

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC)** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Thursday 27th March 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Barrie Pierpoint, in the Chair.

Councillors , Anton Dani, Neil Drayton, Anne Dorrian, Paul Gleeson, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izard, Lina Savickiene and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance:

Councillor Dale Broughton (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Officers:

Assistant Director - Culture and Leisure and Democratic Services Officer.

54 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Austin, Emma Cresswell, Sandeep Ghosh and Patricia Marson.

In the absence of Councillor Marson, Councillor Neil Drayton moved to the top table to assist the Chairman.

55 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

56 Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th January 2025 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

57 Update on Actions from the Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture on six outstanding actions arising from the previous meeting:

- **Benches Mapping Project**

The Chairman and the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture had met with a representative from the app development team on 21st February 2025 to discuss the Committee's request to map the location of public benches. Data had been provided to the app development team and work was underway to incorporate this into a digital mapping platform for future reference.

- **Community Outreach**

Members had previously agreed to identify a community group from each ward to work with the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer. This item was to be revisited under the work programme later in the meeting, to enable more detailed consideration of the issue at a future meeting.

- **Green Flag Working Group**

A meeting of the Green Flag Working Group had taken place immediately prior to the Committee meeting. Members received a project update from the Leisure Services Officer and discussed the development of an action plan. Future meetings were scheduled to take place monthly via Teams, with in-person meetings to be held prior to each BTAC meeting. A formal report was expected to be presented to the Committee in November 2025.

- **Community Governance Review**

At the meeting of Full Council on 3 March 2025, members approved the terms of reference for the Community Governance Review and authorised the commencement of Stage 1 consultation. A working group comprising Councillors Anne Dorrian, Barrie Pierpoint, Emma Cresswell, Mike Gilbert and Paul Gleeson had been appointed to consider consultation responses and to develop draft and final recommendations for submission to Full Council.

- **Highways Maintenance and Police Performance**

Issues raised at the previous meeting regarding highways maintenance and police performance were scheduled to be addressed in the new municipal year and had been added to the Committee's work programme.

- **Bus Routes – Fenside Service**

Following concerns raised at the January meeting regarding the Fenside bus route, the Committee had invited Mrs Marianne Garbutt, Managing Director of Brylaine Travel, to attend and address Members.

The Committee noted the updates and agreed to continue monitoring progress on the above actions through the work programme.

Bus Routes – Fenside Service

Members received a detailed address from Mrs Marianne Garbutt, Managing Director of Brylaine Travel, following concerns raised at the previous meeting regarding the Fenside bus service.

Mrs Garbutt clarified that, contrary to public perception, the Fenside service had not been cancelled. The route continued to operate as it had for over two decades. The service no longer travelled to the bus station but continued to serve the Market Place. The change had been implemented due to operational challenges and public feedback regarding congestion and safety in the town centre.

Mrs Garbutt confirmed that she felt there was a general misconception about what the company did and who they were. She informed the Committee that to assist with this she had produced a booklet, which was presented to the Committee in advance of the meeting and explained during the meeting. She provided some history about Brylaine, which had been operating for 44 years. She advised that Brylaine had worked hard to ensure that bus services were maintained in the rural setting.

She indicated that the company had received very little financial support and outlined her concerns regarding funding, stating there was a misconception that bus services were publicly funded. Confirmation was provided that bus services in this area were not funded and were predominately commercial.

She briefed the committee that currently Brylaine supported 700,000 passenger journeys per year and the fleet covered 1.9 million kilometres per year. The company was operating 80% of this service commercially.

Mrs Garbutt outlined the significant financial and logistical pressures faced by Brylaine as a local, family-run operator. She highlighted that:

- The company had not received Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) since October 2024 due to a national review.
- Concessionary fare reimbursement stood at approximately 52% of the fare value.
- The Boston Town service received only £400 per day in support, which was insufficient to sustain or expand the service.
- In contrast, other towns such as Spalding and Grantham received significantly higher levels of support under the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), with Spalding receiving £980 per day and others benefitting from 15-minute frequency services.

Members noted that passenger numbers on the Boston Town service had declined markedly, from approximately 25,000 in January–February 2019 to 12,500 in the same period in 2025. Mrs Garbutt attributed this to a combination of reduced town centre footfall, limited destinations served by the current route, and increasing congestion.

A proposal for a revised “Daisy Chain” town service, designed to better serve key destinations such as schools, hospitals, and industrial estates, had been submitted to Lincolnshire County Council under Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding. However, no funding had been allocated to Boston.

Mrs Garbutt also raised concerns regarding the condition of the Boston bus station, which she described as inadequate given the volume of passengers using the facility annually. She contrasted this with significant investment in other local infrastructure projects, including the railway station. Councillor Dorrian indicated that the bus station should and could be better and officers were looking at ways in which to make improvements.

Members expressed strong support for Brylaine and acknowledged the disparity in funding and support received by Boston compared to other areas. Several Members voiced frustration at the lack of advocacy from local County Councillors and committed to taking further action.

