding the population figures.

Is there anything the Government could do to improve the image of agricultural work as a career choice?

Yes. It is intriguing that applications to agriculture colleges are oversubscribed, i.e. that is the academic side. It is a real challenge for people who want to get into farming who can't afford a farm. Lincolnshire's land is valuable and in 2001 a farm would be viable if it had 500 acres, but now it needs 1000. How do we encourage local people to see that agricultural work is a worthwhile career? Defra and the NFU have put money towards encouraging people to understand the career progression, apprenticeships and that working in the sector is not necessarily demeaning or low-grade even though it is to start with. This is the failing of recent policy. Local young men asked me when I would be putting a stop on migration and I replied when you are prepared to work in the packhouses and fields.

We hear that the government is going to remove the initial inspection under the GLA licensing regime. What protection will workers have from unscrupulous gangmasters? Do you think this will potentially lead to more unscrupulous gangmasters setting up?

As background, I was instrumental in the Gangmasters' Licensing Authority coming in to operation and it is not perfect but it is positive, getting rid of a lot of illegal activity. Coming to power in 2010, the Coalition Government had to stabilise the economic situation and reduce departmental budgets, and so it was for Defra. Money for flood defences were protected as this is so important. Defra has 30% less than in May 2010, which means there has to be focus and so the focus is on gangsters who are known rogue operators. Some are extremely 'entrepreneurial'! There has to be fair recompense and that is why the GLA was set up. I hope they will focus on the known criminal and exploitative activity that is taking place. There is still organised crime and trafficking people through Europe. The GLA is in a 'consultation period' and I will watch its performance rigorously to ensure it has the right focus.

Do you support the licensing of all HMOs?

Yes. I have very strongly urged the council to do this for a considerable time. It is a resource issue, but is a problem especially in the centre of the town. There is a lady in her 80s who is the only UK citizen in her street and she doesn't understand the drinking, noise, disturbance from shift workers coming home during the night and I am very sympathetic. Licensing all HMOs would be a very positive step and I urge the council to do this and I will work with the council to find additional resources. *[The Chairman confirmed that the council is consulting on the Housing Strategy, which would be finalised on 24 September, and is looking at the Oxford model of full cost recovery. The council will take it forward and wants public support.]*

That is good; encouraging. It is not until you have a self-funding licensing scheme that you will be able to do something about rogue landlords; it is only a matter of time until there is a disaster.

Do you think we need a drinks ban for Boston?

Extending the Designated Public Place Order through the town and borough is a matter for the police; it is a public order issue. If there's a ban in the Market Place, it moves the problem elsewhere. There is particularly an issue with young people 'tanking up' on alcohol at home so that they are already drunk when they come out. That is the reason why the Government has put a minimum price on alcohol. I don't think it's practical; instead we need zero tolerance of bad behaviour. It is not just an issue relating to migrants; there is *no* evidence to support the idea that is mostly migrants; in fact, quite the reverse. There is a lady who owns stalls in the town centre who says that people buy alcohol at 7 am and are paralytic by 9 am and they have collapsed, but when asked if they were Polish she said no, they are all English.

Do you think we need any changes made regarding EU migration? If what changes need to be made?

We need to reduce the level of migration into the UK. This is a key plank of Government policy and net migration will be reduced from the 100 thousands to the 10s of thousands by 2015. In the early years of the previous administration anyone was let in at any time, which was a real disaster as well as derogation, though some Labour ministers tried to put it right later.

Do we need some migrant workers? Yes. Do we need migrant workers with appropriate skills to fill the skills gap? Yes. So we need to look at what and how much rather than should we have any. We have made significant progress in the last two years already in terms of reducing migration from outside the EU. The biggest challenge is migration from inside the EU.

We have more UK citizens outside the UK, with 1.1m living in the EU. We have 870,000 people from A8 countries in the UK, so if they were reversed we would have more people living in the UK.

The direction of travel is to ensure that people are coming here to work, pay taxes and contribute to the community and not to use the benefits system. There is an enormous dispute between the Government and the EU Commission and the courts; the Government is trying to stop migrants from getting benefits they're not entitled to. It is very difficult to say what the number of migrants is. The Office of National Statistics says there are 7,500-8,000 more in Boston than are registered. I feel it is significantly more: 15-20,000. None of these are registered in the funding formula. Most are working and contributing. The level of unemployment in Boston and Skegness is 2,600 and there are effectively 1,300 in Boston. If we got rid of 10,000 migrants who would do the work?

The recently published Government Alcohol Strategy states the evidential burden for Cumulative Impact Policies will be reduced and off-licences will be clearly included within the scope of policies. Does this go far enough to control alcohol sales and numbers of premises at a local level and have the Government considered devolving the responsibility down to Licensing Authorities to set limits on the number of off-licences based on need?

I don't think there is enough control of on- and off-licensing. I have been lobbied vociferously by councillors and officers. I have talked to Home Office ministers about it, but they are bit reluctant about complete local autonomy because before, local authorities saw it as an opportunity to make income, resulting in more licences than fewer. The direction of travel is a more localist agenda, so let's keep lobbying, but it won't be imminent.

Are you able to provide an update on what has happened following the House of Commons debate on 12 December 2011?

There are four key points to make. Firstly, education; we need to expand school places. Lincolnshire County Council has been very supportive and provided £4.8m for more school places. The Government recognises the complexity regarding education in a multi-lingual environment. It is very challenging for teachers and schools are starting to employ teaching assistants with languages.

Secondly health; the national budget is ring fenced though there will be changes to how the health service works and how resources are spent. There needs to be greater focus with respect to money going to GPs for their patients and Pilgrim Hospital, which is making progress with hard work and investment. The health minister, Andrew Lansley, recently made a visit to Pilgrim and Skegness Hospitals regarding schemes for further funding.

With respect to housing services, the Chief Executive and Leader of Boston Borough Council went to see the housing and local government minister, who promised that he would visit Boston and we are awaiting that visit.

The situation is challenging. The next Comprehensive Spending Review will take place in 2013 so the report of the task and finish group is so important to feed into the collective views of the borough. I also want to speak to No. 10 regarding the impact of migrant workers on the area. You are doing some very important work. The issues are very complicated and very important and it is important to get my answers correct. You need full responses and any we don't have time for I will give a full written response.

Questions from members of the public

When was the last time you spent a night in the Boston home you claim to own when we all know you reside in Putney?

I don't accept the premise of the question; I do live in the borough, though I won't give my address, and, of course, I have a base in London.

Why do you refuse our request to view firsthand the problems we are facing in Boston despite constant invitations? We will take you and show you the human excrement, the cans, the benches – we take photos daily. Come to us and see it firsthand.

Again, I don't accept the premise of the question; there clearly *are* problems and I said so before I was elected. I have not refused any invitations. I spend an enormous amount of time with people with a wide range of views. There are people in Boston who think there should be more migrant workers, because they don't get the staff they need. I know one business man who says he is going to go to Europe in order to find more himself. I agree 100% that there are problems; anti-social

behaviour as you allude to, defecation etc; it is completely unacceptable and we need to work to ensure it is minimised; it is appalling. Shopkeepers see me about problems and I immediately report the problems to the council and the police and something is done within 24 hours. Some of it, but not all, stems from migrants.

Will you accept our invitation to come with us to the 'grot spots'?

Yes, but in a balanced way. I have never refused. I know where the grot spots are; I have seen them. I am plugged in with the council and the Home Office about people being removed, alcohol and drug dependency etc. Please note that migrants can be removed after 3 months if they have not worked, but we don't enforce it! That is, if they have not worked and do not have a genuine prospect of work; someone who is not engaging with the job centre etc – they have no right to stay.

After being sexually attacked on Saturday afternoon by a group of EU men what are you going to do to protect local women from further racist attacks? There is a lot of sexual and violent attacks by foreign nationals on English people.

I am very sorry to hear about that; that's terrible. Firstly, you must report it to the police who I hope are investigating it and those people are caught and punished. I have long argued for much greater police presence both at night and during the day. Often it is fear that is the problem. The police are aware and trying to do something about it. It is also to do with resources. I have spoken with them about it ad nauseum.

Seeing how bad things have got in the UK because of migration why are our borders still open and why hasn't EU migration been capped to allow us to cope with what is already here?

Firstly, that is illegal under EU law. Secondly, there is no record of any kind regarding an appropriate EU ceiling. I have some sympathy with your view. Some in Government – not Conservatives – believe we need more migrant workers; they believe it will improve growth. I don't subscribe to that view. Clearly, most migrants in Boston are from the EU but the 1974/75 referendum took us into the EU. Since the election in 2010, no more powers will be given to Brussels without a referendum. I believe the British people have had a say, but they have not had a say on migration.

Why did you vote against having a referendum?

If you mean a referendum about the Lisbon Treaty, there was no point. If you mean the vote in the House of Commons one year ago about the motion in relation to a petition, there were three ways we could vote: give more powers to Brussels; maintain the status quo; or come out of the EU. The result could have been 33%

voting to give more powers to Brussels and that is not what I want. I can't think of anything more irresponsible than a referendum on whether to stay in or come out of the EU when we are so economically unstable.

