

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

At the meeting of Boston Borough Council held at the Council Chamber, Municipal Building, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR, on Monday, 21st November, 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Anne Dorrian), in the Chair

Councillors Brian Rush, Tom Ashton, Alison Austin, Richard Austin BEM, Peter Bedford, Katie Chalmers, Michael Cooper, George Cornah, Anton Dani, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Jonathan Noble, Frank Pickett, Judith Skinner, Paul Skinner, Yvonne Stevens, Peter Watson, Judy Welbourn, Nigel Welton and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive (Growth), Section 151 Officer, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer ELDC, Assistant Director - Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership, Community Safety Manager and Democratic Services Delivery Manager

44 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 26 September 2022 were taken as read and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

45 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tracey Abbott, Alan Bell, David Brown and Martin Howard.

46 COMMUNICATIONS

The Chief Executive announced that under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Chelcei Trafford had ceased to be qualified as a Member of the Council and a subsequent resignation had also been received. The office was declared vacant and would be filled at the elections for the Borough Council on 4 May 2023.

The Chief Executive reported the receipt of a Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Souvenir Baton given in recognition of the part the Borough played in the Queen's Baton Relay. The Baton would be added to the Council's regalia collection.

47 DEPUTATIONS AND PETITIONS

The Chief Executive reported there were no deputations or petitions.

48 QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The Chief Executive reported there were two questions from Councillor Stephen Woodliffe, a question from Councillor Judith Skinner, two questions from Councillor Anton Dani and a question from Councillor Brian Rush.

The questions from Councillor Dani were directed to Councillor Tracey Abbott who was not present at the meeting, therefore the questions were not asked.

Question asked by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

Given your involvement in the scenario surrounding the provision of Christmas Lights for Boston, when are Members, and Scrutiny Committee Members in particular, going to have sight of all the documents associated with the procurement process for the provision of Christmas Lights in Boston?

Response by Councillor Nigel Welton

I understand the Monitoring Officer is currently considering this matter and it would be improper of me to seek to influence any response that the Monitoring Officer will provide following his consideration.

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Woodliffe pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

Under Section 5 of the statutory guidance for overview and scrutiny, issued in May 2019 and adopted by Council in October 2019, scrutiny members have powers to access information. When will the Monitoring Officer release the information?

Response by Councillor Nigel Welton

I refer you to my previous answer.

Question asked by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

According to DEFRA's Strategy White Paper published in June 2022, DEFRA defines its seafood strategy as ensuring the delivery of a prosperous seafood sector and, with that, healthier and more sustainable diets achieved by all. DEFRA initiated the UK Seafood Fund in December 2021 to support the long-term future of the UK fisheries and seafood sector.

Boston's cockle fishing fleet is facing ruin following Eastern-IFCA's recent decision to curtail access to the Wash fishing grounds. Given that Boston's fishing fleet is one of Boston's few remaining local industries, what practical assistance is the Executive of Boston Borough Council planning to give Boston's fishermen to ensure the survival of this vital local industry?

Response by Councillor Nigel Welton

To date I have as you know organised a member meeting that enabled representative from the industry to address members of the council and present their concerns this invitation was also extended to our MP, who attended.

At a full council meeting following this a meeting a representative of the fishing industry asked a question of me as portfolio holder. This was followed up with a meeting with him where a letter was drafted and sent to the relevant minister. This letter and its response was forwarded to all members of the council.

Your response personal to me via email was:-

Hello Nigel

Thank you for your message and the attachment.

Well, the attachment seems to merely explain the procedure for dealing with issues, and nothing more. It's now up to Matt Warman to support Boston's fishing industry by delivering a result that resolves the issues. We've done our bit in highlighting the issues, but we can do no more: it's all up to Matt now.

Thanks again for supporting colleagues and Boston's fishermen.

Regards
Stephen

Even though as a lower tier council our remit is very narrow, this is very frustrating however I and the department continue as many other members of this council do to raise these issues in any arena where it is appropriate.

In addition to my involvement on a political level I requested the economic development team to examine the situation. They are currently in conversations with colleagues at the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk looking at parallel concerns, if any across the region that can be galvanised to enable a holistic 'single voice' approach of local authority support for our fishing sector.

It is our understanding that the Marine Maritime Organisation (MMO), who has the responsibility to perform quality assurance on the byelaw and any supporting evidence provided has received the IFCA Wash Cockles and Mussels byelaw for quality assurance. We are of the understanding that the Boston fishing fleet have submitted comments as part of the consultation process and that this process is still underway.

However, approximately £65 million in grant funding is available through the Infrastructure Scheme is part of the UK Seafood Fund. We are more than happy to work closely with and will encourage representatives of the Boston fishing fleet to apply for funding especially in areas of improved capability at harbours, processing, and aquaculture facilities and fleet modernisation.

