

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 26th March 2026 at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor Patricia Marson, in the Chair.

Councillors Alison Austin, Anne Dorrian, Neil Drayton, Sandeep Ghosh, Mike Gilbert, Andy Iazard, Jonathan Noble, Lina Savickiene and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance:

Officers:

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

52 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emma Cresswell, Paul Gleeson and Barrie Pierpoint.

53 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

54 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of the following information which was requested by Councillor Jonathan Noble:
in relation to agenda item 3 - Central Park Green Flag Application, the cost of the application for Green Flag status was approximately £389 - £440 + VAT.

55 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 remained unlocked since 31st August 2025. Democratic Services had continued to liaise with relevant Borough Council teams to monitor reports of criminality.

Between 1st September and the previous Committee meeting on 22nd January 2026, 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 the incidents had occurred during the period when the gates were previously locked.

Since the January meeting, two further incidents had been reported to the Council's departments:

- youths scaling the roof of the toilet block (which may have occurred during the period when the gates would previously have been locked)
- youths kicking Harris fencing.

Information had been requested from the Police in advance of the meeting but had not been received. Council departments had confirmed that no concerns had been raised by the Police since the last update.

Given the number of incidents remained relatively low, the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services suggested that the Committee may wish to receive a further update at its June meeting, particularly as a result of lighter evenings. It was confirmed that Democratic Services would liaise with the relevant teams nearer the time and ensure that the Committee received an update, and that Members would be informed in advance should reporting patterns change.

The Working Group had not met since the last meeting.

Central Park Green Flag application

A judge had now been allocated to the Green Flag application. All judging would be completed by the end of May 2026, with further updates to be provided as the application progressed.

Highways

Members had previously expressed an interest in hearing from the County Council Portfolio Holder for Highways. Several attempts to secure attendance had been unsuccessful and, despite a recent change in the Portfolio Holder, a date had still not been agreed. It was now anticipated that this would be sought in the new municipal year.

Confirmation was provided that efforts would continue to secure attendance as soon as possible and that provisional dates of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for the new municipal year would be shared with the Portfolio Holder to facilitate this.

Community Governance Review

The provisional terms of the Stage 2 consultation plan and communications strategy were presented to the Working Group at its meeting on 12th February 2026. The consultation launched on 2nd March and would remain open until 5th May 2026.

The Chair of the Working Group, Councillor Mike Gilbert, had circulated information to all Members encouraging them to promote the consultation in the wards, community groups and through social media. Supporting information had been provided to assist with this.

It was confirmed that a further update would be provided to the Committee following the close of the consultation.

56 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

57 Public Speaking Time

There were no public speakers.

58 2025/26 Quarter 3 Financial Position

The Committee received a report from the Director of Finance (S151 Officer), presented by the Head of Finance Delivery (PSPSL).

The report set out the 2025/26 Quarter 3 Financial Position for the period ending 31st December 2025, providing an overview of income and expenditure across BTAC services and the projected outturn position at the end of the financial year.

The forecast showed a surplus of £22,786, representing a positive movement since Quarter 2 of approximately £38,000, and a projected reserve balance of £312,885 as at 31st March 2026.

The Head of Finance Delivery (PSPSL) summarised the key variances across service areas as detailed within the report:

- Open Spaces and Play Areas – a projected overspend of £15,412, primarily due to repairs and replacement of play equipment (approximately £9,000), alongside higher employee costs, which were offset within the Events service.
- Allotments - a small favourable variance of £20 due to additional rental income.
- Central Park – a forecast surplus of £1,979, reflecting savings achieved through the cessation of the gate-locking service, partially offset by repairs and maintenance costs arising from resurfacing works.
- Public Conveniences - an overspend of £17,495, resulting from vandalism requiring door replacements, increased electricity consumption and temporary loss of income during closures.
- Events –a forecast surplus of £59,990, largely attributable to staffing savings following an in-year service review and the reallocation of posts, with expenditure subsequently charged to the Borough Council rather than the Boston Town Special Expense.
- Administration –savings of £28,695, primarily arising from the street-cleaning service review.

Deliberation by members occurred and the Committee examined the factors contributing to the financial variances. The following points were considered:

- Concerns were raised regarding the costs associated with vandalism in public conveniences, with confirmation provided that CCTV was in place and that coverage had recently been enhanced;
- Discussion on the scale of the underspend within the Events budget, with clarification that underspends were returned to reserves unless specifically approved for alternative use by the Committee;
- Questions regarding street-cleaning variances, with assurance that service levels had not reduced and that differences reflected updated re-charge arrangements and forecasting assumptions. It was confirmed that a written explanation would be circulated following the meeting;
- Broader discussion regarding the level of BTAC reserves, with Members highlighting opportunities for future investment and liaison with the Town Board to maximise benefit to local communities; and
- Clarification that BTAC did not operate a formal contingency fund, with reserves providing the mechanism for responding to unforeseen expenditure where appropriate approvals were in place.

It was confirmed that the minimum reserve level would remain at £70,000 for 2025/6 with £100,000 adopted for future years.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee noted the forecast surplus position of a £22,786 for 2025/26; and**
- 2) That the Committee noted the forecast reserve balance of £312,885 as at 31st March 2026.**

59 Work Programme

The Committee received an update from the Assistant Director – Leisure and Local Services on the current Work Programme and proposed items for the 2026/27 municipal year.

The Work Programme included items previously agreed for future consideration, including reports on BTAC assets, park and open spaces provision following the Members' tour in September 2025, and an update on the Community Governance Review.

Members discussed the proposed programme and made a number of suggestions, including:

- Reiterating the importance of securing attendance from the Lincolnshire County Council Portfolio Holder for Highways at a future Overview and Scrutiny meeting, with support expressed for inviting both the Portfolio Holder and a senior highways officer;
- Requesting a future report on public conveniences, covering usage, maintenance costs, staffing, income and future service options;
- Discussing the reserves position, with confirmation provided that the forthcoming assets report would consider aspects of future investment and spending; and
- Agreeing to receive a report on the work of the Town Board and its future plans insofar as they affected Boston Town Wards.

In response to a question, Councillor Mike Gilbert advised that consideration was currently being given to the availability of £1.5 million of Pride in Place Impact Fund funding, including potential opportunities for match funding alongside BTAC expenditure.

Resolved:

That the Work Programme be noted, with the amendments discussed incorporated into the Committee's Work Programme.

60 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 4 of the 2025/26 financial year.

Four eligible applications had been received during the round, with three recommended for approval and one recommended for approval subject to conditions. The recommendations were presented to the Committee in line with its delegated authority to make community development grants.

Members discussed the scope of the scheme and clarified that, while a grant was generally expected to benefit the borough, there was no requirement for expenditure to take place solely within the borough, provided the eligibility criteria were met and the Committee was satisfied with the proposal.

It was confirmed that the following awards would be made:

- 1) £1,000 to Polish Support Initiative CIC for digital equipment to support residents with access to laptops and printing facilities.
- 2) £1,000 to Boston Hanse Group for insurance, entertainment and advertising for the annual Boston Hanse Day event.
- 3) £980 to Little Miracles – Boston to support activities for families with children with disabilities and additional needs, subject to receipts being provided confirming use of the amenities stated in the application.
- 4) £1,000 to Boston Hakusan City Exchange towards resources, venue hire and activities for the UK element of the exchange programme.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Anne Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Mike Gilbert.

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.

61 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 7.24 pm.