What are the government's plans to cope with all these new arrivals as no provisions were made for them coming so jobs, schools, housing all in short supply?

This is down the failing of the current funding formulas; they need to be much fairer for all our services. I would like to see Government much more responsive with respect to the population. The population may decrease again; some will go back and some will settle. We have to get used to a more dynamic, broader society.

Boston's population on paper is far outweighed by what is actually here and there for we are underfunded and struggling to cope with the extra population so what have you done as our representative to rectify this?

I've been lobbying, and with some success: in 2004 the East Lindsey Primary Care Trust got an increase in its budget for one year and in 2010, I lobbied about investment in the hospital, college and schools, but that is just the beginning of the process. What about the future? The Office of National Statistics predicts that Boston will be joint first with Corby (outside London) in terms of increased population; that's the highest percentage and it's due to immigrants having children. How accurate is that? Why do they come? Most come for work; what if it dries up? With the advance of technology we won't need packers, planters and cutters and so if the jobs aren't there...I don't know.

We have seen the population of Boston virtually double in the past decade due mainly to the mass influx of migrants from the EU. We see the strain this has put on local services, the social imbalance and the impact this has had on the Town and its indigenous population; as an example the County Council are having to spend a further 5 million this year on enlarging four Boston schools and plans are under way to build an extra new school in Boston, this is all due to the population explosion created by the open door policy to migrants. With the strong possibility of the withdrawal of Greece and all this would imply, i.e. even more migrants entering the UK, is it not time the government woke up to the fact we are full to breaking point? Why are local people paying for immigrant children; why isn't the EU paying?

The money is not raised locally; the vast bulk comes from Government taxation. A new law will enable uniform business rates so we can keep more. Particularly with respect to the health service, it is an EU-wide agreement; where a foreign national uses health care we are reimbursed by the home country. In theory that is what happens, not always in practice; it is taking up a lot of focus to try to get the money back.

Please note: the maternity unit at Pilgrim Hospital would not be viable without migrant births (nearly 40%), though it is outdated.

In terms of the relationship between benefits and tax – there is no question that the balance is significantly in favour of taxation. You have to be absent from the UK for six months to avoid UK tax.

Migrants should not be able to claim child benefit. The Department for Work and Pensions is currently self-assessing it like disability living allowance.

When David Cameron was canvassing for the election he promised a more open democratic government, one of the things he promised was, we the electorate had the right to ask for a debate via an e-petition. So why was it when an e-petition asking for a referendum on leaving the EU was presented, the government instructed MPs not to allow it? It's not very democratic to direct MPs not to have a debate.

We did have a debate; that's what the e-petition forced. Those 100,000 people wanted to have a referendum but 100,000 people may want to bring back hanging; does that mean we should automatically do it? Of course not! My constituents elected me, but there are other views to mine and people can stand against me. I believe that if we permanently have referendums then MPs are abdicating responsibility. There are significant advantages to being in the EU.

The country has massive debts, social deprivation and unemployment, including thousands of unemployed immigrants, yet you can spend, by next year, 12 billion on foreign aid and 12 billion into bailing out the Euro. Is this a good way to spend the tax payers' money?

There is no question that UK tax is not used to bail out the Euro. Under the previous Labour Government, it was put into the tax structure; the first thing our chancellor did was to remove us from that. We are not allowed to prop up currencies, just countries; there is a massive difference.

When I was a shadow minister in international development, I saw firsthand some of the horrific lives of some human beings. Just 1.1% of Government spending goes on foreign aid to provide water and basic necessities for people, including children. Yes, we have to ensure it is spent on what it is meant for. Government transparency is preventing corruption. The money saves one life every two minutes.

In recent months senior members of the Tory party have expressed how multiculturalism doesn't work and how British employers should look to employing our own nationality ahead of immigrants. Do you agree with your party line on this and, after the pre election promises on reducing immigration, what reasons do

you have on the failure to achieve the numbers claimed the Conservatives would if elected?

The election pledge was made to cover the life of this parliament. Net migration has reduced from non-EU immigrants. Net migration overall has gone up because of the hangover from the previous administration so I hope you will see an improvement before the next parliament.

Multiculturalism is not a great success. Immigrants are able to lead separate lives and become isolated. I am keen that people who come to this country should be able to speak the language and understand our traditions etc. I don't think it is such an issue here. The Government is keen that immigrants understand our way of life, for example through the citizenship test.

It is illegal for employers to discriminate. The French are especially good at giving contracts to French companies. Since around 1998, the majority of new jobs have been taken by migrants. Why? It is partly a UK problem; lack of appropriate skills, education, aspiration and ambition, and the benefits system. Many people have contacted me about getting to grips with the benefits system to ensure that work always pays.

With not been of local origin and obviously due to the occupational hazard of MPs having to spend a lot of time in London. Do you feel that is a valid point on how locals are seeing you as being out of touch with how they feel on immigration when you spend so little actual time in Boston?

I don't accept the premise of the question; I spend an enormous amount of time in the constituency. I go to London on a Monday morning and return here on a Thursday night. There is a running three-line whip in the Commons and I have to be available at any time. Boston is a part of my constituency; there are 92 villages apart from the two towns and with the changes to boundaries the constituency will get even bigger. It is a very big challenge to be everywhere within its 346 square miles. But I take my constituency responsibilities very seriously. I do the work and I believe that all would acknowledge that.

I am very well aware of your views, but you shouldn't assume that it is a uniform view; it is not here in Boston either. I believe the majority believe that if migrants are here legally and legitimately and they are working then they should be part of the community.

Would you agree that the negatives far outweigh the positives of mass immigration our community has suffered in recent years and that there is only the minority such as the employers and landlords who have prospered greatly whilst normal grass roots townfolk have suffered severely in so many ways and the town is not as safe?

Of course, a significant influx has an impact on lives, especially in the centre. Anti-social behaviour and having the resources to deliver public services appropriately need to be addressed further. There have been positive aspects of migration – market stall holders will tell you that the people who go to them are mostly migrants.

What changes have your family and yourself noticed due to the effects of EU migration in Boston and the surrounding area and what were your EU migrant neighbours like in your old house, 5 Church Close, Boston in the seven years since you have been our MP? All your neighbours stated that they never saw you or your family.

We used the house reasonably regularly when we stayed here, but we've now moved. If you are trying to imply I have not done my work properly, I resent that. Our neighbours were mixed. There were occasions when there was noise but it was very rare. Some of the anti-social behaviour in that area isn't all down to migrants. The worst incident was when some local youths were bullying a migrant. There is no simplistic answer; it involves dealing with anti-social behaviour, policing matters, an understanding of the way people live etc.

What effects will there be on Boston when Turkey and the other countries join the EU, re further EU migrants coming into the area and why are the Conservative Party supporting this?

There is no proposition for Turkey to join the EU in the immediate future; it will have to satisfy the EU's 'Copenhagen criteria' first and it is a long way off that, but it is preferable to have Turkey turning westward and becoming more democratic. There would be derogation for a significantly long time and its government is aware of that. It is out of the question not to have derogation; there is great poverty in rural Turkey.

The effects of EU migration is stretching our schools, hospitals, police, courts, housing and services to breaking point, keeping local British people out of work, whilst the EU Migrants living in multi occupancies are sending up to 90% of their wages back to Poland, and then claiming all their Tax and NI back that they have paid in the UK, so how is EU migration a good thing for Boston?

The premise of the question is not accurate. With respect to access to jobs and work, I talked to two local employers – one in agriculture, one in retail – who recently advertised jobs. The agricultural employer said 150 migrants applied and only 3 UK citizens, 2 of whom didn't turn up and one wasn't suitable. The retail employer said that no UK citizens applied for the jobs.

There are cost pressures and the overheads of a single migrant without children are less. But I agree with the minimum wage, which gives a higher return on capital, which results in expansion, which results in more jobs. When will we get rid of the

minimum wage? We won't. There is protectionism – putting up barriers, for example putting tax on goods so they won't be bought or on foreign nationals so they won't be employed; that was what happened in the 30s. Free markets are best. Goods and services outside the EU can't get in and that's how to drive efficiency etc.

The substantial debate has led us to make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 22 – (National)

Request the MP to seek reassurance from Government that it will exercise its derogation powers for future EU entry Countries.

Recommendation 23 – (National and European)

Whilst we recognise the benefits of a free labour market, we also recognise that rapid population change can cause pressure on local resources and infrastructure; we therefore recommend that local MPs and MEPs work to develop an EU adopted mechanism for monitoring inward migration which triggers access to EU funding to meet these additional pressures.

Recommendation 24 – (Local and National)

Seek MP support:

a – to lobby the new Police and Crime Commissioner to adopt 'zero tolerance' on street drinking and associated anti-social behaviour.

b – for increased local powers relating to the issue of licences for alcohol sales.

