



# B O S T O N

## B O R O U G H C O U N C I L

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENT & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE
DATE:	11 OCTOBER 2017
SUBJECT:	TASK AND FINISH GROUP PROSPEROUS BOSTON - PHASE 3 OF REVIEW
REPORT AUTHOR:	HEAD OF TOWN CENTRE, LEISURE, EVENTS & CULTURE  To be presented by the Chairman.
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

### SUMMARY

The 'Prosperous Boston' Task and Finish Group concluded its review at a meeting on the 10 August 2017: officers reported back on activity within their respective services areas, summarising details of that meeting are noted within this report.

On convention of the review in 2015 the following scope and phasing stages were agreed to allow a thorough investigation across all of the services areas identified.

#### Phase 1:

Retail Experience / facilities provided / review of shops and the market(s) and the provision of toilets.

#### Phase 2:

Car Parks, Environment and Transport, full review of signage throughout the town, car parking provision, cleanliness & antisocial behaviour, the provision of flora and statement art in and around the town and transport links to and from the town.

#### Phase 3:

This final phase focussed on Tourism and Events and included a full review of any promotion of the town, all events and accommodation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PHASE 3

1. That the Environment & Performance Committee considers the report, notes the conclusion of the review and agree that Cabinet be recommended to agree the recommendations within Phase 3 as detailed in section 4 of the report.
2. That the Environment and Performance Committee recognise that the group having received all outstanding information in respect of Phase 1, Phase 2 and of Phase 3 of the review have agreed completion of each phase.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

To seek to improve the viability and vitality of Boston and to support the work of the Prosperous Boston Task & Finish Group to enable Phase 3 of the review to be concluded.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

None.

### **1. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW**

- 1.1 At the 9 September 2015 meeting of the Environment and Performance Committee meeting, the Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group be convened to undertake a review of Boston in order to improve the overall visitor experience to the town, across all services, and to develop a 'visitor offer' to take forward. The group identified the priority for in depth consultation exercises and several consultations exercises were undertaken with members of the public; the market traders; retailers and commercial agents which proved invaluable to the group. Feedback crossed over all three phased of the review.
- 1.2 Phase 1 was to cover Retail Experience; facilities provided a full review of the shops and the market(s) and the provision of toilets. The review within this phase was undertaken over a 6 month period concluding with a report to the parent committee, Environment and Performance, on the 30 June 2016; the to the Boston Town Area Committee on the 13 July 2016 and finally through to Cabinet on the 7 September 2016.
- 1.3 Phase 2 was to cover Car Parks, Environment and Transport, to include a full review of signage throughout the town, car parking provision, cleanliness & anti-social behaviour, the provision of flora and statement art in and around the town and transport links to and from the town. This long phase of the review was undertaken over a 10 month period from May 2016 concluding with a report to the parent committee on 1 March 2017 and then on to Cabinet on the 5 April 2017.
- 1.4 Phase 3 was to cover Tourism and Events. To include a full review of any promotion of the town, all events and accommodation and concluded its last meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2017. This final report once received by the parent committee will then be scheduled to be tabled at cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> October with its final recommendations.

## **2. 'PROSPEROUS BOSTON' TASK & FINISH GROUP PHASE 3**

### **Summary of meetings:**

2.1 Phase 3 of the review was undertaken through 5 meetings.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Phase 3 – 20 February 2017**

The group scoped out the priorities, which included:

- A full review of accommodation,
- A full review of all events, and
- A full review of any promotion of the town.

Feedback from initial consultations had identified the need for improved promotional matters pertaining to signage to toilets, web presence and 'Smarter' advertising and promotion for markets and events.

It was agreed that a consultation exercise should be undertaken with hoteliers and accommodation providers at the next meeting of 28 March 2017.

#### **2.2 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Phase 3 – 28 March 2017**

One to one consultations were held with invited guests from across the range of accommodation providers within the borough, and a written survey was posted to those who could not attend.