Resolved:

- 1. That a dedicated meeting be arranged between Brylaine and interested Members to explore the issues in greater detail;**
- 2. That, if necessary after the above meeting, the matter be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Councillor Gleeson, with a view to inviting Lincolnshire County Council to respond to concerns; and**

The Chairman thanked Mrs Garbutt for her attendance and for her candid and informative presentation. Members commended her commitment to the town and pledged to support efforts to improve public transport provision in Boston.

58 Public Questions

No questions were received.

59 Public Speaking Time

There were no public speakers.

60 Central Park Security

The Committee received a verbal update from the Group Manager - General Fund Assets regarding the current arrangements for the opening and closing of Central Park, which had been provided under contract by Logic Services. The contract was due to expire in September 2025.

Members were informed that the service had been inconsistent, with repeated failures to open or close gates as required. Despite monthly meetings with the contractor to address performance issues, the service had not improved to a satisfactory standard.

The Group Manager - General Fund Assets reported that, following a request to Lincolnshire Police for data on incidents occurring in Central Park during closed hours (from 1 March 2024 to 15 January 2025), no recorded incidents had been reported during that period. This called into question the value for money of the current £18,000 per annum contract.

It was noted that:

- The current contract had been paid in full and lacked enforceable penalty clauses.
- A new contract, if tendered, was estimated to cost approximately £44,000 per annum.
- The park remained accessible via multiple entry points, making full security closure impractical.

Members discussed the implications of ceasing the gate-locking service, including potential increases in anti-social behaviour and noise, particularly during summer months. However, it was also acknowledged that other parks in the borough, such as Woodville Park and Burgess Pit, were not locked at night and did not receive similar funding.

As part of any review of the future position, consideration should be given to residents who live near to Central Park and information from Lincolnshire Police about the impact on recorded crime if the gates were not locked.

The Committee agreed with the officer's recommendation to:

- Allow the current contract to run its course until September 2025.
- Monitor the situation in the interim, including any reports of anti-social behaviour or damage.
- Consider alternative, more cost-effective measures such as improved lighting, CCTV, audio warning systems or community engagement.

A proposal was made to include a brainstorming session on the future of Central Park security in the Committee's work programme, which would explore options for maintaining safety and accessibility without incurring disproportionate costs.

The Chairman and Members expressed support for the recommendation and thanked the Group Manager - General Fund Assets for the update.

[Councillor Gilbert left the meeting at 7.30p.m., following consideration of the above item.]

61 BTAC Financial Position at 31st December 2024

The Committee received a report from the Head of Finance (Client), PSPSL providing an update on the financial position of the Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) as at the end of Quarter 3 (31 December 2024). The details of the income and expenditure relating to BTAC for Quarter 3 2024/25 were attached to the report at Appendix A.

The forecast outturn for the 2024/25 financial year indicated an overspend of £16,079, which represented a significant improvement from the £49,000 overspend forecast at Quarter 2. This favourable movement of £33,000 was primarily attributed to a comprehensive review of recharges and service costs, commissioned by the Chairman and supported by the Assistant Director – Culture and Leisure and the Finance Team.

Key points included:

- A detailed line-by-line review of BTAC service budgets had been undertaken, resulting in the identification of £30,000 in savings across various support service charges.
- The Chairman had personally scrutinised operational costs, including those related to public conveniences, grounds maintenance, and administration, with support from PSPSL officers and service leads.
- The gate-locking service for Central Park had exceeded its budget (£23,000 actual vs. £17,000 budgeted), but a portion of this had been carried forward to 2025/26 due to the contract's September end date. The decision of the Committee not to renew the contract would result in a saving in the next financial year.
- The revised forecast meant that reliance on BTAC reserves had been significantly reduced.

The Committee was advised that:

- The opening balance of BTAC reserves at the start of the financial year was £207,611.
- After accounting for the forecast overspend and approved grant allocations, the projected closing balance at 31 March 2025 was £173,000.
- This represented a stronger financial position than previously anticipated.

Clarification was requested in relation to the increase in the cost of inspection of play equipment. This was attributable to increased regulations and although the Council's own officers did routine weekly inspections, the annual inspections were undertaken externally (including by ROSPA and the Council's insurers) and there were increased costs associated with them. These checks and inspections were necessary to ensure that the play equipment was maintained to the highest standard and in the safest way possible for its users.

Clarification was requested in relation to the increased expenditure in relation to materials. Confirmation was provided that this related to the materials for the park's public conveniences. Some materials were bought in advance and stored to take advantage of buying power and all supplies were market tested on a regular basis. The Chairman also clarified that as part of the budget review which he had undertaken recently he had been advised by those working on site that one of the largest costs at the public conveniences was damage caused either to hand driers and/or toilets and the cost of materials in clearing up after anti-social behaviour would be a factor.