HEALTH, UKBA and COUNCIL

On 21 June 2012 we took an extensive range of evidence from a local GP and member of the Boston Clinical Commissioning Group, our local Public Health Consultant, senior officers from the UKBA and a range of Council officers.

Much of the popular discourse about migration tends to blame the pressure on local health service, public services and housing opportunities purely on migration; a summary of the evidence we heard follows.

From Health, we heard that:

- One of the biggest single changes affecting health provision in Boston over the past decade has been the removal of some services from Pilgrim Hospital to Lincoln County!
- The long term sustainability of maternity services at Pilgrim hospital has been supported by a general increase in the local birth rate, most of which is a consequence of in-migration.
- Identifying the ACTUAL numbers of patients on GP lists is virtually impossible as although many people register, few inform practices when they leave the area or country.
- The health community face a general challenge in recruiting quality staff.
- Surgeries are paid for each registration so resources are not as much of an issue to health as to other public services.
- There was recognition that there remains a public perception of preferential treatment for A8 patients which could cause tensions within waiting rooms, however, some of this perception of favouritism may be due to the fact that language and cultural differences may result in reception staff having to spend slightly more time dealing with the problems of the A8 community.
- Changes in appointment scheduling and the availability (or lack of) of appointments cannot be attributed solely to the increases in the A8 community.
- The future challenges facing the Boston health community are predominantly those of an increasing ageing population, a lot of whom have significant health issues. Patients with significant health issues understandably have a high requirement for GP appointments meaning many require monthly, or in excess of monthly, appointments. Many of the A8 registered patients are young, fit and healthy and require little medical support and hence few GP appointments.
- The levels of obesity in the local community, and the subsequent health problems such as diabetes and coronary heart disease, are also a significant cause for concern in the future and are likely to increase demands upon the local GPs.

Recommendation 25 – (Local)

That Boston Borough Council support the establishment of a comprehensive local HealthWatch model as defined in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 in order to promote better outcomes in health and social care for the increasing population of the Borough.

Recommendation 26 – (Local)

Boston Borough Council works closely with the Boston Strategic Health Group, the Health Scrutiny Committee for Lincolnshire and the County Shadow Health and Well Being Board to monitor and respond to the changes and challenges in the demand for local health and social care driven by the population changes that are identified in this report.

Recommendation 27 – (Local)

Boston Borough Council considers its relationship to the newly establishing clinical commissioning group for East Lincolnshire, the local primary and the secondary care providers. In particular to consider any role that it may have that will aid the recruitment and retention of health care professionals to maintain delivery of healthcare services to a diverse and increasing population.

From the UKBA we heard:

- A person from within the EU was permitted entry into any EU Country and allowed to exercise their treaty rights where were to have the right to work, to be self employed or to study whereas non EU nationals have far fewer rights.
- Anyone from the EU not exercising their treaty rights whilst in the UK would be here illegally and potentially liable to deportation.
- It is difficult to enforce deportation because the Home Office only have two grounds available to them when seeking to deport: Criminality or failure to exercise the treaty rights. The onus for proof of failure to exercise treaty rights was on the Border Agency and a formal process has to be followed for anyone suspected of not exercising their rights. (Note – when an individual is sent back to their home country without choice they are deported, where they are helped return home voluntarily they are repatriated).
- The key area in identifying illegal immigrants was liaison and partnership working with the police, crime stoppers and various intelligence units. All potential leads were followed through and the agency had established a substantial data base. The local agency liaised with the officers at the Council and also received regular information from the general public.

Recommendation 6 sets out how we think the Council should work with the UKBA going forward.

From the Council's Principal Licensing and Land Charges Officer, we heard that:

- Over the last five years year 31 applications for premises licences had been granted which ranged from small off licences, large convenience stores and supermarkets. During the same period 18 premises either closed or had their licences revoked.
- Two licences within the last five years had been suspended: one for the retail of counterfeit goods / non-duty paid alcohol and one for underage sales of alcohol. Six licences had been revoked during the same period, one for crime and disorder issues and the remainder for the sale of counterfeit and/or non duty paid goods.
- Current legislation did not allow a committee to refuse an application based on speculative reasoning. Over-intensification of such premises in areas is not a matter for licensing in discharging its function.

- Licensing committees are bound by legislation and a formal application from all applicants included referral to both the police and environmental health, both of whom were able to carry out their own checks on an applicant and if necessary, raise any objection to the application.
- The Local Authority do not record the nationality of applicants with each application being considered on its merits according to criteria.
- HM Customs and Excise enforce the sale of non-duty paid goods whilst Trading Standards are responsible for taking action against any sale of counterfeit / illegal products. Regular checks were made throughout the borough and Council Officers worked very closely with both organisations.
- Members of the public / residents have the right to object to any application. All applications were advertised within the locality of the application site prior to the application being heard at committee.
- Future changes in policy may enable the authority to use a measure known as 'cumulative impact policies' which would allow them to tackle certain issues and the government intend to amended statutory guidance to permit authorities to reflect the needs of their local area i.e. using fixed closure times of premises, staggered closing times and zoning if required.
- The authority receive very few alcohol related complaints and when received and related to illegal products they are referred on to HM Customs and Trading Standards to action.
- Inspections of licensed premises are carried out routinely and normally undertaken as a joint initiative between the Council, Police/Fire departments and Trading Standards. The Licensing department's work plan for 2012/13 included an inspection of all off licences by April 2013.

From the Head of Planning and Strategy we heard:

- The movement from a single family dwelling to a 'small' HMO (defined in the Planning Use Class Order as not more than 6 persons) is permitted development and this will have changed any apparent increase or influx for new HMOs.
- If planning permission to create HOMs is necessary **and in many cases it is not**, policies would permit the subdivision of existing dwellings and suitable non-residential properties into multiple occupation provided that criteria relating to highway safety, on-street parking and amenities of neighbouring residents were satisfied.
- Planning Policies generally take a relatively permissive stance, focusing on:
 1. impacts upon neighbours' amenities
 2. potential for increased on-street car parking
 3. maintenance of grounds and
 4. impacts upon the character and appearance of the building
- Generally, we do not have a significant number of HMO applications.
- Since 1988 there have been 12 applications for HMO defined uses – i.e. self contained flats specifically excluded. Eleven in Boston and one in Benington.
- General grounds of objection are character, white vans attraction, parking and perception of un-neighbourly activities/ disturbance. Committee had no difficulty

approving them. There are usually a handful of objections to each application when we receive applications, but I have not made a detailed count.

- The in-migration levels so far experienced have had no direct knock on effects on the demand for new build housing

From the Head of Housing, Properties and Communities we heard that:

- An HMO is a dwelling which contains more than two people forming two or more households.
- A mandatory licensable HMO is a dwelling containing five or more people who form two or more households which consists of three or more stories.
- Currently the Council only licence HMOs under the mandatory scheme but are exploring the merits of licensing **all** HMOs.
- In relation to those applying for an affordable home, the breakdown in 2007/08 was British 93.43%, EU 5.37%. In 2011/12 the figure was British 85.89% with EU 12.58%.
- The Council receive almost 2000 new housing register application per annum.
- Complaints in respect of HMO's had reduced significantly over the last few years with 138 being received during 2004/05 and only 46 through 2011/12.

Recommendation 28 – (Local)

We recognise that problems arising from HMOs impact severely on our community and therefore recommend that the Council adopts a policy of licensing all HMOs with the utmost urgency.

From the Head of Environmental Operations we heard that:

- The problem of the wrong litter being disposed of in the wrong bins had reduced slightly. Education of residents had resulted in vast improvements in certain areas of the town.
- Guidance for disposal of waste was published in multi-lingual format for residents.
- It was acknowledged that education was the preferred tool as against enforcement for those members of the public who didn't understand the bin disposal system.
- General littering was a continual problem within the town especially and whilst the town centre was cleaned daily, if the culprits were not identified then the authority had difficulty prosecuting.
- The 'name and shame' scheme had been re-introduced which had previously been successful in identifying people littering and a number of prosecutions had taken place thereafter. 70 fixed penalty notices had been issued for littering / cigarette end disposal.
- Year on year the amount of rubbish collected during the 'big Boston clean up' had diminished with a substantial reduction in many areas of the town.
- Dog fouling continued to be a problem predominantly within the urban areas of the borough and again Officers were dependant on the culprits being

named and shamed or reported in order for enforcement action to be taken. It was recognised that there was a reluctance for people to come forward and report offenders.

