

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday, 27 April 2011

Present: Cllrs Adams, Burton, Marshall, Procter & Yaman, DCllr Barrington, also the Clerk and 14 parishioners

Apologies: Cllrs Barnes & Brown

1. Notice convening the meeting was read by the Chairman

2. Minutes of the 2010 Meeting

Minutes of the above meeting were presented, agreed and signed

3. Mayor's Report

Cllr Marshall started by thanking the Councillors for their support through his year in office. He also thanked Ruth Green citing her as the unsung hero of the Town Hall who makes sure it is open and closed whatever the day or time, and clean. He then went on to thank the clerk, Jo Burton, without whom he thought the job of mayor would be much more difficult due to her meticulous attention to detail and organisation.

Cllr Marshall continued by mentioning that there were two vacancies on Council following the resignation of Keith Webster and Bernie Wills due to work pressures. Both were sadly missed, particularly Cllr Wills who had been a stalwart of the Council for over 10 years and very active on numerous committees. He appealed for any interested parties to talk to the clerk about being co-opted on to the Council.

Moving on he said that the Council had set a £100,000 precept for the third year in a row, of which £48,000 was for loan repayments. With the low interest rates the Council had taken the opportunity to renegotiate its outstanding loan for the Town Hall refurbishment and had borrowed money for the purchase of the Community Centre at no extra annual cost in repayments.

The Community Youth Building had just been handed over to the Youth Café following the refurbishment programme, which had taken longer than expected due to problems encountered along the way. Grant funding had been obtained for much of the refurbishment from several sources including Leader & Craven Community Fund. A formal opening event is being planned for the near future.

The Council had also been successful in its bid for Leader funding to part fund a Parish Caretaker for 3 years.

Horton Landscaping had been appointed to the post and the environs of the town were already looking tidier.

During the first year most of the public benches around the parish had been cleaned up and painted, various trees, hedges and shrubs had been cut back, some snow clearing and gritting had been done in the bad weather and the Community Youth garden area had been over hauled. With the project entering its second year various projects are in the pipeline, but the Council would be happy to hear any ideas from residents for improvements around the town.

The quest for the provision of allotments had faltered during the year following interference from outside sources, but was now hopefully back on track and should be moving forward over the summer.

Summing up his year in the chair Cllr Marshall said that the added bureaucracy was starting to take the fun out of being a Councillor and made it more difficult to be enthusiastic, but despite this he was looking forward to welcoming a new Chairman for the coming year to take the Council forwards.

4. Financial / Precept Details

Draft copies of the Reconciliation of Receipts and Payments for 2010/11 (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 £51393.89, which is very similar to 2009/10 (£52098.87) despite spending £48790 on the Community Youth building refurbishment – which had been offset by the receipt of grants totalling £43270.

Total income was £178809.70. Removing the precept and Community Youth grants from this gave a figure just in excess of £31800, which was approximately £5000 up on the previous year. This increased income is due to higher usage of the town hall, up for the second consecutive year, and also the receipt of the Leader grant funding for the Parish Caretaker. Further funds for this, spent in 2010/11, would be received in the coming financial year due to the fact that Leader uses the calendar year, and the next claim is due in May.

Payments for the year totalled £179494.57 of which £48790 was for the refurbishment project and £47855 in loan repayments. Salaries accounted for £20208, up on the previous year as the Tourist Information Coordinator was now included and the clerks hours had been increased with running the refurbishment project. The rest of the expenditure was used to run the parish – the Town Hall, Cemetery, Market, Parish Caretaker, Tourist Information, some street lighting, the council administration and some maintenance. Some maintenance projects from last year had been held over due to problems with the weather and contractor availability. Painting the front of the building had already commenced and re-rendering the rear was due to start, weather permitting, at the end of May.

With some prudent cutting of the budget in some areas to offset increases in others the Council had managed to maintain the precept at £100000 for the third year. Grants totalling £5625 were awarded to 14 local organisations including the Tourist Information Point, which was similar to 2010/11.

There were no questions from the floor.

4. Library

Sixty five children had taken part in the summer reading challenge. Various taster sessions to introduce people to the computer had proved very popular, and the Book Group continues to be well attended. The outcome of the NYCC Library Consultation is awaited with decisions being made in a few weeks.

5. Reports from Local Organisations

Reports were received from:

Adventurers, Age Concern, Aid in Sickness,
 Bentham Agricultural Society, Bentham Juniors FC, Bentham Christmas Lights, Bentham Community Transport,
 Bentham Development Trust, Bentham First Responders, Bentham Line Dancers, Bentham News, Bentham Youth
 Café, Bentham Youth Theatre Group, Blind Persons Association , Blooming Bentham
 Cancer Support Group, Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Bonfire,
 Ewecross Historical Society,
 Footpaths Group,
 Goodenber Play Area, GFI Youth Group,
 High Bentham WI, Homing Society,
 Indoor Bowls,
 LASRUG, Looking Well, Low Bentham Badminton Club,
 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,
 Women's Social Services and NSPCC.

There were no reports from:

Abbeyfield, Bentham AFC, Bentham Cricket Club, Bentham Environmentally Sustainable Town, Churches
 Together & Christian Aid, Community Link Cafe Justice & Peace. Low Bentham WI & Welcome-In

6. A.O.B.

Miss Dowbiggin asked what had happened to her request for greater use of the Town Hall building. Cllr Yaman explained that the Marketing Committee had attempted to put on a Christmas Ball which had been cancelled due to lack of interest. It was noted that the Settle Victoria Hall has an events organiser.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.