

BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
BOSTON TOWN AREA COMMITTEE (BTAC)
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

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1. WHAT IS BTAC?

The Boston town area of the Borough doesn't have a parish council and BTAC fills that gap, reflecting and representing the views of the residents of the town wards.

2. HOW DOES BTAC WORK?

The Council has given BTAC the power and duty to carry out certain services and functions and so it can do this, it sets a precept called a Special Area Expense Account (SAEA), which is paid along with Council Tax. In addition, BTAC supports initiatives that have a direct benefit and positive impact on Boston's town centre neighbourhoods and communities. The Committee is committed to working in partnership with local people to deliver the Council's overall priorities to secure better services for less money and share opportunities and responsibilities wherever possible.

BTAC provides and maintains parks, open spaces, play areas, town events, public toilets and other facilities and services that are mainly intended for the use and benefit of residents for the non-parished Boston Town area. And it monitors and reviews the performance of services within its responsibility.

The Committee also acts as a consultee on major initiatives, projects and developments affecting the town area and considers applications for planning permission and other consents and related matters.

Another important responsibility of the Committee is to award Community Grants to town-based organisations and events.

3. MEMBERSHIP

The Committee is made up of all the 14 elected Members who represent the town wards of Boston; in 2018/19 this was:

Councillor Sue Ransome (Chairman) – Station Ward
Councillor Ben Evans (Vice-Chairman) – Staniland Ward
Councillor Alison Austin – St Thomas
Councillor Stephen Ball – Skirbeck Ward
Councillor Anton Dani – Fenside Ward
Councillor Viven Edge – Witham Ward
Councillor Paul Gleeson – Skirbeck Ward
Councillor Dr Gordon Gregory – Trinity Ward
Councillor Martin Griggs – Skirbeck Ward
Councillor Stephen Raven – Witham Ward
Councillor Brian Rush – Staniland Ward
Councillor Yvonne Stevens – Trinity Ward
Councillor Nigel Welton – Fenside Ward
Councillor Stephen Woodliffe – West Ward

4. MEETINGS

BTAC meets on dates agreed at the Council's annual general meeting in May of each year. The Committee can also hold special meetings if necessary.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT BTAC MEETINGS

Members of the public are made very welcome at BTAC meetings. There is a 10-minute public speaking slot on the agenda at the start of every meeting and this can be extended at the discretion of the Chairman.

BTAC often invites individuals or representatives from other agencies and groups to participate in the meetings to benefit from their advice and information.

6. AGENDA ITEMS

Members of the public can place items on the agenda for meetings of BTAC if at least ten days notice is given to the Council.

Also, BTAC Members are entitled to give notice that they want an item relevant to the functions of the Committee to be included on the agenda for the next available meeting.

7. BTAC COMMUNITY GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The BTAC Community Grant Scheme is for individuals and groups wanting to contribute directly to their town centre community.

The scheme is operated using BTAC's Community Grants Policy with a scoring matrix based on the requirements of the Committee that it be consistent with BTAC's terms of reference; easy to understand; flexible and inclusive; and include a 'pre-assessment' process for officers with only those applications scoring above a defined threshold to be considered by a Working Group of Members to make recommendations back to the Committee.

During the year, the Committee considered the recommendations of the BTAC Small Grants Working Group.

The Committee approved the following grants:

- **£878** to the Lincolnshire Youth Mission for the RoadHoG Youth Bus Project as a contribution to the cost of activities associated with teaching lessons in schools on RE and Citizenship and for materials associated with activities for community visits
- **£550** to the St. Leonards Hospital Trust for a bench for residents of the Almshouses on Willoughby Road and their visitors
- **£970.07** to the Council's Community Safety Team towards the cost of two projects, the Blue Lights Project on 13th October 2018 and a Halloween Event on 27th October 2018.
- **£995.80** to the Boston Community Tennis Partnership towards the cost of equipment and staffing expenses.
- **£930** to the Lincolnshire Housing Partnership for the Memory Lane Project towards three community events to be held at Mayfields during 2019, targeting residents of the Staniland ward.