From the Council's Principal Community Safety Officer we heard that:

- DPPO's were due to be repealed early in 2103 by an act of Parliament but it was expected that the new legislation would have the same powers as set out in the existing DPPO's.
- Extension of the DPPO would need to be resourced and neither the authority nor police could guarantee enforcement of any extension at the present time.
- Removal of benches within the town was always taken as a last measure when all other attempts to deal with the anti social problem had failed but had been pursued where issues were acute.
- The most complaints received in respect of anti-social behaviour the most common subjects were neighbour disputes, throwing items in public, criminal damage including vandalism, verbal abuse and general shouting and swearing in public. Since January 2011 approximately 66 types of incidents had been reported to the community safety team.
- The ward with the highest number of ASB complaints was Central, followed by Fenside, Old Leake & Wrangle, Witham and then Fishtoft.
- Complaints relating to parking issues are relayed to the police at the present time. However, responsibility parking offences would soon become the job of Lincolnshire County Council.
- Abuse on websites should always been reported to the site provider; directly to the website provider who should remove the offending article and to the police. A number of legislative acts were in place for enforcing prosecution of abusers and the police would investigate and decide on a course of action.

From the Council's Principal Environmental Health Officer we heard that:

- There was no current legislation for controlling spitting in public although Enfield Borough Council has proposed a bylaw and this is awaiting approval from the Ministry of Justice. Enfield had undertaken a consultation exercise and it is likely this would be required should Boston consider adopting such a bylaw.
- Boston has no records of complaints/reports in respect of spitting. Officers were aware that it took place within the town although it is not possible to say whether it is any more prevalent in Boston than other towns or cities.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of shops aimed at serving the eastern European migrant community. Some these food outlets have given cause for concern due to the owners' lack of knowledge of UK food regulations. Education courses, on-site assistance and a firm but a fair approach has seen improvements in standards. This has taken a significant amount of resources and it is likely this will continue to be the case for the foreseeable future.

FACT AND PERCEPTION

The final meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 27 June 2012 when we heard evidence from Professor Gary Craig, members of the Boston Protest March Group and a representative from Churches Together in Boston.

Professor Craig was the world's first Professor in Social Justice when he was appointed at the University of Hull in 2000. He was also founding Fellow at the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation (patron, Archbishop Desmond Tutu) and led the team working on issues of modern slavery.

He worked in community development until returning to academic life in 1990 and was President of the International Association for Community Development (with UN consultative status) for 9 years till 2008.

Professor Craig began the meeting by reading a really insightful statement before answering a range of questions from councillors and members of the public:

'There is no doubt that Boston has had disproportionate difficulties in terms of immigration levels – the recent levels of migration in the Wash and in Hereford & Worcester were the two areas with high numbers since 2004 compared to the local population. The impact on Boston must have been considerable.

Why did this happen? Who was responsible or to blame? What can we do? This happened because of a lack of planning by the Government, especially the Labour Government, up to 2004, when 50-70,000 migrants were expected; it was actually a million over the period since then, though some have gone back, but we don't know how many because migrants only register when they enter the country (unless they are self-employed), but not if they go back.

Why the Wash area? It has had a clear need for labour and, as a result, a higher concentration of gangmasters than the rest of the country. Migrants are seeking to better their lives and eastern Europeans are attracted to come here. For many, the dream has turned into a nightmare; for some, it is modern slavery. Most gangmasters are legal and operate properly. The rate for the job is better than in Eastern Europe, but in many cases it is below the minimum wage and conditions are poor. The work is 'dirty, difficult and dangerous', so local people don't want to do it.

Some say "they're taking our jobs" – that is not true. They are doing jobs that local people don't seem to want to do. Employers welcome most migrants' strong work ethic. What would happen if the eastern Europeans were not here? There is no evidence at all that the jobs would be filled with local people; it amounts to myth and prejudice.

Some say that migration leads to unemployment. There is no evidence of this either; in fact, the reverse has been shown to be true historically – migration generates jobs. For example, the 31,000 Ugandan Asians who come to this country have created more jobs per head than any other section of population of the country.

People say “they’re taking our houses”. Again this is untrue in general although there may be some local effects. First, there’s the decline in social housing opportunities – that’s the responsibility of Government from 1979 onwards because they flogged off the best so there’s now less than half social lettings of what there was then. Secondly, less than 1% of social lettings nationwide have gone to migrant workers. Thirdly, in the private market there’s creeping deregulation, which has meant rents have gone up and up. Amongst the migrant worker population, half a dozen people might share a house; 4 share a room by ‘hot bedding’. The impact has been that rent levels are higher than local people can afford. Who’s to blame? Not the migrant workers; it’s the Government. A lot of problems lie at the hands of Governments. You need to look at the facts and the evidence’.

As with our MP, then entire discourse had with Professor Craig needs to be presented within our main report as all of his evidence takes us through the fact and perception debate. Questions to Professor Craig are set out in *italics*, responses in ordinary text.

1m migrant workers have saturated the market so there are no jobs and no provision. As for housing, no more has been built for migrant workers and the landlords are therefore making a mint.

You have just agreed with me! There have been 1m migrant workers since 2000, that’s 80,000 a year, probably less than 40,000 a year across the country given that many return to their countries of origin.

But we don’t know the numbers! [Subsequent comment: Incorrect the number from the ONS clearly shows at least 3 Million]

Official records are kept – migrant workers register when they come into the country, except the self-employed or perhaps the few that go on the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme. It is actually a criminal act to employ someone who has not registered. This is *not* the fault of migrant workers who are often not familiar with local laws and regulations.

There is fear, disappointment and worry about where the country is going. We see in the national press and on internet sites reports of immigrants, such as a family from Somalia with 8 children on benefits being accommodated in a 2 million pound house in London, all paid for by the tax payer, another example a Romanian woman with 4 children, no husband claiming twenty eight thousand a year in benefits and going to court to get more housing benefit. Immigrants that commit rape and murder allowed to stay in this country because of their right to ‘family life’. Is it little

wonder that hard working, struggling British people feel so aggrieved and let down. What would you like to see done about it?

I'd like to see the *certain papers* closed down. *One paper* recently had a headline "How many more?" and gave a figure that was four times the real number of migrants. The Leveson Inquiry shows that journalists have a political agenda.

I don't support criminal activity, but there are bad apples in all sectors of society. With respect to the Romanian woman, if the court rules that she is entitled to more housing benefit then she should be paid. It is "quid quo pro"; there are 250,000 UK nationals in the EU. If a few migrants commit rape and murder, yes, people will be angry – I will be angry – but that is criminality not ethnicity.

There are hundreds of examples of refugees in desperate situations; it is to Britain's credit that it is open to them, but they never receive press coverage. Britain has one of the lowest numbers of refugees per head than any country in the rest of the world, including, for example, poor countries such as Tanzania and Pakistan, which is a disgrace. Facts in this territory, especially facts which show migrants in a good light, don't get a lot of press.

With between a quarter to a third of all babies born in the UK – and the number is as high as two out of three in London – born from foreign parents, added to that the Muslim population increasing 10 times faster than the rest of society, and with a further 8 Countries wishing to join the EU. We are very soon going to become the minority race in our own country. How do you feel about that?

Where are you getting your figures from?!

From the Office of National Statistics

The Department of Health states the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities have between 3-4 times the White/British fertility rate. But look at the demography – we have a very rapidly ageing population, who will care for them? Without migrants it wouldn't happen. In 1949 Caribbeans were invited to this country to work in the care sector...by Enoch Powell! The NHS would collapse if all the immigrants went. There is always another side to the argument.

What in your opinion are the main 3 problems caused by mass migration to the UK?

Bad planning, poor resourcing and the hostile media – they don't care about the facts. The process of migration has not been managed very well; it should be better, but stop seeing migration as a problem. We are *all* migrants. There has been no end of immigration to Britain in the past. I am part English, part Irish, part Scots and part Indian. See it as an opportunity. I passed ten ethnic minority outlets on my way from the station; if immigrants all went you would just be left with gaps in the street

Migration has a place, but not at the rate it has been.

Yes, I have acknowledged that. I have been a community development worker and activist and I know you have to get the targets right.

I'm saying migration should be capped to let us deal with what we've got; I'm not saying 'send them home'.

Migration is capped at the moment.

Not from the EU.

Nor is it capped from here to the EU. You would have to get the whole of the EU to agree. What's needed is better planning, better resourcing, improved social housing provision and labour market regulation and the Gangmasters' Licensing Authority should be given more resources.

[Professor Craig then read an article from the Metro newspaper about a farmer who advertised jobs and got very little interest from local people.] If jobs were not so 'dirty, difficult and dangerous' they would be more attractive to local people. Migrants don't come here to sit on the river bank and drink; they come here to work.

Do you feel the Government are doing enough to cut migration numbers?

You mean inward migration? There has been a massive influx in the last 10 years, but more than half have gone. The facts are that, in the working age population, migrant workers account for 1% of the total workforce. In Boston it could be 4% or more, which is 5-6,000.

The official population figure is 59,000, but I think it is 89,000.

You mean 30,000 migrants?! There are about 6,000. I've done research that looks at the facts.

We are told that there are 5,000 Latvians alone!

That's wrong – it's wrong by a factor of about 10-15.

What's needed is better resourcing for housing and better regulation for the GLA, the HSE and Public Health to improve working conditions.

The Government says that migrants need to have a good grasp of English and yet English as a Second Language courses have been shut down.

