

Present: Councillor Paul Goodale (Chairman), Councillor Colin Woodcock (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alistair Arundell, Alan Bell, Anton Dani, Anne Dorrian, Viven Edge, Martin Griggs, Neill Hastie, Brian Rush and Stephen Woodliffe

Officers –

Head of Place and Space, Accountancy Manager (Revenues and Systems), Local Communities Development Officer & BTAC Grant Administrator, Town Centre Services Manager and Senior Democratic Services Officer

Also attending: Councillor Aaron Spencer

Guest: Inspector Fran Harrod, Lincolnshire Police

20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Alison Austin, Deborah Evans and Yvonne Stevens

21 MINUTES

The minutes of the Committee's last meeting, held on 21st August 2019, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22 UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Head of Place and Space updated the Committee as follows:

Action: Examine the software that details the locations on the 'before and after photographs' of the report on the work of the BTAC Operatives.

The IT section had been consulted and they advised that the GPS system could not always access the exact location for these photographs and simply defaulted to the nearest reference point available.

Action: Report back on the light levels of the new CCTV cameras to be installed in Central Park and whether they would identify faces at night, and whether they would be multi-head cameras.

The improvement of the quality of images following the replacement of the cameras was clearly illustrated in the report on BTAC Assets – Tour of Open Spaces (Minute 28 refers).

Action: Report back on the requirements of insurance, training etc. if a volunteer group was to be formed to lock the gates of Central Park.

Initially, it was for the lead organiser to submit a list of volunteers and, if there were sufficient to cover opening and closure of the gates twice a day on a 365-day rota, this would be taken forward as soon as possible.

23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Stephen Woodliffe declared that, as he was a member of Blackfriars' Arts Centre and had a link with the Centenary Chapel through the Church, he would not take part in the debate or vote on the BTAC Small Grants applications from those organisations (Minute 27 refers).

24 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions had been submitted two clear working days prior to the meeting.

25 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME

A member of the public addressed the Committee and asked a question, but was advised that if he gave his contact details he would receive an answer outside of the meeting.

Inspector Fran Harrod, Boston's Policing Inspector, addressed the Committee.

Giving a general overview of policing activity in August 2019, the Committee heard that there had been 1,351 calls for the service, compared to 1,219 in August 2018, and 578 crimes had subsequently been recorded (not all calls related to crimes). There had been a significant increase in the number of crimes reported online. The top 5 crimes reported were assault without injury; assault with injury; shoplifting; public fear / alarm / distress; and general theft.

Since May, work had been ongoing to deal with the public's fear of crime, mainly relating to street drinking and public urination and defecation. Officers had met with Community Safety Officers, who were key to this matter, and had revised their approach to street drinking. In August 2019, 27 initial advice letters had been issued with respect to the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) following the successful confiscation of alcohol. Part figures for September were that 11 initial advice letters had been issued, 3 cases had moved on to the warning letter and one had received a community protection warning. If a person who had received the initial advice letter re-offended, the information would be fed back directly to the Council's Community Safety team. Not having an address was not a bar to receiving a warning. The next step would be to issue a notice, but this was not a police procedure; it was a matter for the Community Safety team.

Inspector Harrod hoped that this gave reassurance that the police focused on matters known to cause distress and that they were listening to the public. A significant amount of work was ongoing to improve matters in the long-term and Councillors who had shadowed the police had been quite impressed.

The Police and Crime Commissioner had recently visited the Council to address Members and had acknowledged the high level of the fear of crime in Boston and confirmed his intention to secure officers for Boston in the next recruitment uplift. Work was ongoing with Boston College to try to ensure that more future officers were from the local area.

With respect to homelessness and begging, work was ongoing with respect to enforcement and also with offering help and assistance.

Inspector Harrod suggested that information on the 101 service could be presented to a future meeting if Members wished. Members of the public who had complained about the service had been asked to provide screenshots, but as yet none had been received.

In response to questions, Inspector Harrod reported that the Chief Officer of Police was working towards securing 350-400 officers for Lincolnshire and to achieve the capacity to train them. (There were no longer national police training colleges and each force had to carry out training itself, which was a daunting task.) It was not known where this number would be specifically deployed but the PCC would ensure that Boston was allocated its fair share due to the recognised level of fear of crime (allocation was not purely based on crime figures).