The following large grant was awarded, with the funding to come from the BTAC Events budget underspend:

- **£2,500** to Shakesperts towards the cost of engaging schools and Boston residents in preparatory craft workshops for the Shakespeare Festival to be held in Central Park on 6th April 2019.

In addition, the Committee agreed that **£1,385** funding, previously ring-fenced for this purpose, be released to permit the purchase of the items for the 1914-1918 commemorations, and **£360** was allocated towards the provision of murals on the sides of one of the Council's refuse freighters to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the end of the First World War.

The Committee refused one application:

- A request from the Parish of Boston for **up to £20,000** as a contribution to the overall redevelopment programme at St Botolph's Church through three projects: Work with local schools (£15,000); Community Building (£3,000), and Supporting the Arts (£2,000). The Working Group had supported this application; however, although Members fully supported the projects and recognised the value of the work of the church in bringing people and communities together, the majority felt the application was too large, particularly as the Council had already contributed significantly to the programme, that it had not been made clear how the projects represented value for money for BTAC residents and they were part of the Church's normal pastoral work.

8. REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2018/19

BTAC considered a wide range of matters throughout the year.

The Committee received updates from Inspector Andy Morrice, Boston's Policing Inspector, and took the opportunity to raise various **POLICING ISSUES** with him.

Members received news on:

- A Community Alcohol Partnership event, *Boston Active*, which had been very successful, resulting in a significant amount of engagement.
- The Mini Police scheme, which was going extremely well, with 109 schools participating across Lincolnshire, 32 in Boston and South Holland. There were plans to hold a Mini Police Marathon in Central Park and they were also considering a 999 day, with proceeds to go to the Air Ambulance

Concerns raised by Members for discussion included:

- Reports of youths driving at high speed and the Community Speed Watch scheme
- Drug-taking
- Recruitment of additional Police staff, including EU nationals who would work in Boston.
- The CCTV camera system and the number of crimes being reported speedily to the Police.
- Complaints of anti-social behaviour in West Street near the cinema.
- The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and the Police powers to ask people to hand over alcohol or face a Fixed Penalty Notice and a £100 fine.

Inspector Morrice addressed questions from Members of the Committee and members of the public. Issues included speeding, incidents in Central Park,

the 101 service, the effectiveness of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), the recruitment of PCSOs and the level of crime in Boston.

MAIN ITEMS OF BUSINESS

THE USE OF CCTV ON PLAY SITES IN THE BOSTON TOWN AREA

CCTV had been installed at the play sites at Garfitts Lane and St John's in 2015 and in Central Park and Burgess Pit in 2016. BTAC had funded the cameras except for that installed at St John's, which had been funded by Flood Grant.

The Head of Regulatory Services gave a presentation that included police crime statistics and 'live' camera incidents for Burgess Pit, Central Park and Garfitts Lane along with anti-social behaviour outcomes from April 2017 to March 2018 for the four sites.

In summary, since the installation of the cameras, reported incidents in the Burgess Pit and Garfitts Lane areas had reduced from 2015/16. Incidents in Central Park area had increased; however, no single, clear explanation could be offered to this without in-depth analysis and research.

Members discussed the use of CCTV evidence in relation to criminal acts and anti-social behaviour and heard that incidents of anti-social behaviour could result in prosecution and that the police mobile CCTV van also had an impact.

The Committee considered a **PROPOSAL FOR A STREET LITTER BIN REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME** following a survey conducted by officers identifying the wards, street and location of each bin.

The bins varied in design and colour so there was an incoherent street scene and existing many were in a poor state of repair. The decision was made to look for a supplier of new bins and three companies were selected to provide quotes and a supplier was chosen. A litter bin logo was selected and then Cabinet was then requested to approve the funding of £22,410 (plus £1,000 for consumables) for the purchase of 90 litter bins for the BTAC area.

