

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Precept Meeting held on Monday 13 January 2014, at 7.00 pm in the Town Hall

Present Cllrs Adams, Burton, Handford, Hey, Hurlley, Marshall (Chairman), Stannard & Vandy
Also, the Clerk Mrs Burton and three parishioners

169. To Receive Apologies from members unable to attend
Cllr Armstrong

170. Declarations of Interest

All interests were declared in item 174, grant applications. Cllrs Burton, Adams, Hey & Stannard declared interests under appendix B as Council Representatives with various of the organisations applying. Cllr Adams also declared an interest as a friend of the Chairman of Friends of Bentham Station

171. To Receive Comment & Concerns - none

172. To consider the Projected Assessment for 2014/15, based on accounts for 2013/14 to end of December, and make any necessary changes

The clerk circulated copies of the projected assessment for the year 2014/15. She explained that the predictions for the current year were based on actual income / expenditure to the end of December 2013, 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.

Following the consolidation of all the remaining Council accounts into a single current account following the closure of the Bentham HSBC and the Council's move to Unity Trust, the Tourist Information had been included in the budget as any other part of the Council and would be looked upon as a cost centre like the cemetery or town hall etc in future rather than being funded by a precept grant. As a result many of the admin functions had been moved from the TIP budget and recorded as part of Council spending to make apportioning of costs more simple e.g. a single stationery & postage budget, one training budget etc.

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, Tree work in Low Bentham, Repairs to Wenning Avenue street light). It was noted that income was over expectation due to the receipt of the Council Tax Support Grant (£7400) which had not been budgeted for as at the time the precept was set its value and its future had been unclear and the potential for capping of the precept in the coming year very real.

The proposed draft budget, which was based closely on spending over the last two years, was accepted with a few amendments.

A 2% increase in salaries was added to the budget, but no provision was made for any increase in the clerk's hours. It was agreed that the budget for the website should not be reduced but maintained at £500. The clerk explained that she had increased the Town Hall maintenance budget from £3000 to £4000 to potentially cover one of the special projects and this change could be discussed in the next item. The Council also agreed that no provision should be made for replacements following the soon to be completed survey of its street lights as these, if any, could be funded from reserves.

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

173. To consider any Special Projects

173.1. Sanding & resealing Ballroom Floor

At the 2013 Precept meeting the Council had postponed a decision on work on the ballroom floor due to the cost and the fact that it was not as badly in need of attention as the Lower Hall had been. The intervening 12 months had had quite an effect on the surface which was now very much in need of maintenance. The clerk had received a quote of just over £3500 from the company which had done the Lower Hall. This could be done from the increased Town Hall maintenance budget, still leaving sufficient funds for emergency repairs, if the decorating schedule was delayed for 12 months and the repainting of the Wenningdale Room and backstairs postponed.

RESOLVED That the Ballroom floor be sanded and resealed as the major maintenance project for the Town Hall in 2014/15 at a cost of approx £3500.

173.2. Replacement of Town Hall tables

The Marketing Committee had asked for the Council to consider replacing some of the smaller rectangular tables in the Ballroom that have been damaged and also to look at replacing the round tables which are in regular need of repair and have seen better days. The clerk had looked at Go-Pak tables in order to replace like with like for the small ones and to give a better quality round table, but also a good discount for the purchase of multiple items – this gave a predicted spend of £2600 including VAT. There was some

discussion about the size and construction of the round tables as Go-Pak have metal edges which may damage the floor and 5ft round tables will not fit in the lift. It was noted that the under spend in the Town Hall on rates and utilities for the current year could cover this cost.

RESOLVED That the Marketing Committee agree a suitable source of replacement tables and bring a proposal to the February Council meeting for agreement and purchase from the current years Town Hall budget

173.3. Replacement of Stage curtains

The Buildings Maintenance Committee had asked for the Council to consider replacing the Stage curtains which are over 20 years old and worn thin. The clerk had obtained a quote from a theatrical supplies company in Lancaster of £2750 for the stage and a further £1850 for the Ballroom windows to match, a total of £4600 which was considerably lower than expected. Members of the Marketing Committee agreed that such provision would be a benefit if the Council could afford to budget for this project.

RESOLVED That the Council budget £4600 to replace the stage and ballroom curtains in 2014/15

173.4. Work to porch & door on Community Youth building

Only a single quote was available for consideration despite the clerk's attempts to obtain more. Replacing the current door which is poorly fitting would cost £1675 due to its size and the fact that, being a listed building, it would have to be replaced with an identical hardwood door. The quote to repair the cracked panels and suitable draft excluders and brushes to make the door fit better was £250 which was felt to be more realistic. Tanking and replastering the porch area should cost £500. It was agreed that this should be funded from the Community Youth Building refurbishment reserves held in the Council account following the completion of the refurbishment project.