Inspector Harrod confirmed that the decision had been taken years previously to pass responsibility for parking enforcement to the County Council.

Members' comments included recognition of the pressure the police were under; concern that Boston should receive its fair share of future police officers; the importance of joint discussions between the Council and the police; and appreciation of police reports to public meetings.

There was still concern about incidents of street drinking and urination. In response, Inspector Harrod explained that it would be unrealistic to imagine that it could be eliminated, but they all needed to work together to keep it at controllable levels.

In response to concern that the fear of crime was increased by the media, Inspector Harrod confirmed that the force have officers to address this. A vast amount of information was sent out and, although the police were achieving good results on a daily basis, negative social media comments were damaging. This was not to play down negative incidents, they had to be acknowledged, but the police could look to improve how they communicated the facts.

The police had a variety of methods to deal with low-level drug offences, depending on age and previous incidents.

The Chairman thanked Inspector Harrod and urged Members to send as many questions as possible in advance of the meeting.

A Member suggested that the Inspector's attendance should be a standing item at each meeting, and if she was unable to attend, that she could send through facts and figures. Inspector Harrod confirmed that she was happy to attend future meetings and, if she was unable to do so, she would prepare responses for the Committee and send a sergeant in her place.

Inspector Harrod then responded to questions submitted by Members prior to the meeting.

With respect to travellers and their impact on Boston, Inspector Harrod reported that there had been four recent encampments, one that had come through from Spalding.

One had moved on quickly, another had caused no problems, but their presence had been an issue. If a landowner stated that travellers were not welcome on their land, the police could use section 61 powers to move them on. Difficulties were caused when an encampment was causing issues, but a landowner did not turn up to give this statement. Legal action was being taken to the High Court to enable attendance on behalf of landowners and county-wide work was ongoing to accelerate the process. There were two elements to dealing with encampments: the landowner had to state that they did not want them on their land and/or they were causing damage, threatening the landowner or there were 6 or more vehicles present.

In conclusion, Inspector Harrod stated that the encampments had not had a significant impact on Boston and the police were working well with the Council's Community Safety team on the matter.

A Member suggested that Boston's County Councillors be asked to assist when County Council attendance was necessary. Inspector Harrod confirmed that the Community Safety Manager was looking into this.

A second question put before the meeting related to the number of incidents when PCSOs and police officers had telephoned the CCTV section and not received an answer. Inspector Harrod reported that there had been one specific event and it was understood that there had only been one CCTV operative on duty and this could happen when that operative was under pressure. Anecdotally, officers had said that it happened occasionally, but they would simply try to ring again or the control room would phone through and take their own steps.

Inspector Harrod then stated the figures relating to crimes reported specifically within Central Park: 103 in 2016; 83 in 2017; 99 in 2018 and 94 so far in 2019. This showed there was a slight trend upwards, but not a significant spike to bring to Members' attention.

In response to questions, it was explained that the reports in 2016 and 2017 had been mainly in the daytime and related to street drinking. In 2019, the reports related to a wider range of incidents and were no longer dominated by street drinking. In the town centre, one constable and four PCSOs were on routine patrol and the park was patrolled daily, with the response team usually responding to specific incidents.

A Member spoke in favour of locking the park gates at night, believing it would discourage anti-social behaviour and save police time, and also that repairs should be carried out to prevent access to the park by other means, such as through a hole in one of the fences. Another Member asserted that problems arose in the daytime.

26 BTAC 2019/20 FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE AS AT 31 AUGUST 2019

The Accountancy Manager - Revenues & Systems presented a report to members which provided an update to members on the BTAC financial position, showing the budget and projected outturn (full-year spend) for the 2019/20 year, and the project BTAC reserve at the year-end 31st March 2020.

As an update, it was reported that the funds available for unallocated projects now stood at £86,000 and the forecasted closing balance on BTAC's reserve monies was now £122,000.

Members queried the amount of £70,000 as the minimum to be held to allow for contingencies. It was explained that this was the amount that the Section 151 Officer recommended as the minimum.

Action: PJ

An explanation for the reason for the amount set as minimum for contingencies to be included within the finance report to the next meeting.

