

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday, 29 April 2013

Present: Cllrs Adams, Armstrong, Burton, Handford, Hey & Marshall, DCllrs Barrington & Brockbank, also the Clerk and 14 parishioners

Apologies: Mrs Gillibrand (Meals On Wheels), Mr Thomas (Bentham Juniors AFC) & Mr Frankland (NYCC Library Services)

1. Notice convening the meeting was read by the Chairman

2. Minutes of the 2012 Meeting
Minutes of the above meeting were presented, agreed and signed

3. Mayor's Report

Councillor Marshall commented on the fact that the year had not been as quiet as he had expected, and thanked the Councillors and clerk for all their support in the last year, and also thanked Mrs Green and her husband for their work in opening and closing the Town Hall. He went on to thank the public for the interest they had shown in Council activities and for the support and feedback that had been received in the preceding year.

Looking back over 2012/13 the Mayor noted that the Council had had a few successes and was still working to resolve others like the road lining around the town which after three attempts by NYCC Highways was still incomplete. Working with Network Rail and Highways the Council had succeeded in getting the railway ditch dug out and the flooding at the railway bridge hopefully solved. It had also got Lancashire County Council to agree to resurface the B6480 later in the year so the road to Wennington should be much improved. The Council had also helped in the defeat of parking charges – a subject which had hopefully been laid to rest for the foreseeable future.

The Council had worked with Craven District Council on a Parish Profile for Bentham and was now embarking on the production of a Neighbourhood Plan. It had met with Burton in Lonsdale Council with a view to perhaps working together and had a joint training session from Kirkwells.

The Town's bid to be a Portas Pilot had been unsuccessful on both occasions, but the Town team had attracted a £10000 grant, part of which was being used to refurbish the bus shelter and the Heritage Trail. The Council had also been successful in its bid for extra LEADER funding to install public bike racks in High Bentham, which tied in well with the Passing Places Project to bring cyclists into the town and the We Are Bentham efforts to bring more shoppers into the centre.

Following the disbanding of the Christmas Light Committee the Council had taken over the funds and worked with We Are Bentham to light the town over the Christmas period. Work was now afoot to improve things for the coming Christmas. Purchase of the Low Bentham School Field and the provision of an allotment site had been more problematic and work continued on these areas. Cavity wall insulation had been installed with an 80% grant at the rear of the Town Hall and the cemetery had received a facelift following the implementation of the drainage scheme, with the hedges being laid and the benches and gates painted.

The Jubilee weekend had been a great success. Cllr Marshall thanked Mrs Thurnham of the Fourstones Estate for allowing the Council to site the beacon on Burnmoor, and also thanked Peter Hird & Cllr Adams for their help in organising the event which had been attended by more than 400 people. He also congratulated Pioneer Projects on the CARnival and Boat Flotilla, saying that Bentham had much to be proud of.

4. Financial / Precept Details

Draft copies of the Reconciliation of Receipts and Payments for 2012/13 (unaudited) were circulated. The clerk emphasised the fact that the accounts were due to undergo two rounds of audit in the next couple of months and small changes could occur.

The end of year figures indicated a credit of £53691.44 which, whilst appearing lower than 2011/12 due to the artificial inflation of the previous year end because of the early payment of the precept, was actually an increase of £4000. Removing the precept from the income gives a figure just in excess of £32600, which was approximately £2000 higher than 2011/12. This increase was due to the receipt of monies paid out in 2011/12 for the parish caretaker and Craven Walkabout Scheme and reimbursed in the new year, and also from the money received from the Christmas Light Committee when they folded and the sales of the 2013 calendar, which were being held for We Are Bentham. Payments for the year totalled £128668.75, of which £47855 was loan repayments – which will continue until 2017. Salaries were slightly higher at £19953.20 due to longer hours worked by the clerk as, in line with local government policy no salary increases were awarded again in the previous year. The Cemetery drainage scheme and the Lower Hall decoration and resealing of the floor, along with the production of the website were the main projects for the year, costing in the region of £9000. The rest of the expenditure was used to run the Council, the cemetery, the Tourist Information Point, the Town Hall and some street lighting etc.

With some juggling of the budget the Council had managed to maintain the precept at £100000 for the fifth year and increase the money available to community organisations through the precept grant scheme. Grants totalling £5800

(some £1200 up on 2011/12) were awarded to 12 local organisations including the Tourist Information Point, and the £500 unspent Jubilee budget made available to the CARnival organisers for printing. Despite maintaining the precept at £100000 changes to the Council Tax base made by the government had meant that individuals had seen an increase in the parish part of their council tax bills.

Projects to be tackled in the coming year included the completion of the cemetery project, working with NYCC Highways to combat speeding on Robin Lane and Springfield, and trying to progress the purchase of Low Bentham School Playing Field.

There were no questions from the floor.

4. Library

Since July 2012 Bentham Library has been working in partnership with the Friends of Bentham Library who provide volunteers to extend the opening hours. A number of events had been held including a launch event in September where staff & volunteers met Julian Smith MP, and local historian David Johnson spoke about his Bentham archive collection in October. The Book Group continued to be well attended and several taster sessions were held to introduce people to the computer. Business levels remained healthy and Bentham had met most of its performance targets.

5. Reports from Local Organisations

Reports were received from:

Adventurers, Aid in Sickness,

Bentham Agricultural Society, Bentham Beagles, Bentham Common Land Charity, Bentham Environmentally Sustainable Town, Bentham Juniors FC, Bentham Youth Café, Bentham Line Dancers, Bentham Netball Club, Bentham News, Blooming Bentham

Churches Together & Christian Aid, Community Bonfire,

Ewecross Historical Society,

Footpaths Group, Friends of Bentham Library, Friends of Bentham Station,

Goodenber Play Area,

High Bentham WI,

Indoor Bowls,

LASRUG, Looking Well / Pioneer Projects, Low Bentham Badminton Club, Low Bentham WI

Meals on Wheels, Mencap,

Nursing Benevolent Fund,

Playing Field Association, Pet Rescue,

Springboard, Springfield Bowling Club,

Theatre Group, Toddle In, Tourist Information, Tuesday Craft Club,

Victoria Institute,

Welcome-In, Women's Social Services and NSPCC.

There were no reports from:

Age Concern, Bentham AFC, Bentham First Responders, Cancer Support Group, Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Link Café, Settle & District Blind Persons Association, Homing Society, Justice & Peace, Sun Beams & We Are Bentham

6. A.O.B.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hey for all her work collating information for the AboutBentham website which had been launched by the Council in 2012, but that he had omitted from his report. He commended it to the meeting as a 'one stop shop' for information about Bentham for residents and visitors alike.

The Chairman also presented a monitor to Gerald Townson of Friends of Bentham Station, which the Council had purchased for the new information service being introduced in the Station Building by the Friends. Grant cheques were handed out to those organisations which had successfully applied for funding.

Mrs Arnott asked about the Council's intentions regarding the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. It was explained that this was in the very early stages and that the Council had advertised in the May Bentham News for interested Bentham residents to come and take part to ensure that the Plan would encompass the whole community in both High and Low Bentham

Miss Dowbiggin thanked the Councillors and particularly the Mayor for all that the Council had done in the past year. As an ex-Mayor herself she said that being on Council was not an easy job and that members had to be prepared to take a lot of flack as it was not possible to always please everyone. She added that the Mayor should be congratulated on raising the funds to pay for the War Memorial by competing in the Great North Run as this had solved a big problem for Bentham and she felt that the parish's thanks should be put on record.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.