RESOLVED That the door and porch of the Community Youth Building be repaired out of the reserves held for its maintenance

173.5. Others, if any

There was considerable discussion about the provision of coat hangers for events in the Town Hall, the safety of moveable options, where hooks might be hung for permanent ones and any were actually needed. To avoid getting bogged down in the detail it was agreed to add a sum of £200 to the budget and discuss the actual provision at a Council meeting in the new financial year. A similar decision was taken regarding the possible provision of CCTV to the inside of the Town Hall for the protection of lone working staff in the offices. A budget of £500 was agreed with a decision being delayed until the new financial year

RESOLVED That the Council add £700 to the budget for the possible provision of coat hangers and CCTV to the Town Hall

174. To consider and decide upon Grant Applications

It was proposed that the grant to the Community Bonfire be £500 to cover insurance costs. It was also noted that the proceeds of the next calendar will be given to the Community Bonfire.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £500 be awarded to the Community Bonfire

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 Community Link Café requested a grant to help buy a grill for the provision of toasted sandwiches and bacon butties. The Council agreed to provide a grant of £80 or, if preferred, to buy the grill and donate it to the CL Café and reclaim the VAT, allowing the organisation to spend £80 ex VAT.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £80 be made to the Community Link Café

Cllr Burton left the room. Prior to leaving the room Cllr Burton told the Council that funding continues to be tight and that the Youth Café was looking to appoint an assistant to help keep the building open longer which can be a problem due to the lack of volunteers, and had various grant applications in to cover this cost. Another problem was with damp in the building which the organisation was attempting to contain by keeping the building heated for longer but this was becoming cost prohibitive. The organisation was looking for assistance in paying for its insurances and other running costs. A grant of £750 was proposed and agreed

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

CARNival asked for assistance in funding publicity and signage for the coming event which will be linked the launch of the Bentham Bike Loop off the Way of the Roses. A grant of £250 was proposed and agreed with the offer again of buying and donating as with CL Café

RESOLVED: that a grant of £250 be awarded to Bentham CARNival

It was noted that no specific request to fund a project or purchase had been made by High Bentham WI. It was proposed and agreed that no grant be made

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

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 for at least 3 years. A proposal was made that the Council cover the full insurance costs of £1200. An

amendment was made that £1200 was too high and £1000 would be a more appropriate figure for a single organisation to receive. In the ensuing vote the amendment was accepted by 4 votes to 3.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £1000 be awarded to the Goodenber Play Area.

Cllr Adams left the room. The Friends of Bentham Station application outlined 2 future projects, each costing £250. It was proposed that the Council provide £250 to help fund the CCTV system. An amendment was made that the Council should provide £500 to fund the CCTV and Childrens Art Area. The original proposal was carried 4:2.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £250 be awarded to the Friends of Bentham Station

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 try to improve Bentham's train service.

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

Cllr Stannard left the room. A grant of £750 for replacement tables was proposed and agreed with the offer again of buying and donating as with CL Café. The clerk agreed to discuss the table purchase with the Victoria Institute as greater discounts could be available if VI & Town Hall tables are purchased together.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £750 be awarded to the Victoria Institute

Later Applications – *Cllr Hey left the room.*

Letters had been received from Bentham Common Lands Charity and Friends of Bentham Library after the closing date for grant applications

RESOLVED: that late applications are not considered

Twelve applications were received for 2014/15, and the following grants were approved:

Playing Fields Association	1000
Goodenber Road Play Area	1000
Bentham Youth Cafe	750
Victoria Institute	750
Community Bonfire	500
CARNIVAL	250
Friends of Bentham Station	250
LASRUG	150
Community Link Cafe	80
High Bentham WI	0
Friends of Bentham Library	0
Bentham Common Land Charity	0
	4730

The total value of grants awarded for 2014/15 is some £300 higher than the previous year As before, grants of £500 or more will be paid in 2 instalments. 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 £4730 be awarded to local groups and associations

175. To agree the Precept for 2014/15

The inclusion of the proposed spending for special projects and the grant awards led to a budgeted expenditure of £121800, with a budgeted income of £14400 excluding the precept. The Council agreed that it was important to keep the precept to £100,000, as for the last five years in recognition of the current economic climate. It was noted that the Council Tax Support Grant of £7400 for 2013/14 had not been allocated during the year and that this could be used to completely offset the extra spending and still leave a £1000 extra contingency for possible street lighting repairs. It agreed that, in view of the uncertainty about future availability of the Support Grant even for the coming year with Craven looking to withhold some if not all of the funding provided by Government that the precept should be set to cover the budgeted requirements. 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 Council Tax Support Grant if and when it becomes available and that its use should be debated at that time.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.30pm

