

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 5th June 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Patricia Marson, in the Chair.

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

Officers:

Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services, Interim Strategic Finance Manager, PSPSL, Head of Finance Delivery - BBC (PSPSL) and Democratic Services Officer.

1 Election of Chairman

Nominations were requested for the position of Chairman.

Resolved:

That Councillor Patsie Marson be appointed Chairman for the municipal year.

Councillor Marson thanked the committee and paid tribute to the work of her predecessor Councillor Barrie Pierpoint.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman

Nominations were requested for the position of Vice-Chairman.

Resolved:

That Councillor Paul Gleeson be appointed Vice-Chairman for the municipal year.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barrie Pierpoint.

4 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

5 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th March 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to it being noted that Councillor Woodliffe raised an objection regarding the omission of his vote against the Pride event (on grounds of costs) in the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025. It was agreed that this would be noted and recorded.

6 Update on Actions from the Minutes of the Last Meeting

The following update was provided by the Lead Officer for the committee, the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services, in relation to issues not otherwise covered by the agenda:

- **Central Park**

It was confirmed at the meeting on the 27th March 2025 that the contract for security services at Central Park, due to expire in September 2025, would not be renewed. A Working Group would be established to consider the future position. This item would be returned to the Committee under the Work Programme.

- **Buses**

Following the previous meeting, Marianne Garbutt of Brylaine Travel had met with Councillors Anne Dorrian and Barrie Pierpoint, along with officers. It was reiterated that Boston Borough Council, while not a transport authority, continued to act as a proactive partner in public transport matters. The Council remained the only district-level authority represented on Lincolnshire County Council's Public Transport Partnership Board. Officers confirmed that the Council would continue to work closely with Brylaine and other stakeholders to advocate for improved connectivity and investment in local services.

- **Green Flag**

The Green Flag Working Group had held two meetings to date, with a third scheduled on 11th June. The Working Group had been tasked with helping to shape elements of the Green Flag management plan. Several sections of the plan had been completed and were awaiting validation from the relevant service areas. Over the past month officers had engaged with local community groups to understand the activities they undertook in the park and activities they would like to support in the future, and following discussions with some of these groups, it appeared they were supportive of the Council's aspirations to achieve the Green Flag Award. The Council had also been conducting a small questionnaire exercise among park users, which was ongoing, to collect feedback to further inform and evidence the plan.

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services indicated that the project had some challenges, as it involved engagement from several services, all of which were currently working at capacity. Their involvement was crucial for validating and owning the processes and policies outlined in the plan. Without their support, it would be difficult to move forward with the formal application. To address those challenges, the Council continued to engage in regular communication with officer colleagues, seeking their advice and expertise to help align current practices and procedures with relevant policies. These challenges would be discussed further at the next working group meeting on 11th June, and the working group would be bringing a report back to committee later in the year.

- **Highways**

The Committee had previously expressed a desire to hear from Lincolnshire County Council regarding highways matters, which had been delayed due to the recent election period. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be receiving a

presentation from the Highways Authority in due course and all councillors would be invited to attend.

- **Community Governance Review Working Group**

The first meeting of the Working Group was scheduled to take place on 19th June. Thereafter, regular meetings would be held. The Working Group membership comprised Councillors Pierpoint, Dorrian, Cresswell, Gilbert and Gleeson. The Working Group was being supported by colleagues in Democratic Services. In the lead up to the meeting on 19th June, Democratic Services were liaising with officers as part of an information gathering exercise. Updates would be provided to the Committee throughout the year via the Work Programme.

The Committee noted the updates and agreed to continue monitoring progress through the Work Programme.

7 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

8 Public Speaking Time

There were no public speakers.

9 BTAC Quarter 4 2024/25 Financial Outturn report

The Committee received a report from the Interim Finance Manager, providing an overview of the financial position of the Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) as at 31 March 2025. The report, presented in conjunction with the supplementary agenda pack, outlined the final outturn for the 2024/25 financial year and the associated reserve position.

The Interim Finance Manager provided an update on the overall financial position for the financial year ended April 2025 and shared how each service area had contributed to the financial position. In quarter 4 of the financial year 2024/25, BTAC had a net surplus of £86,213. This represented a strong turnaround, especially when considered that earlier in the year, in Quarter 2, a shortfall of about £18,000 was faced.

BTAC had set a saving target of £36,455 and through focused efforts, particularly reducing recharges from Boston Borough Council in relation to grounds maintenance, assistant director work, accountancy and street cleaning, the Interim Finance Manager indicated that it had been possible to not only meet the target but to vastly exceed the target. He indicated that the outturn figures were preliminary and would undergo further review by Cabinet and audit. He also confirmed that in relation to the BTAC figures, although he did not anticipate it, any changes would be communicated to the committee at the next meeting, with the surplus being transferred to reserves.

In relation to reserves, at the beginning of the financial year, the reserves stood at £207,611. By the end of Quarter 4, this had increased to £293,825 with £14,801 earmarked for future expenses. The Interim Finance Manager confirmed that it meant that the outturn report demonstrated that the recommended minimum reserve of £70,000 had been met and exceeded.

In relation to the performance of service areas, the Interim Finance Manager provided further information.

A detailed breakdown of income and expenditure across all service areas was provided in Appendix A of the report. Key highlights included:

- **Open Spaces and Play Areas:** Underspend of £20,847, primarily due to reduced grounds maintenance costs and fewer repairs.
- **Allotments.** The costs were within budget and demonstrated strong financial management.
- **Central Park:** Underspend of £37,601, with significant savings in grounds maintenance and support services.
- **Public Conveniences:** Net underspend of nearly £10,000, despite increased employee costs due to agency cover. Savings were achieved in premises, transport, and support services.
- **Events:** Underspend of £18,762, largely due to reduced event delivery costs and increased income from space hire and revenue.
- **Town Centre Maintenance:** Underspend of £4,318, with savings in transport and supplies.
- **Administration:** Underspend of £32,623, reflecting reduced recharges and lower operational costs.