Because of migrants, in some areas, small schools have stayed open; there are incredible benefits to migration.

Do you think it's time we closed our borders off?

That is completely unworkable. It wouldn't happen. The labour market over 20 years ago was unregulated – the Labour Government described it as "flexible", as though that was an attraction. They take people on, drop them like a hat, they work

in poor conditions etc – if this was changed, things would shift significantly. Jobs would be filled by locals because they would be jobs worth doing; they would be better. The European community overall is very prone to exploitation, not just in the UK.

Do you feel the benefits of migration are enough for the problems caused by it?

If you talk about the benefits of migration, there are improved areas and quality of life by way of restaurants, bars and cafes, dodgy housing areas are regenerated and migrants pay more tax per capita. The net benefit of migration is £3bn per annum, that's net of costs, according to the government's own research. We would be poorer without them and it won't stop.

Why do you think people are afraid to address the issue of migration?

They're not, but don't address it truthfully. You need to create conditions where people can talk frankly about this subject but without abusing other people. There was a meeting at university once with my students at which the Chatham House Rules applied and people used language they'd learned from extreme media. People are afraid of getting things wrong. We should judge not by language, however, but by people's overall views.

Internationally, we are bleeding professionals from elsewhere in the world to work here, when they should be going back to work in their own countries after 3 years.

Do you think I am racially motivated?

If you had a placard saying 'Send them home!' I still wouldn't know if you were racist. You haven't said anything to suggest you are racist. Most racists are talking from the back of their heads; they are not looking at the facts, it's just prejudice.

It's all to do with tolerance and need. There is a huge need in the health service – it would collapse without migrants – and in public service overall. And we have to look at history to understand how it happens. In Bradford there is high unemployment in the Pakistani population; they were recruited in the 60s and 70s to work in the textile industry, but when that industry collapsed they were blamed for their unemployment!

You recently were involved in a report by the Rowntree Foundation on the experiences of forced labour in the UK food industry. Can you explain the scope of the enquiry?

There is a four-page summary on the Joseph Rowntree website <http://www.jrf.org.uk/>

The project is half way through and there will be another report in the autumn.

The report highlighted that there is a concentration of migrant labour in South Lincolnshire. What countries are they mainly from?

They are mainly Polish, a few Latvian and a smaller number of Portuguese.

Have you any idea of the numbers involved?

The data suggested there were up to 5,000 migrant workers in this situation.

Can you highlight some of the issues and abuses you discovered?

These are covered in the Findings and I will circulate that. But in addition, there is also human trafficking for sexual purposes. A Chief Constable who led one operation and who investigated one area said there was only one brothel, but then found 58. They were eastern European women who had been offered jobs, then suffered multiple rape and threats and so forced into prostitution.

Migrants suffer threats, violence, sexual violence, huge deductions from wages and grotesque conditions, i.e. are experiencing forced labour as the ILO defines it

What impact do gang masters have on the situation, has the GLA improved the situation?

Most gangmasters are legal and decent; some however are criminal.

The Government has just cut the GLA's resources and sacked the local Inspector who was doing a very good job. I suggest you meet with the GLA's Chief Executive and ask your MP and Stephen Barclay [MP for East Cambridgeshire-who recently published an article in the Daily Telegraph about the appalling conditions in which migrant workers lived] to pressure the Government to restore cuts in the budget. I would also suggest you increase inspection of HMOs through your own housing officers and the Fire and Rescue Service, which also needs an increase in resources.

A member of the public then asked: *The Prime Minister said recently that multiculturalism doesn't work. Others, including Eric Pickles, have said things need to change and Ed Miliband is now saying that Labour's previous 'open door' policy was a mistake. What do you think?*

Ed Miliband is being opportunistic. For my views on this, please see my letter to the Guardian.

Can the task and finish group send you a copy of its report and ask you to give your views? Can we meet up with you again to firm up the report? We will be taking it to the Government. We have gathered a lot of evidence and will draw up an action plan from it; there will be some national actions, but some will be local.

I am happy to help as much as I can. What's needed is a "grocery adjudicator" to rein in the supermarkets, which pass on more and more demands down the chain to the producers to produce cheap goods 'just in time'. There needs to be debates about the GLA. There was an early day motion three weeks ago on dissatisfaction

with the cuts. Mark Simmonds (the local MP) was instrumental with setting up the GLA in the wake of the Morecombe tragedy when 22 migrant workers were drowned because of their agent's carelessness.

A representative from Churches Together in Boston then addressed the meeting and answered questions from Members and members of the public. The key points raised were:

- Churches Together includes most denominations and has a lot of individual input with the Polish community. The organisation runs the street pastors on Friday and Saturday nights; the emergency night shelter, which opens when the temperature drops below freezing for 3 consecutive nights; and the soup kitchen, which opens weekly.
- About 30 people go to the soup kitchen each week, 50/50 English to migrants
- Mostly migrants use the night shelter.
- The local night shelter was open for 41 nights in 2010/11 and for 27 nights during the winter of 2011/12.
- *In respect of fear from migrants.....it is a perceived fear. If something is strange, we can feel threatened.*

The final pieces of evidence taken and debate had was with members of the Boston Protest March Group; members of that Group offered a range of views and opinions from their interpretation and experience of the social impacts that population change has had within our borough. Their views and opinions have offered important challenge to every other individual and organisation that have given evidence to our Task and Finish Group. The following summary provides a resume of some of the actual and perceived challenges we face from their perspective.

- The problems we have with migration are here and now. It is difficult to attract people to come to live and work here. Wages are low. Agencies, gangmasters and farmers run Boston. The Council should take control and run it as it should be run.
- The benefit system has a lot to do with wage decline, because if you're earning good money it's worth getting up for. They should pay decent wages and not expect people to live in poverty.
- There should be zero tolerance in the town centre with respect to drinking and anti-social behaviour; we stop paying for translation; those who wanted it could pay for it; we should stop licensing outlets, we should licence all HMOs and there should be full registration of all migrant workers, with names, addresses, details of deductions from wages and holiday pay to stop exploitation.
- It's a shame it (the Task and Finish Group process) hasn't been better supported by the public.

- The Council should have a more assertive approach with the MP to get the infrastructure to sustain the population increase; it should be more authoritative.
- A lot of the issues are of national level. We need to work on integration a lot more.
- The schools lied; the MP talked waffle and was no help. The paper I gave to Chairman after the unions showed that 5 gangs were laid off by a local employer. The only person who's said there's a problem was the professor, but he said it's the Government to blame.
- The union representative and the professor both said that migration is not affecting unemployment, but it *has* to have an effect. The ONS figures show that just under 700,000 jobs went to foreign nationals in 2011 alone – they *must* be coming in and taking jobs. The MP predicted migration in the tens of thousands in the next two years, but there's nothing to substantiate that claim; there has been net immigration into the UK each year of 250,000 for the last 3 years; 200,000 a year for the previous 12 years. And there's Greece and Portugal – we could get a lot more.
- A member of the group wanted us (the Council) to cap immigration and deal with what we've got to stop the flow or the pressure building and create jobs, homes, school places, get them integrating before we accept any more.
- In relation to the borough itself and how we could work to promote it in a more positive light, a member of the Protest Group commented that there've been four murders, five killed in an illegal distillery explosion. What's good about it? There's unemployment, low wages, high rents; there are very few things happening that are worth promoting whereas another member disagreed and said There are many others in the country experiencing the same things and we should be proud of what we've achieved in a short time. We have highlighted the issues, our MP has raised them in the House of Commons, Ed Miliband admits the problems. Boston stands out as doing extremely well.
- Boston has had a poor image for several years, whether it's because we're fat or because of flooding etc. I think this is a cry for help. No-one wants Boston to be seen in a worse light, but frustrations are boiling over. We want to get the message through to people who can help us to re-build the town.
- Protest March representatives were involved with the Centre for Good Relations meetings and the Alchemy Project with migrant representatives which they reported to be 'enlightening'.
- *Migrants* stay very much in their own groups. They're not trying to integrate. There has been a massive change in the school playground, but the parents aren't integrating and they're not attending events. So it will improve in time but not at the moment. There are a lot of good people, but they are outnumbered by the not-so-good.
- *Additional funding is not the answer*, that would create more problems. I'm saying 'cap immigration'. If people say that's racist then they're not listening.

I'm saying let's stop more coming in and deal with what we've got. There's a misconception about what we're about. Let's lobby Government to deal with it – they've flooded us – the Council needs to fight the Government on these issues.

CONCLUSION

This extensive report demonstrates the diversity and complexity of the issues that we continue to face as a direct result of the rapid population change that we have experienced. Up until the end of the twentieth century, Boston had a relatively small and stable population; since 2000 however, our population has changed at a pace that has challenged the town and its residents.

Although this report does not and cannot provide the answers that many are looking for, it provides a robust baseline assessment from which to measure developments and define future changes.