The Committee later approved the re-use of the refurbished bins being removed during the replacement programme and agreed another budget of £1,000 for consumables. They also asked that a report be received identifying the onward costs of additional bins.

At each meeting, the Committee received an **UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE BTAC OPERATIVES**. The team of operatives had been recently created and had undertaken a training programme with additional equipment and uniforms purchased from existing BTAC budgets.

A generic email had been developed btac.enquiries@boston.gov.uk to allow all BTAC Ward Members to send in information on any work or issue they wanted addressing in their own ward area. The team has received a large number of positive comments from members of the public.

Members were all in agreement in recognising the significant amount of work the operatives had carried out and the vast improvements they had achieved.

The Committee agreed an annual allocation of £500 for on-going training and £2,000 for Personal Protective Equipment (PE), fittings and consumables in the 2019/20 BTAC budget. It was also decided that a standing report be scheduled onto the Committee's agendas providing information on all incidents reported via BTAC Ward Members through the direct BTAC email link and updates on the activity of the incidents report.

The Committee later agreed that £5,000 be allocated to cover equipment for the BTAC Operatives, including machinery, tools etc. from the Committee's 2018/19 unallocated spend with items of spend reported back to the Committee.

The Committee considered a report regarding **TOWN CENTRE MAPPING & INFORMATION BOARDS**. During discussion, Members spoke in support of the provision of notice boards and agreed that events needed promotion. The Committee asked officers to look into costs of provision of interactive notice boards and potential sponsorship.

CENTRAL PARK SECURITY - UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received a report regarding the decision to leave Central Park open at all times of the day and night and any evidence that might exist demonstrating this decision had had an impact on crime and anti-social behaviour within the park.

Based on the evidence presented, Members were satisfied that the gates to Central Park should remain unlocked. In addition, the amount previously allocated to fund the installation of CCTV at Sheldon's Field and Woodville Road play areas, being £10,200, be vired in full to upgrade the existing CCTV equipment in Central Park as soon as the Council's CCTV operating system has been upgraded, due to be in place by September 2019.

The Head of Regulatory Services provided Members with an update on the Committee's **SPEED INDICATORS** and circulated a breakdown of the data obtained by the device in each of the six locations chosen by Members.

The Committee welcomed the update and the information provided and:

1. Sought a report from individual BTAC Members on alternative sites to Staniland Road and Spilsby Road, where there is a low percentage of speeding vehicles;
 2. Agreed that monitoring of roads be continued where over 30% of vehicles have been speeding;
 3. Requested that representatives from the Road Safety Partnership be invited to attend a future meeting to advise the Committee on what action can be taken to reduce speeds further.
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Members also reviewed the Committee's **WORK PROGRAMME** at each meeting, adding new items as well as ensuring that those items that needed regular attention were scheduled in for future meetings.

WORKING GROUPS

The Committee received a presentation at the start of the year, updating Members on the work of the **EVENTS WORKING GROUP** with details of the events that had taken place recently and those planned for the year ahead.

BTAC had supported the events programme in the last quarter of 2017/2018 and the money had enabled officers to put on additional events. Planned events included three initiated by BTAC's Events Working Group. *Boston's Own Sausage and Beer Festival* was a suggestion from a Member on the group. *Teddy Bears Picnic*, which would include the mini-police, and *Vikings Lost and Found* were being organised by members of the public on the group. All the events were detailed on the *Visit Boston* website and Facebook page.

Members commended the work of the events team and the working group and the range of events taking place. A Member of the working group commended officers for their considerable support and remarked on the enthusiasm of the members of the public taking part, who had come up with numerous ideas for events, and the Members themselves.

Towards the end of the year, the Committee received an update on the 2018/19 programme of events and a summary of the events programme planned for the 2019/20 financial year, with budgeted financial breakdown attached, for the Committee to approve. The Events Team is delivering 30

events and is working at full capacity. To deliver additional events safely going forward would require additional resource.