27 BTAC SMALL GRANT SCHEME

[Councillor Stephen Woodliffe withdrew to the public gallery and took no part in the debate or vote on the grant applications.]

The Local Communities Development Officer and BTAC Grant Administrator presented a report which set out the details of the applications received in the current round by the Small Grants Working Group in respect of applications received for the current round.

The Local Communities Development Officer and BTAC Grant Administrator presented a report, which set out the details of applications considered by the Small Grants Working Group received so far in the Municipal Year.

Normally, there would be four rounds of grant applications, but the first round had been delayed due to the May elections and had been amalgamated into the second round. A sheet detailing the Working Group's recommendations and suggested awards was circulated to the meeting.

In response to questions, it was explained that Singing For Fun was an over-50s Royal Voluntary Services project and the group had a professional teacher and sang in homes across Boston. The East Lincolnshire Downs Syndrome Family Support Group had identified a need within Boston and developed an independent group.

During Members' debate, there was appreciation that the message about the grant scheme was getting across and resulting in a variety of applications. The issue of increasing the grants budget was raised, as it would be unfortunate to have to refuse an application when the Committee had a £70,000 contingency in the budget and it was agreed that the budget be increased by £5,000.

Some Members felt that it should be a requirement of grant applications that local contractors be used. The Head of Place and Space explained that the Council's Procurement Rules allowed for local business quotes. In response to further calls that the grant applicants be restricted to using local contractors, the Chairman suggested that wording be included in the advice to applicants to use local contractors if possible.

Action: ME

Add to BTAC Small Grants guidelines "Where reasonably possible, look to local businesses to carry out work".

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Small Grants Working Group budget be increased by £5,000 in the current year.**
- 2. The recommendations of the Small Grant Working Group be endorsed as follows:**

Applicant	Project	Amount requested	Suggested Award	Working Group recommendations
Willoughby Road Allotments	Installation of an electric supply at the allotments	£934.92	£934.92	Award the full amount requested.
1 st Boston Scouts	Purchase camping equipment	£1,000	£1,000	Award the full amount requested.
Singing For Fun	Purchase small percussion instruments, music stands, branded scarves and ties, and contribute towards volunteer expenses and travel to performance venues.	£1,000	£1,000	Award the full amount requested.
Forbes Road Bowling Club	Repairing the fence at the Bowling Club site	£1,000	£800.00	To award a contribution to the cost of repairing the fence proportionate to the number of BTAC beneficiaries.
East Lincolnshire Downs Syndrome Family Support Group	Assist with one year's rent at St Christopher's Church	£620.00	£620.00	Award the full amount requested on the condition that they have a year to source alternative ways to pay their rent.
Blackfriars Arts Centre Ltd	Contribute towards the cost of equipping a classroom at Shodfriars Hall to conduct guided tours from trained guides to increase awareness of their plans for developing the building into a community and heritage centre	£1,000	NOT TO FUND	Invite the applicant to reapply when they have secured more funds to begin this project.
Centenary Methodist Chapel	Contribute to the cost of planned programme of refurbishment work within the building	£1,000	£800.00	To award £600 for replacement flooring and £200 for improvements to the performance area on the condition that this work is carried out at the start of their programme of refurbishment.

28 BTAC ASSETS- TOUR OF OPEN SPACES

The Head of Place and Space presented an update from the BTAC public open spaces tour on 21st August 2019 following a request from Members. The update outlined matters which were raised during the tour in order to progress improvements and for consideration to be made for future developments.

Details of specific discussions held during the tour were included in Appendix A. Appendix B showed images, which compared the quality of cameras before and after replacement. Appendix C contained consultation responses that included a 'wish list' of further improvements requested by the consultees.

During the tour, Members were pleased with the progress of improvements already carried out on BTAC open spaces and felt 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.

It was anticipated that a future report would be submitted to BTAC by the sub group to provide cost details in relation to those improvements identified for 2019/20.

In response to a question, it was explained that consideration had been given to selling the Pavilion building, but the fabric did not have value if deconstructed. The building would be taken down in-house, which would be significantly less expensive, though it was still subject to obtaining the necessary planning permission and other considerations. The planning application would need to go through the Planning Committee due to the size of the building.

