

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 24th July 2025 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Patricia Marson, in the Chair.

Councillors Councillor Paul Gleeson, Alison Austin, Emma Cresswell, Anne Dorrian, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izard, Jonathan Noble, Barrie Pierpoint and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance:

Inspector Ian Cotton (Lincolnshire Police).

Officers:

Assistant Director - Leisure and Local Services, Community Safety Manager and Democratic Services Officer.

11 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anton Dani, Neil Drayton and Lina Savickiene.

12 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following clarification being provided to Councillor Jonathan Noble:

- a) In relation to the outstanding questions raised at the last meeting (pages 3-5 within the minutes), the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services confirmed that responses had been provided to the members of the committee who had raised questions; and
- b) In respect of the query regarding the BTAC reserve of £70,000, it was confirmed that the matter would be revisited following further assessment by the Section 151 Officer.

14 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 agreed at the meeting on the 27th March that the current contract for security/gate locking at Central Park would not be renewed after 31st August. A

Working Group had been established and had met earlier in the month to explore future options. Lincolnshire Police had since raised concerns regarding the gates being left unlocked, and the matter would be considered further by the Working Group following receipt of information.

- **Highways**

Members were informed that Lincolnshire County Council representatives would attend the forthcoming Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings to discuss highways matters. The Portfolio Holder for Highways was scheduled to attend on 4th September and the Road Safety Manager was scheduled to attend on 2nd October.

All members of BTAC would receive an invitation to attend.

- **Community Governance Review (CGR)**

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services reported that the CGR Working Group had met on a number of occasions since the last BTAC meeting. The first round of public consultation had launched on 14th July and would end on 26th August, ahead of recommendations being made to Full Council and the launch of the second consultation phase.

- **Green Flag**

The Working Group continued to meet regularly and had developed a vision, objectives and a SWOT analysis for Central Park. These elements were being incorporated into the Green Flag Management Plan which would be discussed at the next Working Group meeting on 28th July. Members were also compiling a detailed history of Central Park and an associated plan. It was noted that challenges remained in relation to the development of written policies and procedures. However, a new Neighbourhoods' Group Manager with Green Flag experience was due to join the Partnership in October and would support this work.

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

15 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

16 Public Speaking Time

There were no public speakers.

17 An update on Crime and Policing in Boston

The Committee received a verbal update from Inspector Ian Cotton of Lincolnshire Police. The update provided an overview of the current policing focus in Boston, including operational priorities, staffing levels, financial challenges, and recent partnership activity.

Inspector Cotton outlined the structure of neighbourhood policing in Boston confirming that the local position was favourable compared to other areas. There were four Community Beat Managers and nine Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) posts, occupied by

ten individuals, including three beats (Town Centre, Town East and Rural West) designated as vulnerable following a previous restructure. In addition, Boston benefitted from a resilience team of three PCSOs, enabling support for non-vulnerable beats. While neighbourhood policing was fully staffed locally, it was noted that PCSO numbers had halved county-wide to fifty, with only thirty-eight positions currently filled and no immediate plans to recruit further until wider funding decisions were made.

While neighbourhood policing was fully staffed locally, other departments such as the 999-response team were under-resourced. Community Beat Managers were spending approximately 40% of their time responding to emergency calls, reducing their availability for community-based work. Recruitment was ongoing, and it was anticipated that once new officers were trained, more time could be dedicated to neighbourhood duties.

Community Engagement and Priorities

Members were encouraged to promote the newly introduced Neighbourhood Policing Survey, which aimed to capture public sentiment and inform future policing priorities. Nearly 200 responses had been received from Boston, and further participation was welcomed to ensure a representative view of community needs.

The current priorities for Boston included:

- **Street Drinking in Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Areas:**
This remained a key issue, with approximately 900 interactions recorded, indicating the scale of the problem. The Police continued to work with licensing and other partners, and enforcement tools such as Community Protection Notices were being utilised. Additional officer training was being considered to support this work.
- **Vehicle Nuisance:**
Operation Exhaust had been launched to address issues such as noisy exhausts, speeding, and anti-social vehicle use, including motorbikes on Witham Bank. Targeted tactics were being deployed to manage these challenges.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Report and Funding Challenges

Inspector Cotton addressed the findings of the recent HMIC report, which had identified concerns around underfunding, investigative capacity, and unmet demand. He acknowledged the need for improvement in investigation quality and confirmed that neighbourhood policing and youth engagement had received positive recognition, including work at the Boston Youth Hub.