The key outcomes of this meeting were as follows:

- Requests for better promotional material – hard copy and on line.
- A need for a Boston specific tourism based web site
- Criticism of Council lack of promotional material / lack of support of tourism and leisure businesses.
- Recognition of the improved signage within the town and the increase in cleanliness and floral displays.
- Recognition of the increase in toilet provision.
- Concerns on car parking – lack of car parking signage.
- Concern of no signage on main arterial roads into the town
- ASB – activity across the town with drinking and littering ongoing complaints.
- Concern at late notification of events / lack of any notification of events.
- Suggestion of a large public notice board in the market place
- Acknowledgment of the invitation to attend and give their views with requests to be involved in further consultations as the review progressed

### 2.3 **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Phase 3 – 8 May 2017**

The third meeting held on 8 May 2017, concentrated on Events with the Group reviewing an update on the development of the Visit Boston UK website, the current resourcing of events, forthcoming events, the potential for sponsorship of events and the BTAC position in respect of event.

The Group agreed the following outcomes:

- A website preview evening be convened to consult with stakeholders.
- The support for increasing the number of events and the potential for BTAC to consider additional funding towards events in the town.
- The need for increased promotion of events and wider advertising.
- The Group recognised the need for both social media advertising along with hard copy print and advertising through local media.
- The group raised numerous suggestions for events including local food festivals and events relating to the history of the town (Fishing and Agriculture), music events / themed events and a variety of vehicle / motor shows.
- The group noted the current schedule but would like to see a wider variety in the event programme.
- The Group also wanted to determine a way to provide more public notice of forthcoming events.
- Suggestions were made about the potential to use the market place more and also other areas of open space owned by BBC both in the town centre and rurally if possible.

The Group agreed the conclusion of the events phase with the recommendation that BTAC take up further development of events as part of its ongoing work programme. It further agreed that the final stage of the last phase of promotion would begin after election.

### **4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Phase 3 – 26 June 2017**

- 2.4 The fourth meeting held on 26 June 2017, concentrated on Promotion with the Group reviewing an update on the development of a Visit Boston UK website. The Group determined to hold a preview evening for 11 July and agreed a list of invitees, attendance of officers, timings and refreshments.

Feedback on the initial stage and production of website was positive. The Group recognised that resources for this particular project were extremely limited and that their suggestions for the scope of what website could do had to be realistic, although group also acknowledged the potential of the site was limitless.

The group agreed that a questionnaire was to be used on the 11 July to ensure a high level of feedback was achieved.

## 2.5 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Phase 3 – 11 July 2017

A Visit Boston UK website preview and consultation event took place.

32 local businesses including hotels, bed and breakfasts, tourism attractions, outdoor activity providers and local retailers attended. A number of staff and members / portfolio holders and the Leader and Chief Executive were also in attendance to facilitate the event.

Following a preview all members and officers undertook one to one consultations with the attendees. The feedback was very positive and there was a consensus that the website could indeed help businesses in the Borough to broaden their own market promotion.

One area of particular support was that of the provision of the Events Listings page which proved popular with interest identified by most parties. There was particular recognition by the hospitality providers that the calendar of events would prove to be of the benefit of their guests.

General feedback covered all aspects of the website with requests for more specific information in respect of the initial set-up procedures for their respective businesses.

Furthermore there was a desire by a number of the retailers and food and beverage providers in attendance, to see specific web pages produced to improve their own service offers: suggestions of specific activity pages linking through to accommodation and also mapping of the activities within their areas of the borough were also suggested. Reference was also made to the villages and the benefits they provided to the borough overall with many visitors complimenting a number of the villages and the facilities they provided: again a suggestion noted specific web pages for each individual parish / area of the borough.

There was a genuine interest by a number of businesses questioning the opportunity for advertising direct on the web site with interests also be raised in respect of direct on potential sponsorship possibilities.