Many of the issues described are governed and prescribed at many different administrative levels; local, regional, national and European. One of the things that we hope we have done throughout our process and through this report is to have made it clear that Boston Borough Council alone cannot control labour markets, cannot solve European problems, cannot re-draft European legislation nor easily change national policy. We have however tried to highlight the debate and "spotlight" the concerns of our residents by taking them to the appropriate accountable authorities and as a consequence have labelled our recommendations as either local, regional, national or European matters.

We have not shied away from issues over which we have no control, rather, we have committed ourselves to sending messages where they need to go. We will continue to lobby appropriate authorities whilst we continue to deal with the problems identified on the frontline to the best of our ability. We will continue to develop local solutions to local issues, we will continue to invest in local people and we will continue to invest in local commerce. By focussing our own resources, challenging others and making sure that we represent all parts of our community, we hope that the quality of life and the future prosperity of all of our residents will be protected.

We thank everyone for their contribution and hope that you will continue to help take our Borough forward.

ATTACHED FOR INFORMATION:

1. Notes of a meeting of the Council's Corporate and Community Committee at which members of the public participated; following this meeting some of the report's recommendations were amended.
2. Comments from members of the public received during the consultation period on the report.

NOTES OF THE CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE MEETING OF 18TH OCTOBER 2012 – AS A RESULT OF WHICH SOME RECOMMENDATIONS WERE AMENDED

LAW AND ORDER

Recommendation 1

Public: We would also like to see the police record anti social behaviour related to alcohol outside the DPPO area and the number of times items have been confiscated. It needs to be extended outside the DPPO area.

Member: This will create too much paperwork for the police, especially if the area outside the DPPO was included.

Chairman: Hard evidence is needed.

TFG Member: Everyone wants to see it extended, but a smaller area needs to be targeted first to see the results.

Public: Does “Zero Tolerance” mean an alcohol ban? If so would that mean throughout the Borough of Boston? It needs to be clearer. The police said there isn’t a problem with town centre drinking, but there is. It was in the Standard that the police are being more proactive, which is good; if they are driving by outside the centre and see problems there should be zero tolerance.

Chairman: There is no provision in legislation for a ban. We were looking at how others addressed this; different police forces do things differently. We will ask how feasible this is. People want a strong message and this is the strongest we can give.

Portfolio Holder: The legislation is up for review by the Government and extending the DPPO area will not be considered until the outcome is known. If tolerance is reduced it will only be within the DPPO area because only that area is covered by legislation.

TFG Member: These recommendations will be meaningless if resources are not attached.

Recommendation 3

Public: Why lobby for a Restorative Justice Programme if it can’t be enforced and is an option for the offender and not mandatory.

Officers: It’s an alternative option for those caught.

Recommendation 4

Public: We need to see a time scale for the actions following the report being submitted to our MP. What he has done and when, and this must be reported back to the general public. There needs to be regular reports on what is happening.

Members:

- In many countries, we have to prove we have insurance and driving licences; this should be checked here too.
- Add industrial vehicles; not just lorries, but vans taking people to and from work and ask the police and agencies to look at these vans and even target them.
- When vehicles are bought off the street they don't need to produce driving licences; the sellers should be targeted.

Public: There is a monitoring system that records number plates – get it to record plates so we know when they've been in the country over one year.

Portfolio Holder: the technology is there; we need to ensure it can be deployed in this way.

Recommendation 5

Members:

- PCSOs attend Fishtoft parish council meetings.
- Many areas are not parish or urban areas, e.g. South ward.
- This is a matter of resources; the police cannot attend meetings if they have to be elsewhere.
- If people don't want to engage you can't make them.

Chairman: Some people have asked for a panel in their area.

Recommendation 6

Public: Who is to develop the protocol, by when and who will pay for its implementation? If the UK BA is to draw up the protocol it could take years.

Member: These EU treaty rights apply to all EU countries; so it is for the EU to finance.

Chairman: We're taking this to the National Migration Panel and UK BA at the national level; this is a bigger message.

Portfolio Holder: We're taking this to the Minister for European Migration. They appear before the courts and this needs to be more joined up.

Public: This is a European issue. If courts have to pay for translation do they request funding from the EU to pay for it?

Chairman: The courts paying for translation is an issue for many towns; the National Migration Board will identify them.

EMPLOYMENT

Recommendation 7 & 8

Public: It would be advisable to protect vulnerable workers by providing information on their rights and the "Rogue Gang master" "hotline advertised in public places, the job centre, supermarket notice boards, and local media and through local community

leaders etc. It's still going on; people are still being taken advantage of. The number of foreign gangmasters is increasing and they're registered in eastern Europe.

TFG Member: Promotion on the Council's website is too prescriptive.

Chairman: The hotline number will also appear on the East Midlands Councils website.

Members:

- Most members of Unite union feel immigration does affect jobs locally.
- The GLA needs more staff; Government should be lobbied.
- The main problem is how to target the people suffering from rogue gangmasters so they come forward; it needs careful handling.
- There should be a recommendation to the EU Commission for European protection for employees – legislation for the *obligation to protect*, to limit the amount of migrant labour that can be employed.

Public: Please add this last comment to the recommendation!

TFG Member: Foreign registered gangmasters was not considered. The hotline should be promoted in other languages.

Portfolio Holder: Zero hours contracts, where people don't know what hours they are to work or what pay they will receive, are a significant contributor to migrant labour and disincentive to local people. Local people are not economically able to undertake work because of benefit system disincentives.

Public: Recommend to the Inland Revenue about people who are being exploited; we know of people getting £4 per hour.

TFG Member: the recommendation takes care of this.

Recommendation 9

Public: Who/ which officer, is to take responsibility for encouraging local business's to advertise in their local job centre and what size of company would fall into this category. Encourage larger companies to do this, e.g. PC World.

Chairman: local jobs, whatever the size of the company, should be advertised through JobCentre Plus, though this is difficult to implement.

Members:

- Many companies don't use directly contracted labour; they employ people through agencies etc. Companies put their own vacancies on their own websites.
- The whole picture will change with the benefits changes and people will find it even hard to find work.

Recommendation 10

Members: This is a good idea; we used to encourage businesses to have scholarship schemes; if they needed people with degrees, they would take people on and sponsor them to get the qualification.

Portfolio Holder: Companies could be made to look exciting by good marketing.
TFG Member: There are exciting opportunities not reflected in the schools' careers service.

EDUCATION

Recommendation 11

Public: (D) With an ever increasing population how is this to be monitored and what are the County Council's plans for school place provision over the next 10 years? This will become a critical issue in the next few years. (E) Who is the target for this additional support (adults or children?) and who will carry the cost?

*Funding for this should be requested from the **EU not out of the local budget**. You need to tell the local MP to lobby government to obtain EU funding to cover the cost of educating EU immigrants. The education witnesses said they received £1,000 per pupil no matter when they started.*

Members:

- One of the first things adults should do is learn the language; they shouldn't expect us to pay for it.
- Comment at European level? That criteria exists for all EU states, e.g. in Germany, you have to pass a (language) test, so it's a different test than what they're forcing on us; they've got a different set of rules.

Chairman: We want the County Council and Education Funding Authority to know we're monitoring this too. Making admissions guidance clearer is key. Boston College has been nominated for a college 'Oscar' for its work with European children preparing for exams etc. We want to encourage people locally to speak English.

Recommendation 13

Member: Work experience should mean 'shadowing' employees, not replacing them.

THE MEDIA

Recommendation 14

*Public: It may be more appropriate to work with the media to show Boston in a more "**Balanced**" light. People want to know the truth, both good and bad.*

TFG Member: Yes, it should be shown in a balanced light, not just in a positive light.

Recommendation 16

Public: Why not locate Community Action Notice Boards in areas where we know people congregate, i.e. Tesco, Asda etc.

Apart from the one film event at the assembly rooms, which wasn't very well supported, what else has The Alchemy project done in Boston? Surely further funding would be a total waste of money.

Chairman: Alchemy has its own funding; we want to embrace what the organisation is doing. I will ask them to contact you about its work.

Member: What about distribution?

A LINCOLNSHIRE PERSPECTIVE

Recommendation 17

Member: There is a lot of lobbying to be done; this could take years.

Chairman: These are not 'quick fix' issues. The report illustrates the issues in Boston and they require dialogue with other bodies. Hilary Benn MP commented that many were national issues. The Council could find allies across the country. We want our MP, Prime Minister and MEPs to take us seriously. Some recommendations have funding implications; some are about attitudes.

Recommendation 18

Public: Eastern European shops in West St and all over Boston are just food and drink outlets. How many locals would want to use them? How can you say Boston offers a Diverse shopping experience?

Boston doesn't have the problems Grantham has; we have foreign nationals taking over empty shops so at least they're occupied and rates are paid.

TFG Member: An original suggestion was to ask foreign shops to label goods in English.

Members:

- Boston does not have a 'diverse shopping offer'.
- Changing labels would cost a lot and they shouldn't be expected to do that.
- Why should we publicise these shops?
- I thought the idea was for inviting them more into the community, to integrate more and put the onus on them to engage.
- Most foreign shop owners speak English well; why shouldn't we go in. They are all trading successfully; it is up to us to integrate.

