

## **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 November 2025 at 6.30 pm.

### **Present:**

Councillor Patricia Marson, in the Chair.

Councillors Alison Austin, Anton Dani, Neil Drayton, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Andy Izard, Jonathan Noble, Barrie Pierpoint, Lina Savickiene and Stephen Woodliffe.

### **In attendance:**

The following representatives of Lincolnshire Housing Partnership: Chairman of the Board, Interim Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Customers.

### **Officers:**

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

## **31 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Dorrian.

## **32 Declarations of Interest**

In respect of agenda item 1, discussion with representatives of Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Councillors Neil Drayton and Patsie Marson declared that they were tenants of the Lincolnshire Housing Partnership.

## **33 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **34 Update on Actions from the Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services provided updates on matters not otherwise covered by the agenda:

### **Central Park Security**

Following the decision not to renew the security and gate locking service at Central Park, the gates had been unlocked since 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025. Since then, the Democratic Services Team had been liaising with the Community Safety Team, CCTV Team and Environmental Health Team to monitor the situation and respond to any reports of criminality at Central Park.

Since 1<sup>st</sup> September, eleven reports of alleged criminal behaviour had been received, ranging from anti-social behaviour to unconfirmed reports of a man with a knife. None of those incidents had occurred during the period when the gates were previously locked. There had been no reports to Environmental Health and no incidents recorded by the Borough Council's CCTV team.

As the number of incidents were relatively small, additional information had not been requested to establish how this compared with previous years. The situation would continue to be monitored and a further update would be provided at the January meeting. At that point, the Working Group had not met again.

In response to a question from a member about how the issues might affect the Central Park Green Flag application, the Assistant Director indicated that the management plan for the application would address those matters and stressed that none of the reports had occurred during the period when the gates were previously locked.

### **Highways**

Members had expressed an interest in hearing from the Portfolio Holder for Highways, who had been due to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> September. It was now anticipated that this would occur on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026, and further details would be provided to Members nearer the time.

### **Green Flag**

The last Working Group meeting had taken place on 12<sup>th</sup> November, when it was agreed that the management plan would be completed by January with a view to submitting the application thereafter. The Group Manager for Street Scene and Commercial Services had attended the meeting and shared his knowledge of the Green Flag process and the support he could provide.

An officer working group had been created to ensure officers took ownership of their respective areas of the management plan, and a further meeting had taken place. A Share point site had been created to enable officers to review and amend the document to ensure accuracy for their service areas. Discussions had also taken place with IT regarding the creation of a dedicated web page for Central Park.

### **Community Governance Review**

The Community Governance Review Working Group had met on 20<sup>th</sup> November following Full Council's decision on 10<sup>th</sup> November to amend its composition. Councillor Gilbert had been elected Chairman of the Working Group. At its meeting, the Group had considered responses from the phase one public consultation and possible recommendations, and had reviewed the project plan.

The next meeting was scheduled on 18<sup>th</sup> December to finalise recommendations and the draft phase two consultation, in readiness for Full Council to consider at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

## **35 Public Questions**

No public questions were received.

## **36 Public Speaking Time**

There were no public speakers.

**37 A discussion with representatives of Lincolnshire Housing Partnership**

The Committee received its biennial update from Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (LHP). The Committee was addressed by Anthony Read (Chair of the Board), Shaun Harley (Interim Chief Executive Officer) and Mark Coupland (Executive Director of Customers).

LHP representatives provided a verbal and written presentation to the Committee, a copy of which is appended to the minutes. The presentation included a response to questions submitted in advance and provided additional information on the following areas:

- **Customer Service Delivery:** The quality of responses when dealing with calls had improved, and a call-back service had been introduced. It was anticipated that as LHP's aims in relation to repairs progressed, customer service delivery would improve, as many complaints related to repair issues.
- **Neighbourhood Performance:** LHP had redesigned its anti-social behaviour (ASB) response service and worked to manage expectations better, resulting in improved understanding and satisfaction.
- **Repairs and Empty Homes:** A repair stabilisation programme was in place. The number of works in progress had reduced from approximately **6,500** six months ago to **circa 4,000**. Fourteen additional maintenance operatives had been recruited in December 2024. The Board's target was to reduce works in progress to **around 2,500** by March 2026. Calls relating to repairs were running at about **1,000 per week**, meaning the current backlog equated to approximately two and a half weeks of repairs.

**Vacant Properties:** There were 28 vacant LHP properties in Boston at the time of the meeting. The turnaround time for a vacant property was just under 30 days, although this could vary depending on the condition of the property and whether repairs were required. LHP received notice on approximately 17 properties per week, equating to 850 properties per annum, and aimed to ensure that every empty property was occupied as quickly as possible to maintain rental income for reinvestment.

**Investment and Compliance:** LHP confirmed that £16 million per annum was being invested in its housing portfolio. The organisation was complying with Awaab's Law (Hazards in Social Housing (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2025), which came into effect in October 2025. There were 27 active damp and mould cases in Boston, managed through risk-based interventions, including temporary decanting where necessary.

**Future Growth:** LHP outlined its growth plans in the context of £39 billion national funding over the next 10 years and rent certainty for the same period (Consumer Price Index plus 1%). The impact of Right to Buy was noted, and LHP intended to balance this against new development opportunities.

Following the presentation, the Committee considered a wide range of issues relating to LHP's performance and future plans. The importance of improving repair times and communication with tenants was noted, and the Committee welcomed the additional resources and investment in the repair stabilisation programme. It was acknowledged that the majority of complaints were linked to delays in repairs and that improvements in this area were expected to raise satisfaction levels.