Members commended the Chairman and officers for their diligence in reviewing the budget and welcomed the improved financial outlook. It was noted that the savings identified would also benefit future years, including the 2025/26 budget and the transition to a putative Town Council structure.

A Member queried whether any retrospective reimbursement could be sought for overcharges in previous years. The Head of Finance (Client), PSPSL agreed to explore this further.

The position regarding a potential refund from Anglian Water in relation to sewerage charges at Central Park was considered and it was agreed that more information would be obtained regarding this.

The Chairman thanked the Finance Team, particularly the outgoing Section 151 Officer, for their professionalism and support throughout the review process.

Resolved:

That the financial position, as at 31st December 2024, and the forecast reserve position be noted.

62 Boston Pride Event

The Committee considered a report from the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Dale Broughton, regarding the proposed delivery of a Boston Pride event, scheduled to take place in Central Park on Saturday 26th July 2025. The proposal followed a previous resolution by the Committee in November 2024 to explore the feasibility and associated costs of hosting such an event. The Updated Events Budget was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

In the absence of a dedicated Events Officer, the Council's Events Team had consulted with the organiser of East Coast Pride (Skegness) to inform the planning and budgeting process. The event was designed to be inclusive, accessible, and professionally delivered, with a focus on community engagement and economic benefit to the town.

The total projected cost of the event was £36,000, covering infrastructure, entertainment, staffing, and contingency. The Committee was advised that:

- A successful bid to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) had secured £25,000 towards the event.
- A further £11,000 was requested from BTAC to meet the remaining costs.

- An existing allocation of £17,000 for a music event in the 2025/26 events programme was proposed to be reallocated to the Pride event, with any unspent funds to be returned to BTAC reserves.

Concern was expressed about the cost for a single day event but overall members expressed support for the event, highlighting its potential to:

- Promote inclusivity and diversity within the borough.
- Attract visitors and increase footfall in the town centre.
- Strengthen Boston's reputation as a welcoming and progressive community.

It was noted that similar events elsewhere, including the inaugural East Coast Pride in Skegness, had been highly successful in drawing support from local businesses, transport providers, and national organisations.

The Committee approved the reallocation of the £17,000 music event budget to support the delivery of Boston Pride. It was noted that the event would be delivered in partnership with experienced organisers to ensure quality and compliance. Members welcomed the opportunity to establish Boston Pride as a demonstration of inclusivity and a community focussed event within the events calendar.

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

Resolved:

That the re-worked budget of events for 2025/26 and associated budgets attached at Appendix 1 to enable the delivery of a Pride event in Boston in 2025 be approved.

The Chairman and Members commended the Events Team for securing external funding and for their commitment to delivering a high-quality, inclusive event for the community.

[Councillor Dorrian left the meeting following presentation of the above item.]

63 Work Programme - Standing Item

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture provided an update on the current and forthcoming items scheduled for inclusion in the Boston Town Area Committee's work programme.

Members were reminded that the item relating to Community Outreach, specifically the identification of a community group from each ward to work with the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer, remained outstanding. While Members had previously agreed to pursue this within their respective wards, it was acknowledged that there was insufficient information as to progress. The Chairman requested that all Members provide an update at the next meeting and that the item remain on the work programme for continued monitoring.

The Committee also agreed to include the following items for future consideration:

- A dedicated brainstorming session on the future of Central Park security, to explore alternative measures such as lighting, CCTV, or community engagement, following the expiry of the current gate-locking contract in September 2025.
- A follow-up meeting with Mrs Marianne Garbutt, Managing Director of Brylaine Travel, to further explore the challenges facing local bus services and to gather evidence for potential scrutiny of Lincolnshire County Council's transport funding decisions.
- Updates from Lincolnshire County Council Highways and Lincolnshire Police, to be scheduled in the new municipal year.
- Ongoing monitoring of the Green Flag Working Group, with updates to be brought to each BTAC meeting and a formal report expected in November 2025.

It was noted that the current meeting marked the final session of the 2024/25 municipal year. The Chairman thanked Members for their contributions and confirmed that the work programme would be refreshed and carried forward into the new civic year.

64 BTAC Small and Empowering Healthy Communities Grant Scheme

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture on the status of the Empowering Healthy Communities (EHC) Grant Scheme for the 2024/25 financial year.

It was reported that a total of ten applications had been received during the most recent round. Of these, nine had been recommended for approval by the Grants Working Group. One application had been rejected on the grounds that it fell outside the defined area of benefit and was therefore not considered a priority for BTAC funding.

Should the Committee approve all recommendations made by the Working Group, it was confirmed that the remaining balance of £3,725.62 would be rolled over into the 2025/26 financial year. This would result in a total available budget of £15,725.62 for the scheme across the four rounds scheduled for the next municipal year.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Paul Gleeson and seconded by Councillor Andy Izard.

Resolved:

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

The Chairman thanked the Working Group and officers for their continued efforts in administering the scheme and supporting local community initiatives.

65 Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Meeting ended at 8.05 pm.