Portfolio Holder: it could say 'different shopping offer' or 'different food shopping'.
Chairman: We are not saying we will advertise foreign shops; we are building on work already ongoing.

Recommendation 19

Public: What is happening with our local CCTV system and if this is centralised won't it make it more difficult for the action to be co-ordinated?

Chairman: A report on this went to the Environment and Performance Committee and will go to Cabinet on 7th November.

Public: Promote West St as a great shopping opportunity? You really cannot do that. You could be prosecuted under the trades description act.

Member: There are no shops in West Street until you reach Dunelms! What is a neighbourhood caretaker?

Portfolio Holder: (a) relates to the toilet block on London Road / High Street that could be used for a community hub with three North Sea Camp resettlement prisoners doing basic maintenance as neighbourhood caretakers. However, this is not definite; it depends on whether the block can be acquired.

Recommendation 20

Member: What else could they use it for? They are making money.

TFG Member: this could happen through the planning system; they have to apply to carry on using the site.

Public: Has the signage got approval?

Recommendation 21

Public: What is meant by environmental enforcement? Please define.

Chairman: It's about litter etc. A plain English definition will be given.

Members: The buckets of sand for cigarette ends are unsightly, but they are better than nothing.

MARK SIMMONDS, MP

Recommendation 22

Public: Why have you not told the MP to lobby government to cap EU Immigration? Be more assertive with the MP.

When are the Council submitting the report to our local MP and can we be assured that the public will be informed of timescales for responses and any action will be followed up vigorously, to ensure the report is not ignored.

Portfolio Holder: we could ask the MP to 'demand derogation powers'.

Member: Could you also ask the MP to clarify the PM's statement regarding the yes/no vote on remaining in the EU?

HEALTH, UKBA AND COUNCIL

Recommendation 25

Public: What level of support is envisaged and what is the potential financial cost to the Borough.

Members:

- The biggest impact would be in 2013 and the implications to the County Council budget could be quite significant; it is unclear at this stage. There is no easy answer. The recommendation seeks to ensure the public has a say. We need to watch the model evolve.
- There is supposed to be one hospital bed for every 1,000 people, but there isn't and with the predicted population increase, there could be significant problems.

Public: This was brought up with the Planning Officer, who said he'd need to see proof of it before anything was done.

Recommendation 26

Public: What outcomes will cause concern and how and by whom is this going to be measured. What are the council's long term plans for housing with a projected rise in population?

TFG Member: The Health Service monitoring has all sorts of outcome parameters in place. The temporary resident population has become an issue. The Commissioning Group will have responsibility for this. There were 250,000 on the east coast and there were triggers already. The significant health care 'time bomb' in this region is elderly care, not migration.

Portfolio Holder: There is a significant need for single person's accommodation. The borough needed more homes generally. The New Homes Bonus could be used to make building homes more economical. More empty homes could be brought back into use and there could be better use of the housing stock, etc.

Recommendation 28

Public: Please define urgency. We need a time scale.

Member: The overcrowding of houses that aren't classed as HMOs – because *they* say they're related – needs to be looked at somehow. They wouldn't fall into HMO licensing, but I believe the Council has the powers.

Portfolio Holder: This is in the Housing Strategy. The new definition of an HMO would be 2 or more people forming 2 or more households. Relationships have to be specific and should be easy to deal with. The Council will have to recruit staff and work up a full cost recovery system.

General

Public: Will you give a guaranteed commitment to the people of Boston that all 28 recommendations or subsequent recommendations in the final report will be monitored, and evidence backed, in a progress and implementation report made public at 3 monthly intervals?

TFG Members:

- Ask all relevant bodies if it is feasible to implement the recommendations; how they intend to do so; and if the Council can have an ongoing progress report.

- 3-monthly progress reports are not possible; 6-monthly would show what has been attempted.

Public: we're asking for 3-monthly reports just so people know progress is being made; it would go a long way to alleviate ill-feeling.

Member: This is a very good, comprehensive report. This is the start of the process not the end. The onus is on the Committee to monitor the recommendations; the document has to be dynamic with ongoing review.

Chairman: I have spoken to Cabinet Members and they recognise the issues in the report. We need to ensure the issues are fulfilled in the Council's Corporate Plan to embed the process. Not everyone will agree; different opinions can be included.

TFG Member: The recommendations will need to be resourced. Could there be a recommendation 29 to ask Cabinet to make provision for funding the schemes in next year's budget?

Portfolio Holder: comments could be included as an annex to the report.

By consensus it was:

RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet and full Council

- 1. That it considers making provision to implement the Task and Finish Group recommendations within the budget for 2013/14.**
- 2. That each relevant body within the Task and Finish Group report be asked:**
 - a) If it is feasible to implement the recommendations;**
 - b) How they intend to do so; and**
 - c) To supply a progress report after six months.**

SUBSEQUENT CHANGES MADE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6 – (Regional)

DELETE "Develop" AND INSERT "The Council leads the development of" a protocol with the UKBA that clearly sets out how citizens not exercising their EU treaty rights are assisted and repatriated and, where necessary, deported with half-yearly monitoring reports to be made to the Council.

Recommendation 8 – (Local)

Promote the 'Rogue Gangmaster' hotline number on the Council's website AND ADD: and request the GLA to undertake more promotion of the hotline through community notice boards in supermarkets and other locations frequented by migrant workers.

Recommendation 14 – (Local)

Continue to work with the local media to promote Boston in a DELETE “positive” AND INSERT balanced light.

Recommendation 18 – (Local)

Work with Boston Business Improvement District to:

a - Support eastern European shop owners to make their stores more welcoming to the local population and promote their wares to all people in the Borough, not just their own communities.

b - Promote Boston on the internet and via other media as a multi-cultural town with DELETE “a diverse shopping” AND INSERT an eastern European food offer and a strong heritage.

c - Encourage local European food businesses to take spaces on Boston market and consider holding a ‘multicultural food fair’.

Recommendation 21 – (Local)

INSTEAD OF: Prioritise within the Council’s budget environmental enforcement within the whole of the borough.

CHANGE TO: When setting the budget, the Council should give priority to littering enforcement.

Recommendation 22 – (National)

DELETE “Ask” AND INSERT Request the MP to seek reassurance from Government that it will exercise its derogation powers for future EU entry Countries.

COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE ALCHEMY PROJECT ON THE REPORT OF THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF POPULATION CHANGE IN BOSTON TASK AND FINISH GROUP DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD

COMMENT NO. 1

As a resident in Boston with my family, I have seen first hand the demographic changes which have occurred in our town over the last five to eight years, in particular, and I am very familiar with the impact that these changes have had upon the services within our town.

I wish to say that I am pleased with the recent report published by the Borough council committee as I feel that it clearly shows fact from perception and it has clearly shown what a considerable effort the council have made to acknowledge and to try to deal with the different issues raised by the demographic change within the population of the town.

COMMENT NO. 2

We hope some of the issues will be sorted out very soon!!

Boston is no longer a desirable place to be! it was so nice to stroll into town a few years back, now we avoid going if possible.
Boston was once THE place to visit for American visitors not so now, it has lost its appeal as an English Market Town.

We cannot believe it has taken this long to realise that there are problems that need to be dealt with.

The fact that we have so many immigrants in this catchment area makes us feel the minority in our own Town :-

We would first like to comment on the drinking (not just in the Market Place) quite recently young adults were sat on a tomb at the side of St. Botolphs drinking alcohol, this was at 9.a.m in the morning, not what visitors or local residents want.

Why when double yellow lines are in High Street are cars allowed to park? on numerous occasions they have formed a long line, many of these cars have left hand drives - again flouting our laws (they seem to think they can do what they like and get away with it).

You may think I am against these migrants (not so) many of them work very hard. It is sad that there are so many of our local people not able or willing to do the jobs that these migrants have come over for.

It is the whole structure and numbers that are here, their needs for health, Children's schooling, policing and housing that concerns us.

It would be nice if they respected our streets (spitting onto our paths and shoving their empty bottles/beer cans into our hedges is not acceptable.

The driving standards amongst some of them is another factor that needs to be addressed, we live near a school and industrial estate and it is like a racing track at certain times of the day.

We hear of fights amongst the different nationals and policing this must be draining our resources, a very frightening thought for the future of our children/grandchildren. It has taken a long time for the council to come up with these 28 recommendations, we hope that they are implemented before the residents of Boston take to the streets in protest.

Two Bostonians with High Hopes for a better Boston With Regards

COMMENT NO. 3

Personally i think you miss the point, immigration itself is not the problem, it's the volume arriving and still arriving.

COMMENT NO. 4

As a group you should lobby the government to bring about a complete cessation of all immigration onto the U.K. It is unfair that the British tax payer should be the provider of benefits and health care for impoverished Eastern Europeans. This country neither wants nor needs these people.