On collation of the feedback two key areas for action were identified in order to address expressions of interest of funding support for the website by the businesses:

- 1. That the Council develop a corporate policy covering advertising to enable income strands through the Visit Boston website for private advertising.**
- 2. That the Council develop a corporate policy covering corporate sponsorship to support private sponsorship to support the sustainability of the Visit Boston website.**

### 3. PROSPEROUS BOSTON' TASK & FINISH GROUP CONCLUSION

#### Final Meeting 10 August 2017

The aim of the final meeting was to allow the group to monitor the activity which had taken place across the review to identify outcomes achieved from the initial consultations undertaken in 2015:

The Head of Environmental Operations:

**Feedback:** A need for an increased provision of toilets.

**Action:** The number of toilets had been increased including provision within shops and Boston Stump.

**Outcome:** Positive feedback from members of the public and businesses.

**Feedback:** Concerns on environmental anti-social behaviour throughout the town including littering; spitting; urination in public, discarding of cigarette ends and vandalism of flower beds / litter bins and other issues.

**Action:** Introduction of external partner 3GS to carry out enforcement action on behalf of the Council in respect of all anti social behaviour across the town and out into the parish's. Issuing of fixed penalty notices was taking place. Covert cameras sanctioned through the courts and utilised in lay-by's to tackle littering and fly tipping.

**Outcome:** Noticeable impact on the town. Four prosecutions through the courts were in process for fly tipping. East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership had set up a Fly tipping Task and Finish Group.

Concluding his representation, the group were advised that the trial in Central Park where the gates have been left open at night had experienced a few instances of ASB but that there had been an improvement in the level of litter left overnight, possibly due to perceptions that other users will be walking through the Park. Discussions were due to take place in respect of continuation or not of the all day opening hours.

The Head of Housing, Health & Community Services:

*The Head of Town Centre, Leisure, Events and Culture* provided an update on behalf of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Services – quoted verbatim below:

“Public Order Offences / PSPO / Community Safety / Anti Social Behaviour. He reported that BBC works in partnership with the Police, Housing Associations and other agencies to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Boston. Street drinking continues to be dealt with through the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO). The number of ASB incidents is falling across Boston borough. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 the number of ASB incidents in Boston Town Centre (reported to Lincolnshire Police) fell by 15%, 89 incidents (source Police.UK). He also reported that crime is also falling. During 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 there were 1934 crimes reported compared to 1670 reported during 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017; a difference of 264 reported crimes (source Police.UK)”.

The following concerns raised from initial consultations were still being raised:

**Feedback:** Dispersal of groups who made people feel intimidated and threatened particular in the town and around the bus station.

**Action:** No action had been taken as it was felt that the 'treat felt' was probably 'perception of threat' as against being actual threat.

**Outcome:** Advice of the police was to call 999 if a threat was made.

**Feedback:** Street Drinking / lack of policing. Drunks around the town at all hours openly drinking in the street / vomiting / urinating and discarding cans everywhere. No police patrols / no PCSO support. CCTV did not seem to be working. Calling 101 did not work.

**Action:** It was reported that during 2016-17, the Council issued 266 PSPO advice letters, 29 PSPO Warning letters, 7 Community Protection Notice Warning letters and 1 Community Protection Notice. This demonstrates the volume of people being dealt with for street drinking, and also that the advice letters are effective at preventing people from repeating the behaviour. The Council and Lincolnshire Police use the limited resources as efficiently as possible in tackling drinking in the PSPO area. Public needed to phone incidents in using 101.

**Outcome:** The group were not happy with the response by the police. They agreed the complaints of the public about not being able to access 101. and requested more information from the police in respect of their concern.

**Feedback:** Central Park: The ongoing lack of police presence. The park was still being used openly as a toilet. Drug taking and drinking was prolific. When trying to call the police to report an incident or calling 101 there were never any police available to attend. It was dangerous for children with discarded needles. There was no official patrolling. Large groups of very vocal groups of people was very intimidating.

**Action:** The Group were informed that the Police responded to incidents in Central Park in the way their prioritisation processes and resources allowed them to. CCTV was present in the Park and continued to be used to direct officers to incidents when resources were available and it was also used to gather evidence to support the service of notices, fines and prosecution. People needed to report the incidents at the time of the event.