Round 1 is now closed for applications. However, Round 2 will open shortly, and will focus on improved capability at ports, harbours, processing, and aquaculture facilities. Further rounds will open later in 2022. They will focus on fleet modernisation and recreational sea fishing.

I hope this provides some reassurance that we continue to work with all those involved to provide as much assistance that we can.

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Woodliffe pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

The shellfish industry is an important contributor to the local economy, the fishermen are fighting to preserve their livelihood and looking to the Council for support. What strategy does the Executive have in hand if the cockle industry ceases to exist?

Response by Councillor Nigel Welton

The Economic Development Team are well experienced in dealing with the fall-out from industry and have access to resources if needed. All Councillors should be involved in making representations to different bodies and continue to fight their corner.

Question asked by Councillor Judith Skinner pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

Could Councillor Goodale inform the Council what date he was first aware of the letter sent to the council from Christmas in Boston dated April 2022, stating that they could not put on the Christmas light display without further funding and what steps he took regarding this matter.

Response by Councillor Paul Goodale

I first became aware of the letter in May and because there was a comment regarding a grant BTAC had given the Group within it, it was subsequently provided to the first quorate meeting of the committee in order to inform Members of the Community Group's decision not to accept the grant of £5,000 this financial year.

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Skinner pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

Why did you not raise it with the portfolio holder?

Response by Councillor Paul Goodale

The letter was taken to the first available meeting. Unfortunately the July meeting was inquorate so it was circulated at the following meeting. The letter was not solely addressed to me it was to all Members.

Christmas lights is part of the visitor economy not a BTAC function. The Council as a body decided not to fund Christmas lights, BTAC is governed by that decision. If a community group had asked for a grant it would have been considered.

I assumed the Portfolio holder had been informed as being responsible for town centre management and is the Cabinet liaison member for BTAC.

Question asked by Councillor Brian Rush pursuant to paragraph 11 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

Councillor Skinner, would you agree that it is a sad state of affairs, when we have to spend scarce public money, on security measures such as those that have been introduced.

Whilst I am quite sure that these measures will be a comfort to us all, it is also sad that this administration have now had to introduce these new, but now necessary, security measures, and indeed, despite the additional public expense, it is clear that we have also now had to employ extra security staff, to see that these room barriers are being utilized properly to divide the public viewing gallery from the Council meetings area. Would I be right then in assuming, that all of these security measures, have come as an extra cost to the public purse?

With that in mind, would you please now tell me, and all of the people of Boston Borough, just how much public money has now, had to be spent, in order to protect deliver and utilize all of these public security measures?

Response by Councillor Paul Skinner

Thank you for your question Councillor Rush.

There have been a number of national events that raised significant concerns regarding the safety and security of elected members. Indeed both Jo Cox Labour MP for Bately and Spen murdered in the street following a constituency surgery in Birstall; Sir David Amess Conservative MP for Southend West was fatally stabbed during a constituency surgery at Leigh on Sea.

Anyone, regardless of their background or political affiliation, should feel safe to become a councillor and be proud to represent their community.

But the increasing level of abuse and intimidation aimed at local politicians is preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election and undermining local democracy.

Debating and disagreeing with one another is a healthy part of democracy, but abuse and intimidation crosses the line into dangerous territory. The right engagement matters. The public separation a rope approximately £100, it is a quality rope. Costs for the attendance of Customer Services Officers totals £1418.68 for the period May to September. The invoice for October has yet to be received.

Indeed timely debate is required (don't chat for too long) as if meetings go on longer than 21-00 extra costs are incurred for the continued presence of Customer Services Officers.

Supplemental question asked by Councillor Rush pursuant to paragraph 11.6 of the Rules of Procedure as set out in the Constitution:-

Councillor Rush made a statement which did not contain a question.

Response by Councillor Paul Skinner

As an experienced Councillor you should be aware that open cases of any kind cannot be discussed in Council.

We have many individuals that seek information through requests indeed that is a healthy part of democracy.

The Local Government Association's campaign 'Debate not Hate' sums up the situation. A national campaign to address this behaviour experienced by Officers and Members.

Unfortunately, there are those, giving the benefit that they have forgotten how to communicate during lockdown, probably thinking that there is no recourse to expressing less than truthful opinions on social media and in the press. Fortunately the libel and slander laws are still present for those who can afford to pay. As our mothers' told us manners maketh man, and probably also if you can't say anything nice don't say anything at all.

49 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chief Executive reported there were no questions from the public.

50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

51 SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY

Councillor Paul Skinner introduced a report by the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership setting out a Community Safety Strategy for 2022-25.

The report detailed the duties placed on local authorities and other named statutory agencies in relation to crime and disorder and outlined the current Community Safety Partnership arrangements across the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership area and in Lincolnshire as a whole.

