

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Precept Meeting held on Tuesday 15 January 2013, at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall

Present Cllrs Adams, Armstrong, Burton, Handford, Hurlley, Procter & Marshall
Also, the Clerk Mrs Burton and two parishioners

157. To Receive Apologies from members unable to attend

Cllrs Barnes, Brown & Hey

158. Declarations of Interest

All interests were declared in item 162, grant applications. Cllrs Burton, Procter, Adams & Armstrong declared interests under appendix B as Council Representatives with various of the organisations applying. Cllr Armstrong also declared an interest as a committee member of Bentham Beagles, Cllr Marshall declared an interest as land owner of the potential allotment site.

159. To Receive Comment & Concerns - none

160. To consider the Projected Assessment for 2013/14, based on accounts for 2012/13 to end of December, and make any necessary changes

The clerk circulated copies of the projected assessment for the year 2013/14. She explained that the predictions for the current year were based on actual income / expenditure to the end of December 2012, i.e. 3/4 year adjusted to the full year either by the addition of known costs or by converting from 3/4 to 4/4. The predicted overspend / under spend for the current year was then calculated as the difference between budgeted and actual expenditure plus or minus any differences from budgeted income.

There was considerable discussion on the financial management of the Tourist Information. Craven District Council had confirmed payment of the 2012/13 grant that day and the funds would be available within a fortnight, but a grant for 2013/14 cannot be confirmed until the Craven budget is set. It was agreed that the TIP accounts should remain for this year as the organisation does currently stand alone which makes applications for grants etc simpler. If Craven funding does stop it will still be able to function for the coming year due to the late arrival of the current grant (after the season has ended) and the reserves held. A decision on the Council input for the coming year was reserved until the rest of the spending had been agreed.

The Council as a whole was under budget this year to date, mainly due to rate relief being agreed part way through the year and spending on fuel bills being lower than expected, although some known expenditure was still to be invoiced as the work was not yet complete (e.g. Town Hall maintenance – Lower Hall floor and decorating) The proposed draft budget was accepted with a few amendments.

Usage of the Town Hall was up and income over budget, however a considerable sum had been paid by ‘My Last Car’ which will not be repeated in the coming year, so the budgeted income was left the same. As energy bills had been lower than predicted for the last 2 years it was agreed to remove £1000 from the budget. Following some discussion it was agreed to leave the contract cleaning of the building as before, i.e. a monthly clean from May-September and fortnightly cleans for the rest of the year.

A budget of £3000 was agreed for the Parish Caretaker following the end of the LEADER grant funding, which is approximately the Council budget in 2012/13, although is lower than the total. This was felt to be sustainable on going.

RESOLVED That the Council budget £3000 for the Parish Caretaker following the end of the LEADER funded scheme.

The Admin budget, allowing for a 1% increase in the clerk’s salary was accepted. Provision for the Council newsletter, which has not been published in the last 12 months was reduced to £100 as it was agreed that most could be done on the new website. Further money was left in the budget for additions to the website once the current development phase is complete. It was agreed that the phone provision should be investigated but that the budgeted figure be left for the time being.

RESOLVED That the provision of the Town Hall & Clerk’s phone be investigated with a view to cutting costs.

Cemetery income over the last two years has been above expectation, so the clerk had increased the budgeted income from £2000 to £2200, which she admitted was conservative. The Council noted that cemetery fees had not been altered since 2011 and decided that these should rise by 5% from 1 April 2013, taking predicted income to £2300.

RESOLVED That Cemetery fees be increased by 5% from 1 April 2013.

RESOLVED That the initial proposed budget be accepted for the main areas of Council expenditure, with the changes outlined above.

161. To consider any Special Projects

161.1. Tarmacing of Cemetery Paths

This will complete the drainage project started in 2012 at a quoted cost of £2000

RESOLVED That the Council budget £2000 for tarmacing of the new path in the Cemetery

161.2. Tree work on Low Bentham Playing Field

It is 5 years since these trees were checked by a tree surgeon and topped. Despite asking for quotes by this meeting nothing has been received. It was agreed that this work was essential and a budget figure of £700, equivalent to the previous costs, was included

RESOLVED That the Council budget £700 for the tree work on Low Bentham Playing Field

161.3. Others, if any

There was a short discussion about treating the Ballroom floor, but it was agreed that it's state was better than the Lower Hall which will be done shortly and that this should be reconsidered next year.

RESOLVED That sanding and resealing the Ballroom floor be reconsidered in 2014/15

162. To consider and decide upon Grant Applications

Two requests had been received late and there was considerable discussion about how to deal with them. It was agreed that the closing date in January caused problems with the Christmas post and with organisations which have a December years end. Council agreed that the closing date should be moved to 1 December in 2013 with forms going out at the end of October. It also agreed that in future late applications will not be considered.

RESOLVED: that Precept Grant application forms for 2014/15 be sent out in October, with a 1 December closing date to remove the clash with Christmas.

RESOLVED: that in future late applications will not be considered

It was proposed that the grant to the Community Bonfire be £250 to cover insurance costs, and be paid in October if the event goes ahead. A Cllr pointed out that such a date was after all payments would have been made, and that the grant, if made, should be paid earlier when the cover would need to be obtained. An amendment was proposed that the grant should be £500, paid along with the other grants. The ensuing vote was 3:4 meaning that the amendment was carried

RESOLVED: that a grant of £500 be awarded to the Community Bonfire when it is confirmed that the event is going ahead.

It was proposed that a grant of £100 be made to High Bentham WI but this was not seconded. Other Cllrs felt that the organisation had quite healthy reserves and that there were more deserving causes to be considered. Another proposal that no grant be made this year was agreed

RESOLVED: that no grant be made to High Bentham WI.