**Outcome:** The group once again were unhappy with the feedback and requested officers source

*It was noted that Inspector Morrice attended the monthly BTAC meetings and the group agreed that he be made aware of the concerns and asked to respond to their concerns at the next scheduled meeting of BTAC and that his representation be relayed to all group members.*

## The Town Centre Services Manager

**Feedback:** Car parking charges needed to be reduced to encourage visitors and local people to use the town car parks and shop / eat and drink in the town. Free car parking to be provided on market days was also suggested by businesses, market traders and the public. Suggestions of advertising on the tickets / sponsorship of tickets were also made to try to reduce charging.

**Action:** Following a review of parking permit charges, parking fees had not been altered for the current financial year. Charges had though decreased to £2 all day at Tunnard Street resulting in increased income. The service was due to undertake a full review in order to see if there are further opportunities to bring more people into BBC car parks. Requests for half an hour tickets would be included in the review. The Service would write to businesses offering them advertising on back of our tickets: reports of shoppers preferring to park in Pescod due to recently reduced charges and the £1 back in Oldrids had been a factor in the decision and other market incentives would be investigated.

**Outcome:** The group recognised that ongoing action was being taken to achieve the best parking provision for visitors and local within the town. It was reported that the Council were at that time £15k off budget at the end of Quarter 1 compared to last year, with just over £8k of this is on Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) owned car parks where parking patrols have been unable to enforce due to LCC signage, BBC is currently in discussions with LCC regarding this anomaly. The Group were also informed that there is now a larger private sector presence of parking in the town and that they have the ability to drop prices easily.

**Feedback:** Better promotion of the markets was required both within and outside of the County and also better signage from the coach park into the market place and the walk through tidied up. Signage within the market place directing people to Wide Bargate market was also required. The markets leaflet needed to be produced in greater quantities.

**Action:** A new banner had been erected at Coach park and the area had been tidied up. Posts were placed on Facebook every Wednesday and Saturday and leaflets had been distributed to Hull, South Holland Centre, Ayscoughfee Hall, the Embassy Theatre and Tourist Information Centres in Skegness, Nottingham, King's Lynn, Horncastle, Stamford and Milton Keynes along with some in Stickney Surgery. Leaflets could be distributed as requested to any destination. One action outstanding remained sourcing advertising for the GMLC TV Screens for the Market. Incentives for traders to encourage new traders on to the market were being looked into: a Teenage Market was being explored and a crowd funding exercise through the Youth Council was active with 5 days left at the time of the meeting but no money had been pledged to date.

**Outcome:** Businesses had, at the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, noted the clean up which had taken place on the route through to the market place from the bus station. Members noted their pleasure at the scope of distribution of the markets leaflets and also agreed that continuation of production of the leaflets be provided to allow hard copy provision if required. Following savings from a staffing restructure for erection of market, the ideal outcome for the Markets would be for a break even model but the short term goal was for the costs of the market to be reduced to £15-20k annually. Recent changes to the fees and charges included, a review of bin provision and the removal of free recycling bins for all traders bar fruit and veg suppliers.

**Feedback:** Better provision of events within the town and around the Borough. Better promotion of events, suggestions from the consultations included food events, better usage of central park and of the market place. An annual event in line with the Borough's history should also be provided.

**Action:** An increase in events had occurred alongside the town retaining its existing events. Sponsorship had been secured for some events with further sponsorship being sought to both add onto, and assist in, the running of events. The Community Sports Day event had secured funding to pay for a face painter from Longhurst House/Kiers group and the Outdoor Cinema Event had been supported by Chattertons.

A Food Festival was scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> September with 9 stalls confirmed at that the time of the meeting, a local business was considering hosting an event on the same day at their own premises.

Involvement of the college had been sought and was hoped that Select Lincolnshire would also attend.

Two external event suppliers had contacted the Council to hire Central Park which would bring additional income into the town. A Retailers guide was under construction to inform retailers about what events were programmed and how they could be involved in an event i.e. when the 1940s event took place staff would dress up and theme their window displays.