29 REVIEW OF 2019/20 EVENTS AND LOOKING FORWARD TO 2020/21 EVENTS PROGRAMME

[Councillor Alistair Arundell declared that he organised part of the Boston Bike Night event and ran the bar and that he was the Portfolio Holder for Events, but was speaking at the meeting as a Member of BTAC.]

The Town Centre Services Manager presented a report which provided an update on the 2019/20 programme for the Committee to note and options for a planned events programme for the 2020/21 financial year. The report included budgeted financial breakdowns covering both financial years, to support the Committee in its deliberations.

The Town Centre Services Manager reported that the events during 2019/20 had been fantastic once again. An additional document was circulated to the meeting with photographs illustrating the successful events held during the year. The events had been funded by BTAC and the Boston Big Local and catered for the whole family. The Events Team and Safety Advisory Group had also provided advice and support to a number of events within Boston run by external providers, which provided a more varied programme for Boston residents and drew more visitors into the town.

The report then set out three options for Members' consideration for delivering an events programme during 2020/21. It was pointed out that the Christmas Market and Lights Switch-On event had been developed and fully funded through the Controlling Migration

Fund programme, but that this funding was coming to an end during 2019/20 and would add cost to the events programme going forward.

The three options, all of which included the Christmas Market and Lights Switch-On event, were set out as follows:

- Option One: incorporates some larger scale events in addition to the existing community based events. This option aims to keep all the free community events, which people have enjoyed this year but adds/combines some of the existing larger scale events, some of which would have or could have a charge on entry. A major cost for the 2020/21 budget is the return of the Christmas Market & Lights Switch on event (not including the provision of lights) within the budget, which has recently been funded through Controlling Migration Funding. Option one, would cost BTAC an additional **£27,000** for the 2020/21 financial year and a detailed breakdown of this programme is appended (Appendix B).
- Option Two: focuses on larger scale events within the BTAC funded events programme with a more limited programme of smaller scale community focussed events delivered principally through the BBL funding stream. This option could be delivered with an additional **£12,000** for the 2020/21 financial year as shown in Appendix C.
- Option Three: **retains the existing BTAC budget** at £41,500 and the programme is reduced to retain current spending as shown in Appendix D, again this option focuses on larger scale events within the BTAC funded event programme, and a limited programme of smaller scale events funded entirely through the BBL funding.

It was noted that two events identified within all options had already been committed to for 2020 – a Teenage Market and a Through the Ages event – due to the need to make bookings in advance, though Members could consider not continuing with these events if they so wished.

The Events Team sought sponsorship where feasible within existing resources. Details and options were set out in Appendix E should a Member Working Group wish to seek additional sponsorship.

During debate, Members voiced support for the larger events, particularly the 1940s Event, Boston Show and the Party in the Park, and favoured Option 1 as the additional £27,000 would be needed to keep the existing smaller events and support the running of the larger events.

Members' comments included the need for Members to help increase advertising of events and to interact more with local businesses, for example suggesting shops and cafes remain open during Bike Night and reference was made to the importance of the Christmas events.

Action: PP/KW

Extend the Committee's appreciation to the volunteers involved with the Christmas Lights event and those already preparing for this year.

It was suggested that an advertising banner would be a good value purchase. Other ideas put forward for advertising were crowd barrier covers and the sides of pool cars.

Members referred to the success of the Party in the Park in previous years and reference was made to its effect on community cohesion. In response to questions, the Town Centre Services Manager confirmed that the numbers planned for the Party in the Park were not as high as in previous years, but it could be expanded again; many events had been developed and improved over time as more people were realising that there were things to do in Boston rather than having to go outside the borough.

The Town Centre Services Manager added that it was beneficial to agree an events programme at this stage as it would allow an events leaflet to be sent out with council tax bills.

In response to questions regarding the Outdoor Cinema, the Town Centre Services Manager reported that the first two events had not made a profit, but they had learned from the experience, for example, hiring toilet facilities. The next two events had made money, with one event being a sell-out. The most recent event had been disappointing, with 200 out of a maximum of 500 tickets sold. The reasons were not clear, as the tickets prices were reasonable and there had been positive feedback from the event; however, the events were being constantly reviewed and could be replaced in time with others, such as outdoor theatre.