The Committee heard that, following the increase in the number and breadth of the events programme, Boston was developing into a town more noted for its events, with a wide mix of family-oriented and more commercially-focused events. It appeared that local people were starting to stay within town to find activities and more visitors were also starting to travel from further afield to Boston for BTAC events, as previously reported.

The Events Team would continue to establish new relationships with businesses to create further sponsorship opportunities to support the costs of running events where feasible.

The Chairman of the Events Working Group gave special credit to the four members of the public serving on the Group be formally recognised and thanked. Some events would not have taken place without them; they had carried out the work in their own time, saving officer time. It was good to see families attending free events in the park and even free events would help finances through the increase in car parking income. Some events made a profit, but the free events were enjoyed and generated goodwill.

Members expressed appreciation of the work of the members of the Working Group, particularly the volunteers involved who had given their own time. They had brought people together and there had been a marked improvement in events. It was important to continue holding free events for those already paying for them through the BTAC precept and there was general agreement that there should be some much larger events. The Working Group had done a fantastic job and should now try to take steps to hold major events to attract visitors from other countries.

BTAC TOILET IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP

Members considered a report after their tour of assets on 20th June 2018, to enable them to consider future improvement and development opportunities. The Committee resolved to establish a BTAC Toilet Improvement Working Group to report back to the Committee with a detailed set of options for possible improvements to the facilities and an associated funding mechanism for future costs.

The Committee received a report back and agreed to recommend to Cabinet that expenditure be approved from the unallocated reserve sum of £12,550 to allow completion of the works prior to the end of the financial year with officers to source optional costings and products for inclusion within the report.

The report from the Working Group was submitted to Cabinet in October 2018 and the expenditure was approved.

OPEN SPACES WORKING GROUP

The Committee considered a report on BTAC's public open spaces following its tour on 20th June 2018.

On the tour, Members had reviewed improvements carried out following the Committee's decisions at its meeting of 29th November 2017 and identified further development opportunities that could be investigated for delivery in 2018/19 to continue its investment in improving public spaces, subject to the availability of funds.

The areas visited during the tour were Broadfield Lane, Woodville Road, Garfits Lane, St John's Park, Burgess Pit, Shelton's Field and Central Park. Members had been pleased with the progress of improvements already carried out, feeling that these had made a significant contribution to improving the quality of those spaces provided in the town, and that the plans discussed for further development would encourage greater more positive use of public open spaces.

The Committee decided that the development opportunities identified in the report be referred to the Open Spaces Working Group to investigate and report back on costed options to a future meeting of BTAC, including information on provision of play areas in West Ward. Also, that a visit be facilitated for a small group of Members and/or Fenside's Ward Members, to visit the Ingelow Avenue play area.

The Working Group reported back to BTAC on improvements, outdoor gym equipment, trim trails and play area signs. The Committee agreed to submit the expenditure to Cabinet for approval covering play area equipment in three areas and match-funding for provision of a Pirate Ship on another, subject to quotes.

BTAC PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Sub-Committee, comprising BTAC Members not serving as Members of the Planning Committee, met on one occasion during the year to consider a planning application at the request of a Member. The Sub-Committee's comments were directed to the Planning Department.

Members considered regular **FINANCIAL REPORTS** by the Chief Finance Officer, which updated the Committee on BTAC's financial position, showing the budget and projected outturn (full-year spend) for the year, and the projected BTAC reserve at the year end.

The Committee held a Budget Workshop on 28th November 2018 and then, on 9th January 2019, Members discussed the **DRAFT BTAC REVENUE BUDGET REPORT – ESTIMATES 2019/20 – 2023/24** at which point Members recommended to Cabinet and Council that the level of BTAC's special expense precept for 2019/20 be £680,303 with the council tax charge at £74.07 at Band D, an increase of 2.9% over the 2017/18 figure.

9. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

At every meeting, BTAC has an item for members of the public to ask questions or raise issues of concern and three members of the public took up this opportunity to address the Committee.

The Chairman also welcomed members of the public to ask questions of Inspector Morrice on any policing issues they were concerned about.