Events were promoted heavily on Social media with the addition of an apprentice to the Town Centre Services team proving beneficial. Each event was now set up not only on the Visit Boston website, but also on Facebook where people could register their interest or intent to attend. Posters had been displayed onto the back of toilet doors with mixed success as those in the public toilets had unfortunately been damaged. Adverts had been put out in Simply Boston, with occasional quarter page adverts in the newspaper and the quarterly Event leaflets would continue: a special Festive one, which would look to work with the local businesses to advertise all we have to offer over the Festive Period.

**Outcome:** There had been noticeable support of the events from some of the businesses and the group noted its pleasure at the increase in events and promotion and agreed their continued support of the Events team. The group also agreed the importance of the continuation and increase in the provision of events across each year to allow the town to achieve a reputation for its quality of events.

## The Museum, Arts & Heritage Manager

**Feedback:** Better provision of signage was required across the town. This included from arrival points into the town at the bus station; train station and in the car parks and within the town itself directing visitors to attractions and areas of the town. Directional signage from the foot bridge(s) crossing into the town had been identified as being of very urgent need. Also signage along the main corridor routes into the town and along the main routes through the town. Concern had also been identified at the lack of signage from the main A routes running past the Borough itself with no indicative signs to the town.

**Action:** New signage had been reprioritised and redecorated in a more accessible colour scheme of blue and white which was cohesive with the monoliths interpretation scheme. Fingerposts across the town were cohesive which led intuitively from post to post. Six contemporary freestanding monoliths had been created that sat well within the historic environment and were located at key decision making locations to orientate the user with heads up mapping whilst engaging visitors with Boston's history (the stories coming out of consultation with the local community).

New mapping for the town centre had also been created, which highlighted attractions as well as retail areas and graphically was connected by Boston's watery connections, The Witham, Haven and Maud Foster rotated with the map as the orientation changed.

PDF and paper versions of the Discover Boston Visitor Map in House had been created. A trial sponsorship has been agreed with Poyntons sponsoring the first print run in combination with funds from the Council which would provide a year's worth of maps.

The creation of a toolkit through the Explore & Discover Project included guidelines to inform future signage and interpretation of Boston and many graphic aspects are already being used widely:

- The 'Skyscape' of Boston is used on all outgoing emails and in internal and external signage and notices.
- The colour palette and font are being used in the creation of other signage solutions such as highlighting the Market Offer from the Bus Station.
- BBC Managers business cards have the palette, skyscape and font.
- The PowerPoint presentation format for the authority also used it as did letterheads.
- The Graphic toolkit has been the whole design foundation of the new Visit Boston UK website and enabled the technical development stage

- Recommendations and schedules of work were created for all town centre and car park signage and much of the street furniture. This addressed both the public realm and key arrival points for users and visitors to the town.
- Schedules looked towards assessing what could be delivered in house through the new Town Centre Maintenance Officer position. The work was difficult to appreciate with no shiny new 'wow' factor, but the change was actually stunning, e.g. instead of turning up in Doughty Quay and being confronted by 4 rusty, redundant posts with sun faded signage which gave an impression of decline, you arrived into an uncluttered car park which doesn't instantly do this. Another example was the bins which had all had statutory stickers placed on them which really caught the eye and made them and the streetscape look challenging. These have been very difficult to remove but instantly had an effect of improvement.
- Benches too were being looked at with a view to replacement from the hardwood slatted ones that came with the market place refurbishment and proved costly to maintain with a number having been removed. Replacement would be with Stainless steel low maintenance ones that still sat sympathetically in the historic environment.
- Additionally mapping for Bargate Green and signage for the car parks and town centre had been designed and mapped and with other allied elements that also use the toolkit, it created a coherent feel as you moved around Boston. The last Task & Finish Group update meeting also discussed the Brown signage on the A52 and A16 and LS investigated with LCC, where we got a price for the dismantle and re-erection of the A52 sign with a slightly smaller size sign, less vulnerable to wind damage in that location and the repair of the panel on the A16 sign.

A town trail with mapping will also be produced by the end of the month, with an initial print run of 3,000 and funded by the HLF we may then investigate sponsorship again of a larger print run.