The Committee discussed the target for reducing works in progress to around 2,500 by March 2026 and noted that this would represent approximately two and a half weeks of

repair demand based on current volumes. The need for realistic targets and clear communication was emphasised.

Consideration was given to the number of vacant properties in Boston and the turnaround time for re-letting. The Committee noted that the average turnaround was just under 30 days but could vary depending on the condition of the property and whether repairs were required. The scale of demand was highlighted, with approximately 17 tenancy terminations per week across the wider service area, equating to 850 properties per annum.

Environmental concerns, including fly-tipping and grounds maintenance, were discussed, and the Committee welcomed LHP's commitment to work with Members to address these issues through ward walkabouts and the sharing of Neighbourhood Action Plans. The importance of maintaining clear channels for Member casework was noted.

The Committee also considered the complexity of managing small adjacent land parcels under mixed ownership, which often resulted in fragmented maintenance arrangements. Support was expressed for further dialogue on practical solutions to improve coordination and efficiency.

The Committee noted LHP's compliance with Awaab's Law and the management of 27 active damp and mould cases in Boston, including the use of temporary decanting where necessary. The scale of planned investment was acknowledged, with £16 million per annum being allocated to the housing portfolio, alongside a 10-year contract with main contractors to improve quality and timeliness of work.

Future growth plans were considered in the context of national funding and rent certainty for the next decade. The Committee recognised the need to balance the impact of Right to Buy against new development opportunities and welcomed LHP's commitment to explore options for increasing housing stock in Boston.

The Chairman thanked the representatives from Lincolnshire Housing Partnership for their informative presentation and responses to questions.

Resolved:

1. That the LHP update be noted; and
2. That LHP be requested to:
  - Circulate ward-level Neighbourhood Action Plan information and Member contact details;
  - Continue arranging ward walkabouts and meetings with Members to address local issues;
  - Provide Boston-specific follow-up data on repairs, empty homes and investment progress; and

Explore options with Council officers to improve maintenance coordination for small adjacent land parcels.

### **38 2025/26 Quarter 2 Financial Position**

The Committee received a report from the Head of Finance Delivery (PSPSL) which provided an overview of the financial position of BTAC as at the end of the Quarter 2 for

the financial year 2025/6. The purpose of the report was to ensure that the BTAC forecast financial position for the year was considered and that reserve sums held were noted.

The report summarised the position across all service areas and confirmed that the forecast indicated an overspend of £15,042, which would be covered by reserves if the position remained unchanged as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. The opening balance of the BTAC reserve on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 was £293,825, and the forecast reserve balance was £275,057, reflecting planned use throughout the financial year.

Deliberation by members occurred and the following points were raised:

- Clarification was provided on the procedures followed for transferring credits or debits between service areas within the BTAC budget and the process for authorising such adjustments.
- The restructuring of services and allocation of budgets between service areas was explained, and it was suggested that future reports include more narrative detail to assist Members in understanding individual variances.
- It was confirmed that there had been a saving of £26,000 in respect of third-party payments for street cleaning, which would not be attributable to BTAC following a budget analysis undertaken previously.
- The level of reserves remained under consideration as part of the ongoing robust budget-setting process, and the Committee would receive updated in future reports.
- Consideration was given to the position in relation to public toilets. There had been a loss of income and increased costs associated with supplies and recent vandalism. The Committee noted the measures introduced to address vandalism, including additional CCTV and involvement of the police and the Council's anti-social behaviour team.
- Deliberation took place on whether the charges for the use of public toilets might be linked to vandalism caused by those unwilling to pay, and whether this required further review.
- It was confirmed that the increased cost of cash collection had arisen due to changes in the method of collection, with a more centralised approach now in place as part of outsourcing arrangements.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That the forecast position of £15,042 deficit for 2025/26, as detailed in Appendix A – Table 1 within the report, be noted; and**
- 2. That the forecast reserve balance to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 be noted.**

### **39 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 2025/6 municipal year.

During discussion, Members considered whether any additional items should be included. It was agreed that a report should be added to the Work Programme for mid-2026, to allow Members to review progress and outcomes following the completion of the Community Governance Review process that Boston Borough Council is undertaking.

**Resolved:**

**That the Work Programme be noted, subject to the inclusion of a report on the Community Governance Review in mid-2026.**

**40 BTAC Small Grant Scheme**

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services on the status of the Small Grant Scheme for Round 3 of the 2025/26 financial year.

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

It was confirmed that approval would be provided to the eligible applications contained in Appendix 1 within the report, as follows:

- 1) A grant of £1,000 would be awarded to Carers First to contribute towards the cost of providing well-being packs and activities for young carers aged 16 to 24 in the BTAC Wards of Boston.
- 2) A grant of £960 would be awarded to Headway Lincolnshire to contribute towards the cost associated with the provision of their Social Support Group for brain injury survivors and their families.
- 3) A grant of £1,000 would be awarded to Haven Domestic Abuse Service (HAVENDAS) to contribute towards the costs associated with Growing and Cooking Project supporting families affected by domestic abuse.
- 4) A grant of £1,000 would be awarded to Forbes Road Bowls Club to contribute towards the cost of building a low concrete wall to protect the banks surrounding the bowling green.

**The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Barrie Pierpoint and seconded by Councillor Paul Gleeson.**

**Resolved:**

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

**41 Exclusion for the Public and Press**

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

The Meeting ended at 8.14 pm.