Member deliberation followed which included:

- In relation to page 17 and the business rates refund referred to, the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services clarified that it was a refund from the 2022/23 financial year. Also, in relation to the same page, clarification was requested in relation to the almost doubling of the cost of cash collection services. The Interim Finance Manager agreed to provide subsequent information to the committee in response.
- Clarification was sought in relation to a potential refund from Anglian Water in relation to sewage charges at Central Park. It was pointed out that this issue had been raised before and the Interim Finance Manager agreed to check the position and provide subsequent information to the committee.
- In relation to the unspent development budget (allotments), it was clarified that it was £255 rather than £255,000 and there had been no development projects.
- Further information was requested about the savings in grounds maintenance at Central Park. The Interim Finance Manager confirmed that the savings arose from an exercise that was completed to look at recharges and how they were allocated to BTAC. On analysis, it was found that BTAC was not being charged the correct amounts and this resulted in an adjustment and savings.
- In relation to page 17, clarification was sought in relation to the additional costs per day/week arising from agency cover for staff absence. The Interim Finance Manager agreed to provide this information to the committee but in the meantime he indicated that the cost of the agencies would be considerably higher than permanent staff costs.

- In relation to vehicles and the savings as against budget, the Interim Finance Manager confirmed that the savings related to the lower usage and cost of moving supplies between premises such as cleaning material and toiletries.
- In relation to events at page 18 of the agenda, the Interim Finance Manager confirmed that he would provide subsequent information on the underspend as against budget. He agreed to confirm whether an allocation of £17,000 had been reallocated to the Boston Pride event.
- Clarification was also provided about the circumstances in which the committee had approved the Boston Pride event, that it had benefitted from UK Shared Prosperity Funding and it was anticipated that not all the anticipated BTAC expenditure would be required. Deliberation also occurred about the circumstances in which a Boston music festival had been proposed as one of a number of suggestions. Full information would be provided on all events in the events report which would be submitted to the committee later in the year.
- In relation to page 19, the Interim Finance Manager was asked to confirm how many employees were employed directly by BTAC. The Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services confirmed there was one events assistant, two operatives and 2.5 toilet cleaners.
- In relation to the savings made, members requested that it be recorded that Councillor Pierpoint, with the help of officers, had put a lot of hours and effort into the cost saving exercise to ensure that charges were being applied correctly.
- Clarification was requested in relation to the length of time the recommended reserves figure of £70,000 figure had been in place and whether it should be reviewed. The Interim Finance Manager confirmed that the figure had been in place for at least three years. He confirmed that it was an issue he could take forward to the section 151 officer to see if there was any further recommendation to change that amount.

The Committee welcomed the improved financial position and acknowledged the efforts of officers in delivering efficiencies. It was noted that the surplus would provide a strong foundation for future investment in BTAC priorities.

Resolved:

- 1. That the financial position as at 31 March 2025 and the outturn reserve position be noted; and**
- 2. That the transfer of the surplus of £86,213 to BTAC reserves be approved.**

10 Work Programme - Standing Item

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services on the current and forthcoming items scheduled for inclusion in the Boston Town Area Committee's Work Programme for the 2025/26 municipal year.

The following items were confirmed for inclusion:

(i) the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services confirmed that it had been agreed by the Committee in 2023 that meetings with Lincolnshire Police and Lincolnshire Housing Partnership would take place on alternate years, which meant that it was necessary for them to address the Committee before the end of the year. Lincolnshire Police had provisionally agreed to address Committee on 24th July and Lincolnshire Housing Partnership would address the Committee on 27th October or 27th November. The Committee confirmed its agreement to proceed in that way.

(ii) The last tour of BTAC assets and open spaces took place in July 2023. The Committee agreed that a tour would take place on the morning of 24th July, being the same date as the next BTAC meeting.

(iii) At the last meeting, it was agreed that a Working Group would be formed in relation to Central Park security to consider plans for September 2025 onwards when the current security contract was due to end. It was agreed that the working group would consist of Councillors Dorrian, Ghosh and Gleeson and that the first meeting would be arranged by Democratic Services.

(iv) Membership of the Small Grants Working Group was re-confirmed as Councillors Pierpoint, Gleeson, Woodliffe, Dani and Cresswell, who had a willingness to continue and confirmation was provided that Councillor Pierpoint wished to continue to participate. Councillor Savickiene also joined the Working Group.

Member deliberation followed which included the following issues:

Members suggested that the Committee consider allocating funds to improve facilities in under-served areas, including Ingelow Park. It was noted that some play areas in new developments were minimal and lacked sufficient equipment.

Deliberation occurred in relation to the work of the Community Governance Review regarding the possibility of a Parish or Town Council being formed in Boston. It was agreed, earlier in the meeting, that regular updates be provided to the Committee as the work developed.

In relation to advertising boards being installed at locations in the Borough, clarification was provided that the boards were owned by the Council and would be used for public messaging, community safety, and advertising. A request was made for a future discussion on their content and usage policy.

Members expressed a desire to ensure that the Committee's legacy included tangible improvements to community facilities and services, particularly in areas of greatest need. Officers confirmed that all comments and suggestions would be recorded and reflected in the updated work programme.

The Meeting ended at 7.15 pm.