**Outcome:** Recognition by the businesses at the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and by the group noted the vast improvement of signage across the town with all agreeing the professionalism of the quality and style and colour of the signage.  
The introduction of the monoliths had been acknowledged by both businesses; the public and the group as providing simplistic, easy to read and follow information.

## The Partnerships and Sustainability Manager:

**Feedback:** The town needed more street art; statement pieces and the overgrown areas of the town, along the riversides and in the central areas needed to be cleaned and as much planting as possible provided to brighten up the town all year round.

**Action:** The Boston Buoys project where the Port of Boston has donated buoys historically used in the Wash, together with £14k of funding had to date secured for the project through Boston Big Local (BBL) to support an application to the Arts Council, for artists to re-purpose and customise 5 buoys, which would then be permanently displayed around the town.

2019 marked the centenary of the land purchase of Central Park and an application had gone to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Resilience fund to develop the Park in the future. The Team was awaiting a HLF decision on this £10k funding bid. Tawney Street entrance was a current focus and a recent addition of an Art Deco style garden comprising of 4 decorative arches and planting beds had largely been funded by BBL and had received many positive comments.

Improvements at Boston Stump included the Police Cadets knot garden to complement existing one, Fern planting and wildflowers in the shady northern border, A Church flower bed planted by Bloom volunteers and featuring bird boxes produced by Boston College students, and Two large bell-shaped beds filled with daffodils supplied by Springfields Horticultural Society.

Further funding had been secured from BBL to landscape 60 metres of the raised beds in the B&M area to attract pollinating insects. Extra soil has also been donated by local company for the Haven Bridge Urban meadow, which had also received favourable public reaction.

Permanent sculptures of the Silhouette sheep on Bargate roundabout were in place and number of individual figures has been increased to 13. The project had been entirely funded by private and business sponsorship and support from businesses currently included:

- Cammacks store adopting and improving planting on car park ground opposite the shop projects.
- A £2k cheque from The Coaching Inn Group and it has been proposed that this could be spent on a central feature for new Central Park Art Deco garden.
- A £1k cheque from authors of 'Memories of Bargate in Boston' book – partly used to fund floral tower outside the GPO building.
- Bulbs and seeds to the value of £1,000 from Boston Seeds.
- Sponsorship of the Church flower bed by Pelo and Eden and Maudes the Jewellers.
- Mint supermarket sponsorship of the Police cadet knot garden.

Future initiatives include the development of a bog garden and other associated habitat improvements in the Boston Victorian Cemetery, and a prospective project to put mosaics in the 'bricked-up windows' along Petticoat Lane.

**Outcome:** Positive comments from members of the public and businesses at the flora within the town. The group agreed the significant improvement in both the clearing and planting of historic problem areas; at the ongoing efforts to maintain the areas and at the

### The Communication Manager:

**Feedback:** Better promotion of the town was required. Negative publicity by local press. Late notification of events. No hard copy promotional material.

**Action:** Pro-active press releases and photographs were regular practice with the majority being good news / success stories. Promotion of events was provided across all media. Generally the use of press releases, and the way in which they are used by newspapers and other publications, such as Simply Boston and Lincolnshire Life, and radio and TV is always dependent on the whim of the editor: the Council could only offer copy which was interesting and press ready as local newspapers were generally editorially understaffed. Whilst providing copy quite often the Council did not get the recognition of doing so even when the publisher used it.

Promotion of 2020 would also promote the new [www.visitbostonuk.com](http://www.visitbostonuk.com) website and will be sent to publications in America and other contacts that can help to promote it, such as The Partnership of the Historic Bostons', with whom we already have a working relationship, and the Massachusetts Historical Society.

The Council had a good reputation for reliability with the local media and had an advertising agreement with the Target which provided a half page once a month and also delivered a free monthly quarter page advertising space restricted to generic adverts that they hold for BBC's leisure services and activities, such as the market, Geoff Moulder and Guildhall.

