

Present: Councillor Barrie Pierpoint (Chairman), Councillor Patricia Marson (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Joythi Arayambath, Emma Cresswell, Neil Drayton, Anne Dorrian, Paul Gleeson, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izzard and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –
Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure, Markets Manager and Democratic Services Officer

136 APOLOGIES

Apologies were tabled by Councillors Alison Austin and Anton Dani.

137 MINUTES

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

138 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

None tabled

139 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None tabled

140 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None tabled

141 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

No representation received.

142 BTAC SMALL GRANTS SCHEME AND BTAC EMPOWERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES GRANT SCHEME

The Local Communities Development Officer and BTAC Grant Administrator presented the report confirming that the Small Grants Working Group had considered 2 eligible applications in Round 1 of the Boston Town Area Committee Small Grant Scheme, and 1 eligible application in Round 1 of the Empowering Healthy Communities Grant Scheme. All three applications had been agreed by the Working Group

Boston Town Area Committee Small Grants Scheme:

- Boston Community Transport for £1000.00 to enable the purchase of fuel vouchers for the volunteer drivers.

- Cash for Kids for £1000.00 to contribute towards offering grants to vulnerable families within the BTAC area on the condition that the BTAC Grant Administrator was satisfied that a robust referrals/application and monitoring process was in place to ensure the funds are utilised within the BTAC area of benefit.

Empowering Healthy Communities Grant Scheme:

- The Wednesday Club for £650.00 as a contribution towards the cost of fundraising event to celebrate 20th Anniversary of the Club.

In response to a question seeking further clarification in respect of the Cash for Kids group, The Local Communities Development Officer and BTAC Grant Administrator advised that

“Cash for kids working in Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire are a charitable organisation working locally with their cost of living crisis programme and Boston is one of the areas they offer support. Their mission is to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and young people in their communities who are affected by poverty, illness, neglect or have additional needs. They believe that all children should be able to express their individuality, achieve their potential and live life to the full. They work with grassroots organisations that aim to make a difference to young lives, directly supporting families who often have no one else to turn to.

They were currently responding to the current cost-of-living crisis hitting many families right now by launching a new grant scheme that can react quickly to provide emergency essentials to children who are struggling through lack of food, heating, school uniform, shoes etc.

They could provide clothing, energy vouchers, food parcels, and other most basic needs. They are doing this through one off payments of £50 per child per household, and they can react in 48 hours if required.”

In response to the question as to whether £50 was enough members were advised that the £1,000 contribution from this committee would be used to support Cash for Kids to offer £50 per child per household for families within the BTAC area. In response to a suggestion that the grant level be increased, members were advised it was down to the committee to set the limit. However, members were advised that should any increase be requested to the current limit, there would be an impact on how many community groups could be supported within the BTAC area through the grant scheme.

On questioning how many times within a year a group could submit an application, members were advised that groups were encouraged to only apply for one project in each financial year, and to not come back to the fund for the same project year on year, but consideration may be given if the applicant had left at least one full round before reapplying and it was not for the same or a similar project for which they have applied previously

In response to a request with regard monitoring information members were advised that case studies could be produced from the monitoring information which was already collected as part of the grant making process.

RESOLVED:

That the Boston Town Area Committee agree ratification of the decisions made by the Small Grants Working Group.

143 CENTRAL PARK LOCKING SERVICE

The Markets Manager presented the report noting he was doing so under his previous role as the Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, having knowledge of the procedure when previously tabled to committee. The report tabled sought the continuation of funding for the locking of the gates at Central Park by BTAC.

On the 6th September 2021, it had been agreed that the committee would fund the closing and locking of Central Park during the periods of darkness for an initial 1-year period.

It was then reviewed by members at their meeting in August 2022 where it was agreed to continue funding the locking of the gates for a further year, in a bid to continue to reduce crime, nuisance and anti-social behaviour. At that point a change in the timing of the locking of Central Park was also agreed, in line with feedback provided by officers and residents on the initial locking of the gates.

Advising members of the statistics the Markets Manager confirmed the following comparative information over the period 6th September 2020 to the 6th September 2021, against the period 7th September 2021 to 6th September 2022 as follows:

Total calls to the police 124 with an average of 10 per month, against 63 calls averaging 6 per month.

Daytime calls to Police (05:30 – 20:00 hours) 91 averaging 7.6 per month, against 52 averaging 5.2 per month.

Calls to the Police Within closing hours (20:00 – 05:30 hours) 33 averaging 2.75 per month, against 11 averaging 1.1 per month.

Statistics for the period 7 September 2022 to 31st May 2023:

Total calls to Police 38 averaging 4.22 per month.