The Community Safety Strategy had been produced to demonstrate the work of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership (SELCSP) which was working collaboratively with the County Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP), to address crime and disorder at a local, sub-regional and County level.

The Strategy had been prepared using the format of the last partnership plan of 2016-19. An Action Plan for 2022/23 would support the strategy and sit with the SELCSP.

Information from the county strategic assessment had been reviewed along with routine data on crime and anti-social behaviour from Lincolnshire Police, information from the pilot initiative StreetSafe which allowed people to anonymously report areas they felt unsafe, and perception data from the Lincolnshire Crime and Policing Survey. This had been considered alongside the county priorities identified for the SLP.

Five priorities were detailed in the plan which was attached at Appendix A of the report:-

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Hate crime
- Safer streets and night time economy
- The safety of women and girls
- Vulnerability and safeguarding

It was noted that a Strategy had not been produced since 2019, however it was recognised that the work undertaken locally should be acknowledged and communicated to partner organisations and the public.

The Strategy promoted the dedication and commitment of partners working across the SELCP in tackling crime and ASB and aimed to provide a focus for actions to be developed to address the priority community safety issues that impacted on communities within the sub-region.

The report had been considered at the meetings of the Corporate and Community Committee on 6 October and Cabinet on 9 November, and the recommendations were endorsed.

The strategy and partnership working were welcomed by Members, but some concerns were raised regarding:

- The decision to switch off street lighting which was detrimental to the safety of the community;
- Omissions in the strategy in respect of disabled, partially sighted and blind residents particularly in regard to cars being parked on pavements which resulted in people having to walk on the roadway;
- People congregating in large groups and street drinking caused fear and intimidation;
- Fear of crime was discouraging people to visit the town which was detrimental to the businesses.

It was highlighted that the concerns raised were not within the control of the Council, they were the responsibility of the Police or Lincolnshire County Council. The dual hatted Members were urged to relay the concerns to the County Council.

In summing up the Community Safety Team were thanked for an excellent example of cross partnership working in the production of the strategy and Members reminded of the survey being conducted by the Police and Crime Commissioner which everyone should be encouraged to complete.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Community Safety Strategy and identified priorities for the South and East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership for the period 2022-2025 be adopted.**
- 3. That delegated authority be granted for the Deputy Chief Executive (Communities) to finalise with the Portfolio Holder a programme for the development of a Community Safety Action Plan.**

52 AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

It was moved by Councillor Peter Watson, seconded by Councillor Anton Dani that the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 18 July 2022 be received.

53 MOTION TO RESCIND A PREVIOUS DECISION

It was moved by Councillor Jonathan Noble, seconded by Councillor Anton Dani and

RESOLVED that the decisions made at the meeting of the Council held on 26 September 2022 in relation to the Financial Outturn 2021/22 report be rescinded.

54 FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22

Councillor Jonathan Noble introduced a report by the Strategic Finance Manager (PSPS) setting out the draft financial position for the Council at the end of the 2021/22 financial year, and seeking approval for the transfer and drawdown of reserve funds and carry forward of capital budget in the sum of £3.55m.

Members commented on the continued financial losses incurred by the Geoff Moulder Leisure Pool and downturn in parking income referred to in the report.

It was noted that options regarding leisure provision were being reviewed with an all Member Workshop arranged for Tuesday 6 December.

It was moved by Councillor Johnathan Noble, and seconded by Councillor Paul Skinner and

RESOLVED

- 1. That the transfer of £1,830,999 to the Funding Volatility Reserve to fund the 2022/23 budget be approved, this being the Section 31 grant allocated to the Council in 2021/22 but required in 2022/23.**
- 2. That the drawdown £1,864,887 from the Funding Volatility Reserve be approved which is the Section 31 grant set aside in 2020/21 to cover the reduced Business Rates received in 2021/22.**
- 3. That the final revenue surplus (currently estimated to be £165,024) be transferred to the Transformation Reserve to fund future projects which will help realise future revenue savings and service improvements.**
- 4. That the carry forward of Capital Budget of £3.55m as detailed in Table 6 of Appendix A be approved.**

- 55 TO CONSIDER RESOLVING THAT UNDER SECTION 100(A)(IV) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006, THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEM OF BUSINESS ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT INVOLVES THE LIKELY DISCLOSURE OF EXEMPT INFORMATION AS DEFINED IN PARAGRAPH 1 OF SCHEDULE 12A OF THE ORDER.**

It was moved by Councillor Paul Skinner, seconded by Councillor Nigel Welton and

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(iv) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Order.

- 56 HONORARY FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH**

A minute of this item has been lodged separately with the Council

(The meeting ended at 8.18 pm)