Almost all press releases also received exposure via the council's main website; through the weekly residents' newsletter, Boston Bulletin, and are signposted via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Occasional short video films are also placed on YouTube. The Bulletin has a subscribed readership of around 4,000, and was recognised by third parties and partner agencies as a good way of obtaining free publicity for their event or service and, within certain parameters, such as charitable, not for profit, non commercial or in the interests of leisure and tourism.

Social media activity has grown in recent months and the Team had an annual increase in activity target of 20% to meet. It was anticipated that the core social media activity would exceed this target, but social media activity for services such as the crematorium, perhaps for obvious reasons, will be harder to increase.

Members and staff were encouraged to share BBC posts through their friends and contacts. The council had a number of challenging social media correspondents and was often blamed even when the issues were not its responsibility or within its control: recent months indicated a change with the Council achieving more positive media comments. At a recent event one critic made the usual cutting comment about binmen forgetting how to walk and was quickly cut to pieces by residents posting in favour of the binmen and being highly critical of those causing the problems.

Communications and graphics produced information and publicity leaflets and brochures for services and events. They also worked with the Geoff Moulder Leisure Complex and the Guildhall to help promote their activities and special events. All work was also available to the public in digital format on the council website.

Consultation feedback had asked for hard copy material and the Council recognised that old technology was still also a communication tool: various notice boards dotted around the town with one in Central Park all which would advertise the forthcoming events.

**Outcome:** The group acknowledged the ongoing problems of securing local media support and press coverage in general but it agreed that improvements to promotion of events and of the Council in general had improved across all media streams.

#### The Projects & Development Officer:

Reporting on the updates to the [www.visitbostonuk.com](http://www.visitbostonuk.com) website the officer handed out slides identifying the amendments made in line with the feedback from the preview evening held on the 11 July 2017.

Members were advised that the enthusiasm for the site had been significant and uptake for inclusion on it from businesses was increasing. Amendments included re designing of various category's including those for the accommodation areas to include text and pictures and re designing the venues and attractions page to include text and pictures.

The group agreed the success of the meeting on the 11 July 2017 and their role in part in helping to support to the production of the site.

The amendments referenced are attached as appendix A to this report.

The Head of Town Centre, Leisure, Events and Culture then concluded by provided an update on the Economic Development on behalf of the Economic Development Manager. ***Quoted verbatim as follows:***

“It was reported that by way of context, the main raison d’être over the last 11 months for economic development had been to develop constructive relationships with the business community whilst leveraging greater support and focus from county-wide partners and key economic stakeholders to deliver on our economic plan which aligns to the Council Plan 2016/17 - 2019/20

The Group were informed that the economic overview of the borough showed that Boston has over 2100 PAYE and VAT businesses in the borough, not including those of self employment. Of those business, 15% are in the agricultural sector, 6% manufacturing/processing, 13% wholesale and retail, 11% logistics and storage and 11% in construction. One of the biggest sectors in employment (Full-time equivalent (FTEs)) numbers is the manufacturing/processing which supports over 13% of our working age population compared to agriculture 1%. The various sectors of the borough’s economy returned over £1.3billion in GVA back to the exchequer and as of May 2017, JSA claimant count was just over 400.

Over the past 11 months BBC has been working with the business community to fully understand their aspirations for growth and where the local authority can support through targeted interventions and collaborations. Better understanding the economic landscape through business engagement has enabled the council to develop an economic rolling action plan that is fit for purpose, responsive and able to react to economic shocks through an integrated partnership approach. Part of the council reaching out to the business community is monthly leadership meetings with key businesses that are showing growth. These meetings between the Leader, Chief Executive, Economic Development Manager and business are not only an opportunity for the business community to raise any concerns, issues or opportunities at the highest level, but also for the business community to fully understand that the Council is listening and is supporting an open for business priority. The Council is also developing a business “Think Tank” to enable a more connected approach to the borough’s economic prosperity. The idea is to bring together 10 - 12 businesses from all sectors to develop initiatives that support and remove barriers that affect business growth and sustainability, development and investment. This could include facilitating greater collaboration and working relations between the boroughs business community, schools, college and university to help shape the local skills agenda. The group will also be used as business champions/ ambassadors to engage the wider economic agenda through potential funding applications, marketing the borough as a place to do business and advocates for public and private sector engagement.