Daytime calls (0530 – 2000) 35 averaging 2.88 per month

Calls within closure hours (20:00 0 – 05:30 hours) 3 averaging 0.33 per month.

The Community Safety Manager commented on the report as follows:

“It was clear from the reported police incidents over the last three years that the locking of central park at night had been a real success. Annual reports to the police had reduced from 124 (averaging 10 a month), in the year prior to when the park was locked at night, to now 38 (averaging 4 a month) this year. The relief, peace and quiet the reduction must have had for residents living adjacent to Central Park was something that we must continue with going forward, therefore my recommendation will be to continue with this valuable service going forward.”

Inspector Clarkson of Lincolnshire Police also commented on the report as follows:

“Community feedback from those that live in residential properties around the park has historically suggested that antisocial behaviour and crime has been more prevalent in the hours of darkness, and that it is more disruptive during these hours. Calls to police have been reduced again due to the park being closed in the hours of darkness, saving

police time, and secondly and more importantly prevented members of the community from becoming a victim of crime and/or ASB.

StreetSafe data for the area in and around the park would suggest that one of the main factors reported by members of the community in relation to feeling safe is adequate lighting. During the hours of darkness unlit areas increase the feeling of anxiety and make identifying those responsible for committing crime or ASB harder.

The reduction in calls for service to police have meant that officers have been freer to deal with other incidents. I believe there is benefit to the community in restricting access during the hours of darkness which outweighs keeping the park accessible all the time.

Operation Plotting is the police response to street-based violence and antisocial behaviour in Boston. Four hotspot locations have been identified and Central Park is one of those areas. Crime and ASB is at or below average levels, however, closing the park during the hours of darkness is a tactic that limits ASB and criminal behaviour during those hours.

The figures show that crime/ASB has been reduced during night-time hours and crime and/or ASB isn't being displaced."

Committee deliberation followed which included:

Overall members supported the continuation of the locking of the gates, noting the positive impact on the residents within the area and the reduction on the police's time being called out to incidents. Concern was noted at the problems in respect of damage to the fencing surrounding the park and members were advised it was being addressed.

On questioning the lack of information in respect of displaced ASB activity to other open space areas within the town, a member was referred to the comments of Inspector Clarkson who had stated that 'the figures show that crime/ASB has been reduced during night-time hours and crime and/or ASB isn't being displaced.'

Addressing the proposed closing times within the report members voiced concerns at the closing time for the Autumn period of 20:00 hours, stating they felt it to be too late as darker nights drew in over that time. The suggestion of amending that to 18:00 hours was generally agreed as a preferred option.

RESOLVED:

That the Boston Town Area Committee:

- Have reviewed, commented, and challenged the information presented within the report.
- Have agreed to the continuation of locking the park for another 2 years before next review subject to the agreed following amendment:

That the Community Safety Manager (report author) be delegated to go back to the company who will provide the service of locking of the gates, and ask for a change to the timing in respect of the Autumn closing hours to 18:99 hours and not 20:00 hours as within the report, with the proviso that there are no additional costs to the quote already provided

- Have agreed that officers be recommended to enter into a contract for two years with the existing contractor following the procurement exercise.

144 WORK PROGRAMME - STANDING ITEM

The Chairman referenced the annual tour of BTAC's assets which had taken place that morning and thanked all the members for their attendance. Members agreed the benefit of the tour in not only visiting each site, but in identifying the standard of equipment and facilities provided and missing from each site. Facilities lacking at some sites included litter bins and signage and concern was also noted at the lack of seating at a number of the sites. Members were advised that historically a great number of seats had been taken down due to continual abuse of them, not only in physical abuse and damage, but also in being used in a number of areas as sites for alcohol and substance abuse resulting in ongoing littering of cans / broken glass and substance paraphernalia around the seats, rendering them unusable and unsafe for use by the public.

Options of re introducing various types of seating were discussed, including single seater units along with possible shelters, although caution was urged in respect of any introduction of shelters due to the physical damage they were often subjected to

Addressing the work programme members were advised that representatives from LHP (Lincolnshire Housing Partnership) would be attending the next scheduled meeting and as such, questions were requested in advance to enable the representatives to source any information required, to ensure a response would be provided at the meeting.

A request was made for current information identifying all open spaces across the town, clarifying who they belonged to and with a view to improving a number of what appeared to be overgrown and unused areas.

A request was tabled that the committee consider a report in respect of the Green Flag Award which recognised and rewarded well managed parks and green spaces.

Committee further agreed that the outcomes from the annual tour be incorporated within the 'wish list' of the committee to be tabled at the meeting scheduled for 8 February 2024.

The Meeting ended at 7.40 pm