

# **BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) Annual Report for 2015/16**

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### **1. WHAT IS BTAC?**

BTAC is effectively a 'parish council for the town' - the 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 open spaces, play areas, allotments, benches 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 elected Members who represent the town wards of Boston.

Following elections and boundary changes affecting wards, the Membership for 2015/16 was as follows:

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

### **4. MEETINGS**

BTAC normally meets six times a year on dates agreed at the Council's annual general meeting in May of each year, but the Committee can 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 by the Committee or the Chairman.

Also, 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, for individuals and groups who wished to contribute directly to their town centre community, could, for example, apply for a grant to purchase equipment to help improve an area or maintain a local park, or to set up a community group. The Committee reviewed the scheme and decided it should continue as it was for the year. The scheme had no minimum award, but the maximum continued to be £1,000.

### BTAC Community Grants awarded during 2015/16:

- A grant of **£1,000** was awarded to **Endeavour Radio** towards the cost of equipment needed to commence broadcasting across on FM following the award of a full-time community radio licence by Ofcom for five years. Members felt the service provided good value and would put Boston back on the map.

The equipment was purchased in January 2016, with the station due to go live in the Summer of 2016.

- A grant of **£1,000** was awarded to **Blackfriars Arts Centre** towards the cost of repairing the “lean-to” roof above the stage of the building. Members commented that the centre was used by people from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages, providing a springboard for talent and the disadvantaged; it drew people into the town centre and was an important part of its offer.

The works to the roof were completed in March 2016.

- **Boston and District Athletics Club** was awarded a grant to purchase pole-vaulting and hammer-throwing equipment in proportion to the number of children from the town area who would be using the equipment **up to a maximum of £990**. Members recognised the importance encouraging Boston’s young people to take part in sport, particularly if it instilled discipline.

The equipment was purchased in January 2016. (Monitoring information was e-mailed to Members in March 2016.)

- **St. Thomas’ Church War Memorial Project Group** was awarded a grant of **£1,000** towards the cost of repairing and refurbishing the war memorial, which stands in the grounds of the church. Members commented that it was a duty of parish councils to ensure war memorials were maintained to a good standard and the group was commended for the money it had already raised.

The refurbishment works to the War Memorial were completed on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016.

A re-dedication service took place on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2016 with members of BTAC invited.

- A grant of **£786.96** was awarded to **Willoughby Road Allotment Association** for the short-term hire of a port-a-loo at the allotment site. This would enable the association to continue to work in the local community as well as to support a further bid to the Big Lottery Fund *Awards for All* scheme for a longer-term solution. Members commended the association's work and its well-managed allotments. The benefits of families growing their own healthy food were recognised and endorsed.

The hire of the port-a-loo took place in July 2016 and has enabled the group to significantly review the benefit of having facilities provided on the site. This in turn has enabled them to apply for further funding for a permanent provision going forward.

*Monitoring information has been received by the Grants Administrator relating to all the above grants, including copies of accounts and invoices, photographs etc, and is available to Committee Members to view, on request.*

#### Other Contributions made from the BTAC Budget:

BTAC also agreed to make the following contributions:

- An ongoing annual contribution of **£600** for the hire of a portaloos at **Witham Way County Park** to enable volunteers to work on site
- **£2,500** towards the **Christmas lights switch-on event**
- **£5,368** (plus VAT) for the purchase of an **additional CCTV Camera** to be located along Emery Lane, Boston in order to help prevent crime and anti-social behaviour associated within this area
- **£3,198** (excluding VAT) for the purchase, installation and movement of a **data gathering speed indicating device** (SID) and the management fee of **£847** exclusive of VAT plus 3% per annum **to be located at six sites throughout the BTAC area** to be identified by Members
- **£300** to purchase **100 Event Poppies** and the cost of staff time to mount them to decorate the town area during the year of commemoration of the outbreak of World War I
- A maximum of **£5,000** to purchase and install a third **CCTV camera in Central Park.**

## 8. REVIEW OF THE YEAR

2015/16

Following the borough elections in May 2015, 11 of BTAC's 14 Members were new to the Committee. Therefore, Members considered the Committee's Constitution at the first meeting to ensure its role was fully understood. BTAC then held a workshop for Members to establish the Committee's work programme.

The Committee considered a wide range of matters throughout the year:

The Committee received an update on the upgrade of its **Play Areas and CCTV**. The Committee received an update on the upgrade of its **Play Areas and CCTV**. The Committee had committed £30,000 to improve its play grounds and equipment. Of this, £8,250 was used as match funding for the new Garfit's Lane play ground project and £21,750 towards a second project to refurbish the Woodville Road, St John's Park, Shelton's Field and Burgess Pit play areas. A further £6,500 contribution had been committed from the BTAC grounds maintenance revenue budget. Both projects had then been able to lever in an additional £75,000 through WREN and £3,440 through Boston Big Local. The modernisation of play equipment in the Garfit's Lane play area was completed with CCTV installation to follow and very favourable feedback was received from the public.

After discussing future arrangements for **Christmas Lighting**, the Committee recommended that the Council should proceed to explore a new lighting contract of 3 or 5 years on the basis that other town centre traders, businesses, partners, agencies, community groups contribute significantly and possibly, through a Service Level Agreement, take over the operational management of the resultant contract. Two BTAC Members volunteered to get involved with the arrangements on behalf of the Committee.

The Committee discussed **Policing Issues** with Inspector Jim Manning and, in particular, aired concerns about the 101 call system and street drinking. Members heard that police officers had attended 30% fewer incidents as a result of the 101 service and that over 300 people had been spoken to since the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) had come into force, with alcohol confiscated and warning letters issued.

The previous year, the Committee had recommended that the Council should explore options for the development of part of the **Ingelow Avenue Amenity Land** in partnership with another organisation. Members were keen to see the site properly utilised and resolved to support further development options.

Members received a presentation from the Flood Resilience Officer and considered ways of **Improving Emergency and Flood Resilience within the Boston Town Area** by encouraging people to sign up to receive flood warnings and supporting the community in their wards to develop Community Emergency Plans.

**Highways Issues** were discussed with the County Council's Highway Manager for Boston, including provision of cycling schemes, signage and parking enforcement, and details of specific concerns were noted.

An **Update on Public Toilets** was considered and Members discussed potential options for future provision in the town centre.

**Financial Updates** were considered throughout the year. Members discussed the **Draft BTAC Revenue Budget** report and considered the **estimates for 2016/17 to 2020/21**, resolving to recommend an increase in the BTAC precept for Band D of approximately £1 per month.

Members discussed the **Consultation on the New Electoral Arrangements for Lincolnshire County Council** and agreed to put forward the view that the names of the six Boston County Council divisions be retained as Boston North, West, Coastal, Rural, East and South.

The Committee considered the **Prosperous Boston Task and Finish Group's Review** and authorised officers to bring back a report to the Committee with details relating to costings and the feasibility of work relating to provision of toilet facilities, street cleaning, the market and events.

Boston Disability Forum made a presentation to the Committee on **Disability Issues** following which Members volunteered to take the Forum's guided walk and asked the Communications Manager to include information provided by the Forum in the Boston Bulletin.

## **9. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

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

Members of the public attended meetings to represent all applications for Community Grants.

## **10. THE YEAR AHEAD - 2016/17**

Members decided to have a standing item on future agendas to consider future potential items for the Committee's work programme as well as updates on actions previously agreed by the Committee.