A ‘Health of the borough’s economy’ survey has also been developed, which will act as valuable business barometer reflecting the borough’s current position, future needs and aspirations, challenges and opportunities. It will also help inform and guide Boston Borough Council rolling economic action plan and together with partners focus interventions that will have the greatest impact for supporting business growth and investment. Also, as part of better intelligence and promotion we now have regular meetings with local and regional commercial agents, land agents and developers to ensure that information and guidance about the borough of Boston is correctly disseminated and not just reflecting the town of Boston. The Council is also now in dialog with Oldrids to look at the potential to develop initiatives that support the retail environment in the modern technological world.

This includes sectors that compliment retail and increase the dwell time for visitors. As part of reiterating BBC's Open for Business message and to enable the Council to talk more readily to the business community inside and outside of the borough, a marketing campaign has been developed with cross cutting themes that clearly set out its position and one where the business community understand and can connect with Council priorities



**THINK BOSTON** | think business

Inward Investment is also a Council priority and along with agents Baker Storey Matthews from Peterborough the Council has been actively promoting the redundant Produce World facility in Butterwick. As part of our wider partnership work BBC has also been promoting the site internationally through presentations to the government's Department for International Trade (DIT) and interest has been received from an Italian toilet roll manufacturer, Portuguese Cheese maker and a chicken hatchery business from Ireland. The group were then informed that the site had now been sold to the Irish company, who are investing over £8million into the site and it would be fully operational next March/April, supporting nearly 100 new jobs locally. Work is also ongoing with another sizeable inward investment opportunity in the Sutterton area which could deliver a further 200 new jobs. The update finished with information that the Kirton Distribution Park is now virtually sold either through offers or fully signed agreements.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The Officers in attendance all received thanks and recognition from the Group who collectively showed their appreciation and recognition of the quality of work and the commitment level of all officers involved, throughout this very long and in depth review.

It was noted and agreed by all members of the group that the improvements were significant when compared to when the review first started. However, the group did agree to re-visit the Markets Service in line with the gradually declining trend in income and that a meeting would be convened to allow the group to scope the review.

Furthermore the importance of monitoring all the outcomes from the review was agreed and the group agreed to 'pick-up' the review again in Spring 2018 to look at how the recommendations agreed over the two years were being progressing.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The 'Prosperous Boston' Task and Finish Group concluded its review with two recommendations from the final stage relating to the need to support the ongoing sustainability of the Visit Boston website in future financial years and that monitoring of all the recommendations take place in Spring 2018.

- 4. That the Council develop a corporate policy covering advertising to enable income strands through the Visit Boston website for private advertising.**
- 5. That the Council develop a corporate policy covering corporate sponsorship to support private sponsorship to support the sustainability of the Visit Boston website.**

#### **Chairman's Comments:**

This review covered multiple service areas. It has been fluid in its working and its scope and, due to the length of the investigations, outcomes and actions have been implemented as it has progressed and not as is normal in a review, in line with the final recommendations at its end.

A number of common key areas of concern were identified from the large scale initial consultations. I must stress that whilst significant outcomes have been achieved in addressing the majority of the concerns, they have been done so, not solely by the group – but by a collective working alongside portfolio holders / members / officers / partnerships and in part with funding by BTAC.

It is very pleasing to say that due to this best joint working practice the outcomes over the two years have justified this review and the time and effort it had taken.

I would like to conclude by thanking the members of the group who have collectively given everything and done anything asked of them to achieve this: it has been a very small group membership but it has worked together as a single unit and tirelessly in its efforts. My final thanks go to the officers who have supported us all the way through this: they too have professionally given time and effort to ensure a thorough review was carried out.

Councillor Judith Skinner  
Chairman Prosperous Boston Task and Finish Group.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No financial implications specific to this report.

**ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None specific to this report.

**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Visit Boston UK , update for Task & Finish Group – Prosperous Boston

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

No background papers as defined in Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the production of this report.

**CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT**

N/A