A Member explained that this year's Bike Night had been relocated to Central Park because it relied heavily on volunteers and there had not been enough. Fewer volunteers were needed to hold the event in the park. Different funding possibilities would be explored with a view to holding the event in the Market Place again in future. The Town Centre Services Manager added appreciation for the hard work of the volunteers; the Events Team supported them when possible and were keen to work with them as a group.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that an additional £27,000 expenditure be approved in order to go ahead with Option One for the 2020/21 Events Programme, as set out in Appendix B, attached.

[Councillor Brian Rush left the meeting at 8.25 pm]

30 UPDATE ON TOWN CENTRE OPERATIVES ACTIVITY

With the Chairman's permission, the Leader of the Council addressed the Committee on a matter of urgency. Having taken the decision, in liaison with the Chairman, to keep the town's public toilets open overnight on a 3-month trial basis, starting on 2nd September, with the Council to pay for the costs, the Leader reported the substantial damage that had since been inflicted on the facilities. The decision had been taken in response to calls for the facilities to be available to reduce incidents of urination and defecation during the night. As there had been no evidence of any reduction in such incidents during this period, the Leader asked for the Committee's views on whether this trial should be terminated early, as considerable costs would be incurred if it was run for

the entire 3 months. Furthermore, the toilets were mainly for daytime use and it was reasonable for people to expect them to be in good working order.

The Leader read out some of the details of the vandalism and costs. A breakdown of the costs incurred so far had been shown to the Chairman and could be e-mailed to BTAC Members. The damage was primarily to the Central Park toilets and drug paraphernalia was also left there, a health and safety risk in itself. The Leader accepted that the trial could continue for the full 3 months if the Committee wished to have more data, but stressed the costs, health risks and facilities not being usable for the majority accessing the toilets during the day.

During debate, there was a view that the trial should end immediately in order to prevent the waste of public money and protect the Council's assets, which the Committee maintained and that opening the toilets at night did not address problems of urination and anti-social behaviour.

In response to an assertion that problems of vandalism etc. had been occurring when the toilets opened at their normal early-morning opening time, the Leader confirmed that the number of incidents occurring had dramatically increased since the facilities were left open overnight and had done so as soon as the overnight opening had commenced. More innovative solutions to the problems referred to could be considered instead, though even if the vandalism and anti-social behaviour had not occurred, the 24-hour opening had not reduced incidents of urination and defecation so it would be difficult to substantiate the cost of, for example, anti-vandal toilets and how this would be funded. Solutions working in other areas could be explored.

Another view expressed was that the full trial period should, perhaps, be considered, particularly as the trial was started in response to issues raised at a meeting called by the public, so that the evidence was clear that the trial was not working. Members then went on to discuss concerns about rough-sleeping, highlighted by one facility being used overnight for this purpose.

Members discussed possible options. As mentioned by the Chief Inspector, people congregated in Central Park; therefore, the other two facilities did not need to be open at night. However, it was at the Central Park toilets where most of the vandalism had occurred; therefore, it would be best to close these. It was possible that problems might move to the other facilities, but some action had to be taken, as, in addition to the cost of vandalism and health risks of drug paraphernalia, there was the costs of Council workers having to clear up the mess and deal with damage, as well as residents not being able to use facilities that they paid for. On the other hand, a commitment had been made to run a 3-month trial and the evidence that the opening had had no impact on incidents of urination and defecation could be classed as anecdotal. The information on the costs and damage needed to be fed back to those who had called for the public meeting on the matter.

RESOLVED: That the Central Park toilets should be closed overnight with immediate effect, that the other two facilities be left open overnight for one month and, if problems continued, then they should also be closed.

The Leader then formally requested that the Head of Place and Space should action the overnight closure of the Central Park toilets.

The Head of Place and Space then presented the regular report detailing the work undertaken by the BTAC Operatives.

In response to questions, it was explained that cast iron bins were refurbished and reused whenever possible. Plastic bins that had been vandalised, thrown in the river etc., were replaced with cast iron bins. Any cast iron bins that could not be refurbished would be disposed of through a scrap merchant.

Action: PP

Report back on the cost to the Council of scrapping cast iron bins.

31 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman suggested Members e-mail him with details of any other items for future agendas.

The Meeting ended at 9.10 pm