The Community Link Café requested a grant to help with refurbishment of the Victoria Institute kitchen. The Council noted that the Victoria Institute had also requested funds for the same project and felt that it should support the latter.

RESOLVED: that no grant be made to the Community Link Café

A request from the Friends of Bentham Library was considered to cover insurance. Council agreed that keeping the Library open as a service to the residents of Bentham was a must and that as such it should support the Friends and meet their request for £300 in full

RESOLVED: that a grant of £300 be awarded to the Friends of Bentham Library

Cllr Adams left the room Before leaving the room Cllr Adams confirmed that the running costs for the Goodenber Play Area amount, in terms of insurance and Rospa inspection fees, had increased following the recent modification and updating of the area and replacement of equipment particularly as the insurers were now demanding asset insurance. It was proposed that the Council provide a grant be £750, to help cover the insurance costs. This was agreed unanimously

RESOLVED: that a grant of £750 be awarded to the Goodenber Play Area.

A request for funding of swimming lessons from High Bentham Primary School caused considerable discussion. As swimming is part of the national curriculum it was felt that funds for this should be provided either by NYCC or from the school budget, alternatively parents should be asked to contribute.

RESOLVED: that no grant be made to the High Bentham Primary School

Cllr Adams left the room. It was proposed and agreed that the grant to LASRUG stay at £150 in recognition of the sterling work done by the organisation to at least maintain, and try to improve, Bentham's train service.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £150 be awarded to LASRUG.

A grant of £500, to help with the proposed kitchen improvements was proposed and agreed.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £500 be awarded to the Victoria Institute

Cllr Armstrong left the room. Before leaving the room Cllr Armstrong answered questions about the 10K race and informed the Council that the club had also been asked to look at another run on Bentham Show Day in September. The Council agreed that this event brings people into the town and that perhaps the organisers should talk to We Are Bentham about how they could work together for the benefit of the town. It was agreed that the Council would contribute towards the required signage to a value of £100. It was noted that the Council could purchase the

required signs and donate them to Bentham Beagles and reclaim the VAT, and that this option should be offered to the club as it could increase the value of their grant by 20%.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £100 be awarded to Bentham Beagles.

A request for assistance in running the Give & Take Event from BEST was discussed, but Council felt that this should not be supported

RESOLVED: that no grant be made to BEST

Cllrs Burton & Procter left the room. Prior to leaving the room Cllr Burton told the Council that the organisation had made 21 applications for funding in 2012 and been successful only once. The tuck shop and subs paid by the youngsters and room hire fees cover the utility costs. Whilst the search for money for salaries, which currently cost approx £1000/month, was continuing the organisation was looking for assistance in paying for its insurances. A grant of £750 was proposed and agreed

RESOLVED: that a grant of £750 be awarded to Bentham Youth Café

Bentham Common Land Charity asked for £150 towards their £265 PL insurance which costs more than their income. It was agreed that this should be supported as closing the charity would not be straight forward and the land would revert to the Town Council if this was to happen.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £150 be awarded to Bentham Common Land Charity

Cllr Armstrong left the room. It was agreed that a grant of £1000 be made to Bentham Playing Fields Association

RESOLVED: that a grant of £1000 be awarded to Bentham Playing Fields Association

The Friends of Bentham Station application outlined 3 future projects. The Council agreed that the third, a computer controlled digital information screen, would be of most benefit to Bentham residents at a probable cost of £150. It was noted that the Council could purchase the required hardware and donate it to FOBS and reclaim the VAT, and that this option should be offered to the organisation as it could increase the value of their grant by 20%.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £150 be awarded to the Friends of Bentham Station

The final application considered was from the fledgling Allotments Association asking for assistance with Public Liability insurance for the proposed site. The Council agreed that, as project facilitator, it should pay the insurance for the first year to ensure the project gets up and running.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £60 be awarded to the Allotment Association

Fifteen applications, excluding the Tourist Information which was decided by other spending, were received for 2013/14, and the following grants were approved:

Playing Fields Association	1000
Goodenber Road Play Area	750
Bentham Youth Cafe	750
Victoria Institute	500
Community Bonfire	500
Friends of Bentham Library	300
Friends of Bentham Station	150
Bentham Common Land Charity	150
LASRUG	150
Bentham Beagles	100
Allotment Association	60
High Bentham WI	0
Community Link Cafe	0
BEST	0
High Bentham Primary School	0
Tourist Information	1400
	5810

As before grants of £500 or more will be paid in 2 instalments and the Tourist Information grant will be paid in full in April, as it is only open for the summer months. It was agreed that organisations receiving precept grants should be present at the Annual Parish Meeting to give a report, and that failure to attend may affect the way that the Council considers further applications

RESOLVED: that grants of £4410 be awarded to local groups and associations excluding Tourist Information

163. To agree the Precept for 2013/14

The agreed projected expenditure, including precept grants led to a figure of £100,000 being required, if the Tourist Information grant was reduced to £1400. Although the grant funding from Craven for the TIP is not agreed for 2013/14 it does have sufficient reserves to cover the potential shortfall and the Council agreed that it was important

to keep the precept to £100,000, as for the last four years in recognition of the current economic climate. It agreed that, in view of the uncertainty about the changes to the Council Tax Base, the future availability of grants to cover the shortfall and the possibility that parish precept increases will be capped in future years, it should not take the grant from Craven into account when setting the precept. This will mean that, although the precept has not increased, the change in Council Tax Base will see payments rise by 6% across the parish. The Council agreed that it should apply for the grant if and when it becomes available, and that this extra funding should be considered once it is confirmed.

RESOLVED: that a precept of £100,000 be set

RESOLVED: that the Council should apply for the Craven ‘top-up’ grant if and when it becomes available and that use of this should be debated at that time.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.45pm