COMMENT NO. 5

Local Females feel unsafe in home town,most people now travel out of town to socialise-ruined local social scene.

Predatory behaviour of foreign nationals in late night clubs/bars.

Massive shoplifting issue driven by foreign nationals.

Children vulnerable in town after dark.

Unsafe feeling in london rd and other migrant concentrated areas.

Locals moving out of town centre to peripheral areas/villages.

Rude body language and attitude of some foreign nationals.

No effort to integrate communities made by local council/government at early stages of incoming migrants.Too late now to go back and fix issue without re-education and massive investment.

I do not go into Boston unless i have to & spend leisure time elsewhere.

West street is an undesirable area to visit in the main.In the evening very intimidating.

Large Green supermarket in town downgraded due to demographics of customer base.

Given the choice i would leave the area.

I like the hard working attitude of some migrants.

I would be keen to attend any meetings looking to positively tackle this issue to evolve & energise our home town.

COMMENT NO. 6

I think that the rise of population in Boston is well above 10,000.

Has the Council consulted with the number of people using GP and Dental Services? The CAB can supply more accurate figures. Several years ago, I attended a presentation on the increase of multi-occupancy housing problems at Lincoln University. A member of Boston Borough Council was a presenter and the figures were very inconsistent then.

The demand on the NHS has greatly increased especially with non-British births - demand on public money for Child Benefit, Housing Benefit and Schools. They see it as a right to demand money when they have not contributed to our tax system. Demand is not too strong a word if anyone who works in the public sector will testify to. There must be figures to show the increase of Housing Benefit payments and as the Council have an Equal Opportunities Questionnaire, they should also be able to distinguish between local residents and foreign nationals claiming benefits.

There are very few people willing or making an effort to speak English. The increase in the costs of translators must impact on Council Budgets as well as other public services such as Police and other Government funded agencies.

The local economy is not benefitting from the shops. VAT and other costs are not being paid as food is being imported from Eastern European countries to the detriment of our local produce. I am not sure of import taxes but I would guess that this is not being paid. Hygiene standards are questionable at the best of times. I have entered a delicatessen only to have 3 prams moved to bar my way on the way to the counter because I am local.

Myself and many of my colleagues who live locally will not go into Boston to shop and certainly will not go socialising of an evening. I work in Spalding and shop there too.

On Benefits: please check the changes being implemented later this month regarding sanctions to receive Jobseekers Allowance.

I have the opinion that a lot of our young people do want employment. However, schools and colleges have little understanding of what employers actually want regarding attitude; respect; meaningful qualifications; aspirations being realistic and achievable; and even what the industries offer in terms of employment opportunities.

Thank you for taking the time to read this e mail.

COMMENT NO. 7

Read the above report with great interest - a conscientious piece of work, and a positive beginning.

One aspect that did disturb me was the great disparity in basic facts and figures:

Mark Simmonds, the local MP, estimated the migrant worker population as "15 - 20 000".

Others including Cllr Paul Kenny & Prof Craig of Hull estimated 5 000.

The 2011 Census, on the face of it, seems to indicate a figure between the above two (perhaps 10 000?).

Given the wild fantasies that urban myth conjures up on this subject ("*One-third of the Boston population is now Polish*" was a comment I heard recently from a normally Labour-voting artist friend married to a retired history teacher - not, one would have thought, fertile ground for hysteria), and the fact that it is over a year since the Census took place, surely some reliable figures, not of course available to the Council's working party, must now be in the public domain? If not, they should be.

RESPONSE TO COMMENT NO. 7 FROM ANDY FISHER, THE HEAD OF HOUSING, HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Although we have had the first release of the 2011 Census data, residents nationality will be due in the second information release due in November.

Notwithstanding the issue of non-completion or partial completion, the second set of Census data will contain far more detail and hopefully be of some real use to us and many others.

Both the MP and Professor Craig refer to population numbers based on evidence that they have seen or gathered directly; unfortunately they have just seen or gathered different data.

The second release will be available on the ONS website as soon as it is published and information for Lincolnshire will be number crunched by the Lincolnshire research Observatory. In the meantime, the best I have to go on is the July Census release which shows us to have an official population of 64,600 and I am not aware of any further contradictory information having been published.

I believe mid-year review estimates should start coming out from ONS in 13/14 and would hope that for Boston they take full account of actual birth rates and reducing mortality; growing our official estimate year on year by a sensible amount.

If you do ever come across any other population assumptions or figures then please do forward me a copy as like you I find the debate about 'how many' to be fascinating.

JUST Lincolnshire, as the county's single equality organisation welcomes the work that has gone into this report and looks forward to continuing to work with a wide range of partners in Boston. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss further how JUST Lincolnshire could be of maximum impact. I have also attached how the Alchemy Project, initiated by JUST Lincolnshire, has viewed the report. Wesley Shelbourne wesley.shelbourne@just.lincolnshire.gov.uk

Social Impact of Population Change Boston Borough Council - A Report of the Task and Finish Group

The Alchemy Project Response

The Alchemy Project is a pilot project based in Boston, Lincolnshire, and the surrounding area that aims to foster a better understanding of the town's culturally-diverse community.

The Alchemy Project is about breaking down barriers. From February 2012 to March 2013 The Alchemy Project is engaging with a wide cross-section of Boston's culturally-diverse communities as it attempts to unravel the myths, misunderstandings and prejudices associated with the arrival of migrants into the town and its surrounding area.

Through a programme of creative activities including writing, film making, drama, dance and music, The Alchemy Project is encouraging confidence so people are not afraid to report crimes against them.

The Alchemy Project is blending its innovative programme of arts and cultural activity (devised, curated and delivered by Lincoln-based arts organisation cultural solutions UK – www.culturalsolutions.co.uk) with a specially-devised training programme for volunteers, local authorities and community organisations, helping to encourage understanding.

The Alchemy Project is an initiative run by JUST Lincolnshire, the county's equality and human rights organisation, with funding from the Community Development Foundation.

JUST Lincolnshire welcomes the inclusion of The Alchemy Project in the report; having only been in existence for six months highlights the visibility, impact and partnerships The Alchemy Project has established. We believe the project's long-term aim (and potential) of bringing Boston's culturally-diverse communities closer together will be best realised in partnership with its current partners and stakeholders, along with new partnerships and stakeholders signposted by Boston Borough Council and its partners and stakeholders.

PLEASE FIND BELOW OUR RESPONSE TO THE REPORT:

Recommendation 3

We are currently working with Victims Support's Restorative Justice Officer, Delia Stratton and welcome the opportunity of discussing how our work might align to that of Lincolnshire Police and that of its partners and stakeholders.

Recommendation 5

Having met and spoken with over 20 of the town's PCSOs we welcome the opportunity of exploring in more detail how we might forge a longer-term relationship with them and their work.

Recommendation 14

The Alchemy Project had generated considerable positive media stories over the past seven months for the local and national media, as well as an online presence of the local community to engage with each other on creative and educational events and activities.

The Alchemy Project had a dedicated part-time media consultant who harvests positive experiences and stories and brings them to the attention of the wide ranging media sector.

The Academy Project welcomes the opportunity of researching the feasibility of both creating a monthly, multi-lingual news sheet for Boston (this to also be available online) and the possibility of a dedicated multi-lingual page in the two Boston papers.

Recommendation 16

The Alchemy Project welcomes this recommendation and will discuss how best to approach it with its Steering Group.

As a one-year pilot project it is vital that additional funding is secured to realise the project's full potential.

Recommendation 17

JUST Lincolnshire is about to meet with arts NK (North Kesteven District Council's external arts delivery team and lead organisation of the £2.5m Arts Council England's Creative people fund). The three-year project will identify innovative and appropriate methodologies in the engagement of more Boston and South Holland residents in the arts.

Just Lincolnshire suggests that as a major partner in the project Boston Borough Council ensures that its representative on the steering group highlight the work of The Alchemy Project and its 'fit' with the soon to be launched Creative People project. JUST Lincolnshire will feedback to BBC's representative on the project.

Please supply us with details?

We believe it would be helpful for The Alchemy Project's methods and findings to be shared both within Lincolnshire, and further a field, as it is a new model of engagement and delivery for and with a culturally-diverse community such as Boston. In so doing, Boston and Lincolnshire would be seen as a town and county with vision, aspiration and innovation in creating methodologies that demystify local perceptions towards immigration and new arrivals through artistic and cultural interventions.

Recommendation 18

The Alchemy Project welcomes the opportunity to input into the online development and content prompting Boston as a multi-cultural town.

We have discussed with Boston BID how The Alchemy Project can, and is assisting in more Eastern European businesses working with them, and encourage Boston BID to invite us onto any further panels or fora.

MESSAGE FROM HILARY BENN MP, SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES:

Thanks very much for sending me your report which I have just read. It is very impressive – honest, balanced and a commendable attempt to deal with the tensions that I know there have been locally because of the pace and scale of the changes that Boston has experienced.

I am copying your report to Harvey Redgrave in Ed Miliband's office.