



B O S T O N

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

REPORT TO:	BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE
DATE:	27 TH FEBRUARY 2019
SUBJECT:	CENTRAL PARK SECURITY – UPDATE REPORT
REPORT AUTHOR:	HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY:

BTAC Members requested a report on the decision to leave Central Park open at all times of the day and night and if any evidence exists which demonstrates this decision has had an impact on crime and anti-social behaviour within the park.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That this committee:

- i) Note the report
- ii) Decide if any changes to current CCTV arrangements are necessary after considering information and facts provided in the report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To provide information enabling members to establish a position in respect to current arrangements for leaving the park open all day and night and provide a proposal to enhance CCTV deterrence in relation crime and anti-social behaviour in the Park.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Not to consider the option in the report.

REPORT:

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 At its meeting of 30th January 2019, Members raised concern about the level of crime and anti-social behaviour in Central Park reported to them by constituents and requested a report on any evidence that may be available to factually establish the position on crime.

2.0 ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1 Historically Central Park was opened by 07.30am and closed each day 30 minutes before sunset or no later than 8.00pm. Gates were locked by the Council's Parks and Grounds team and more latterly by the grounds team and public conveniences team. Employees received a fixed payment in addition to their basic salary for each locking occasion.
- 2.3 A decision to trial leaving the park open for the entire 24 hours each day was made in May 2016 with this decision being confirmed to continue in perpetuity in July 2017, subject to a commitment to monitor trends in crime and anti-social behaviour. These decisions were made by the Head of Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and Open Spaces and were driven by the need to make operational efficiencies and financial savings.
- 2.4 A review of the trial was undertaken in July 2017 and concluded that there were no negative impacts or evidence of increased crime or anti-social behaviour and that operational efficiencies and financial savings were delivered.
- 2.5 Operational efficiencies included eliminating the risk of conflict between staff and the public when encouraging users to leave the park in order to lock it. This task was particularly challenging during the long summer months when often many people wished to use the park late into the evening.

3.0 CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- 3.1 Records of crime and anti-social behaviour reported in the park are produced and provided by Lincolnshire Police.
- 3.2 At its meeting of 24 October 2018, BTAC members received an update from Lincolnshire Police Town Centre Police Inspector for Boston, who advised committee that 100 incidents were reported in the park during 2016 compared to 69 incidents in 2017. 85 incidents were reported for period January 2018 to October 2018.
- 3.3 Comments made by the Inspector at the meeting confirmed the number and type of incidents reported were lower than in 2016, at the time the park was

locked at night. Further, the type and number of complaints did not provide any concerns to Lincolnshire Police.

- 3.4 Reported incidents referred to minor offences, such as damage and no reports were made about more serious offences such as assault.

4.0 FINANCIAL SAVINGS

- 4.1 Leaving the park open delivers a recurring annual budget saving of £8,100. There is no provision made in the 2019/20 budgets.

5.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 One complaint was received by the Council in 2018 which related to the park being open all day and night. This complaint related to allegations of anti-social activity however, the complaint was not upheld on investigation.
- 5.2 One enquiry was made to the Council in 2017 which related to access off Tawney Street for disability scooters which was quickly resolved to the satisfaction of the enquirer.
- 5.3 If in the future a decision was taken to lock the park each evening, this would require additional budget as savings from the current arrangements are already secured. The cost of providing this service could be provided for consideration by BTAC Members, however the crime and anti-social behaviour evidence does not support this.
- 5.4 Notwithstanding the above, BTAC Members may wish to consider investing in CCTV camera technology to help identify individuals who commit offences, cause damage or anti-social behaviour. BTAC Members are advised a budget of £10,200 was provided by the committee to fund installation of CCTV cameras at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Road play areas. This budget remains unspent due to technical difficulties preventing these installations progressing, therefore an opportunity exists to re-allocate these funds to upgrade existing CCTV equipment in Central park.
- 5.5 All three cameras in Central Park will be able to be replaced with new, night capable cameras as soon as the Council's CCTV operating system has been upgraded; the upgrade is due to be in place by September 2019. Replacement of these cameras with new, 200m capable infrared units can be met within the budget previously agreed for cameras at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Park. New, infra-red cameras will provide CCTV Operators with enhanced low light capability that will enable more effective monitoring of crime and anti-social behaviour. Following the upgrade to the Council's CCTV operating system, set to be approved by the Council as part of the 2019/20 budget, night capable cameras can be purchased, installed and commissioned for approximately £2,000 per unit (as opposed to equivalent Panasonic units at approximately £6,500 per unit).

5.6 The Council has continued investment in its CCTV systems regularly drives Police and anti-social behaviour operations, providing evidence in a wide range of crime and anti-social behaviour cases. Between April 2017 and January 2019, CCTV Operators dealt with 2,924 incidents, 2,805 out of hour's calls and contributed to 1,102 arrests.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 No factual evidence is available to support the assertion that leaving the park open has caused or increased crime or anti-social behaviour in the park. In fact, reported incidents were higher in 2016 when the park was locked, than since the time the park has been left open.

6.2 Evidence would suggest that reintroducing locking of the park would have no impact in reducing incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

6.3 Alternative options are available to the committee to increase opportunities to deal decisively with individuals who commit offences by installing more effective CCTV systems, which can be funded from budgets already approved.

6.4 Consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and Open Spaces has revealed that in a recent conversation with Inspector Morrice, he suggested that if the gates to Central Park were locked it could make matters (of crime and anti-social behaviour) worse not better.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This update report has no new financial implications. However, were a decision made to reintroduce locking of the park at night, budgetary provision would have to be made to achieve this.

LEGAL & EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

It is not legal for Council employees to eject individuals from the park who do not voluntarily leave when asked in order to lock up. It is unlikely a legal solution to this could be found without taking a disproportionate position involving significant resource and cost – Section 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and Offences Against the Person Act 1861 (common assault).

If individuals were locked in the park given our knowledge of this likelihood, and their attempts to exit over railings or gates cause injury, the Council would likely be vicariously liable for their injury – Occupiers Liability Act 1957

ANY OTHER IMPLICATIONS

For some time, the community has had experience of the park being open during the day and night. Any changes resulting in restricting access to the park will require a significant publicity campaign to ensure the users of the park are informed and cooperate with new arrangements.

CONSULTATION

Consultation on this proposal has taken place with the Chairman of BTAC and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure Services and Open Spaces.

APPENDICES

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report: -

None	
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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

None

FINANCE PROFORMA

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

**PROFORMA FOR EXECUTIVE APPROVAL OF THE RELEASE OF RESOURCES
(CAPITAL AND REVENUE BUDGETS)**

FROM:

THIS PROFORMA PROVIDES THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS
IN RESPECT OF THE ATTACHED

REPORT:

REPORT DATE:

OPTION 1	£ Year 1 2018/19	£ Year 2 2019/20	£ Year 3 2020/21	£ Year 4 2021/22	£ Year 5 2022/23
Revenue	0				
Total Revenue	0				
Cost					

Funding required:

Total capital cost £0

Considered by:

Enter committee here

Date:

BTAC

Revenue cost

Enter Council or
Cabinet here

Financial Services Comments

The report proposes no new financial commitments. If the CCTV changes are agreed the previous allocation will be amended.

Risk

Procurement

Value for Money Efficiency

This FP is valid for 3 months from FP date	If this FP is no longer required please advise Finance	If there are changes to the original report it may invalidate this document, it must be reviewed by Finance.