Inspector Cotton spoke candidly about the impact of financial constraints on strategic planning and public perception. While the force had received limited funding from central government, this had not enabled long-term planning. Officers were being encouraged to focus on their core values and deliver the best possible service within existing limitations.

Operational Successes

Despite the challenges, positive outcomes were reported. Operation Continents, targeting shop theft, had resulted in multiple arrests and Criminal Behaviour Orders. A modest

reduction of 3.8% in shop thefts had been achieved locally, in contrast to national increases of 15-20%.

Operation Absence, aimed at tackling truancy and safeguarding, had been ongoing for several years had led to the registration of numerous children and the safeguarding of many others.

Member Questions

Inspector Cotton responded to a number of questions submitted in advance of the meeting, including:

- Speeding near St Nicholas Primary School - this had been added to patrol plans which would result in increased activity.
- Motorbike nuisance on footpaths - plain clothes officers had been deployed and operations were ongoing.
- Shop window damage - statistics were shared and discussed.
- Crime outcome rates - successful outcomes were reported at 14.76% over the last three years, 15.14% in the past twelve months and 17.7% in the last three months). The distinction between successful outcomes and prosecutions was noted.
- Staffing levels at Boston Police Station.
- PCSO powers - including the ability to detain rather than arrest.
- The role of Special Constables - three were currently active in Boston, and a recruitment review was underway.
- Public perception of policing - societal changes and the influence of social media were discussed.
- Youth engagement – including the ongoing “Mini Police” programme.
- Community cohesion and perceptions of safety in the town centre.

Inspector Cotton emphasised that all crime was solvable given sufficient resources but acknowledged that not all incidents could be investigated. He invited members and communities to share information about criminal activity for consideration.

Further questions were raised during the meeting on a range of issues including the impact of the HMIC report, funding pressures, public perceptions of safety in the Market Square, victim attrition, the role of the criminal justice system, drug use, digital crime, and the wider impact of reductions in other public services.

Full details of the responses to each of the questions were available on the livestream and were annexed to the minutes.

The Committee thanked Inspector Cotton for his comprehensive and candid update and acknowledged the continued efforts of Lincolnshire Police in serving the Boston community.

[Councillor Anne Dorrian left the meeting at 7.46 pm, during consideration of the above item.]

18 Work Programme

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.

It was confirmed that:

- A report on BTAC events would be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting in September; and
- Lincolnshire Housing Partnership had confirmed its attendance at the Committee's meeting on 27th November to provide a biennial update.

19 BTAC Small and Empowering Healthy Communities Grant Scheme

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

It was reported that a total of two eligible applications had been received during the most recent round. The recommendations were presented to the Committee in line with its delegated authority to make community development grants to town-based organisations and events.

During consideration of the item, clarification was sought regarding:

- The eligibility criteria for applicants. Officers confirmed that all applications had been assessed in accordance with the scheme's published policy;
- The scheduling of future rounds. It was confirmed that the Working Group meets four times per year and that further applications would be considered in subsequent rounds; and
- Terminology used in the climate impact infographic appended to the report. Officers undertook to provide further explanation in due course.

The Committee noted that the grant scheme supports the Council's corporate priorities, including Healthy Lives, Safer and Resilient Communities, and the Environment. The financial implications were outlined in the accompanying finance pro forma, which confirmed that the total revenue cost of the approved applications was £1,935.39, leaving a remaining balance of £15,277.20 in the Small Grants budget.

It was confirmed that:

- A grant was awarded to Tonic Health in the sum of £935.39 towards the cost of equipment for a newly established Youth Hub at Pescod Hall, Boston; and
- A grant was awarded to Boston Orchestra in the sum of £1,000 to support the group's core running costs.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Paul Gleeson and seconded by Councillor Emma Cresswell.

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.

20 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Due to the Committee's approval of the previous recommendation, this item was not required.

The Meeting ended at 8.16 pm.