**AGREED BUDGET 2014/15,
BASED ON ACTUAL SPENDING TO DECEMBER 2013 VS 2013/14 BUDGET**

	Actual 2012/13	Budget 2013/14	Actual Todate (Dec13)	Predicted Year End	Deviation from Budget	Budget 2014/15
Open Spaces					(-underspend)	
Income	267.50	50		50.00		50
Leader	1016.69	0	700.00	700.00		0
Walkabout	2475.00					
Sundries	338.25	200	173.30	231.07	31	200
Grass Cutting	2485.28	1800	2249.07	2249.07	449	2000
Low Bentham School Field	360.00	500	360.00	480.00	-20	500
Parish Caretaker	2244.75	3000	2082.20	2776.27	-224	3000
Craven Walkabout	2150.00	0			0	0
Low Bentham PF Trees		700	350.00	350.00	-350	0
VAS installation			1260.00	1260.00		
						from reserves (Council reserves)
	7578.28	6200	6474.57	7346.40	446	5700
Admin						
Interest	72.59	200	130.63	174.17	-26	200
Audit	840.00	700	695.00	695.00	-5	700
Clerk / PAYE	12274.94	13500	9458.24	12610.99	-889	13770
Telephone	566.42	600	442.01	589.35	-11	600
Broadband						240
Stationery/Photocopying	526.86	450	194.36	259.15	-191	350
Postage	170.45	300	272.30	363.07	63	350
Sundries	117.14	100	77.58	103.44	3	100
Chairmans Allowance	10.46	100	19.90	26.53	-73	100
Subscriptions	792.00	700	182.00	582.00	-118	700
Newsletter		100	0.00	0.00	-100	100
Web	790.86	500	109.41	145.88	-354	500
Office Equipment	49.17	200	30.00	130.00	-70	200
Training / Conferences	188.10	300	73.50	98.00	-202	200
Valuation for insurance			100.00	100.00	100	0
Contested Election costs 2014						1835
	16326.40	17550	11654.30	15703.40	-1821	19745
						previously paid by TIP
Street Lighting						
EOn	663.72	800	593.64	791.52	-8	800
Maintenance	1215.41	1000	866.03	866.03	-134	1000
	1879.13	1800	1459.67	1657.55	-142	1800
Cemetery						
Fees	2487.00	2300	3259.50	4346.00	2046	3000
Plaques	26.00	50	0.00	0.00	-50	50
Grass	800.00	700	875.00	875.00	175	800
Water rates		150	0.00	0.00	-150	150
Water Leak	232.03					
	1058.03	900	875.00	875.00	-2071	1000
Town Hall	9246.67	9000	6273.76	8365.01	-635	9000
(see sheet 2)	26936.21	29455	16076.42	23398.32	-6057	30655
Borrowings	47854.90	47855	23927.45	47854.90	0	47855
Grants	3400.00	4410	4350.00	4350.00	-60	4730

**AGREED BUDGET 2014/15,
BASED ON ACTUAL SPENDING TO DECEMBER 2013 VS 2013/14 BUDGET**

	Actual 2012/13	Budget 2013/14	Actual Todate (Dec13)	Predicted Year End	Deviation from Budget	Budget 2014/15	
TIP (see sheet 3)	1200.00	1400	1400.00	1400.00	0	2140	
						3980	
Carnival / Bonfire			410.92	410.92	411		from reserves (Jubilee budget)
Contingency		0		0.00		1028	(from 2013/14 Grant in reserves already)
Xmas Lights	1209.43	1408.79	2446.02	2446.02	2446		from reserves (2012/13 Calendar funds)
Jubilee		445.15					
Projects	5800.00	2000	2200.00	2200.00	200	5300	
Precept	50000.00	100000	100000.00	100000.00	0	100000	
Grant			7403.44	7403.44	7403		to reserves
					-10765		excludes spending from reserves if included
Budgeted Income	111550	****	Predicted Income	121038.63		114390	-6648
Budgeted Expenditure		111570	Predicted Expenditure	107642.52		121793	
		****	Predicted income includes Grant of £7403.44				
			Predicted expenditure includes sums from Reserves			-7403	2013/14 Grant from Reserves balances budget

AGREED TOWN HALL BUDGET 2014/15

Income / Expenditure to date against Budget

	Actual 2012/13	Budget 2013/14	Actual to date	(to Dec13)	Year End Prediction	Deviation from Budget	+/- budget	Budget 2014/15
Town Hall								
Bookings	9246.67	9000	6274		8365	-634.99		9000
Gas	2916.28	3000	1069.18		1426	-1574.43		3000
Electric	1650.71	1875	973.53		1298	-576.96		1875
Water Rates	1101.53	1000	672.52		897	-103.31		1000
General Rates	981.86	2995	907.05		1008	-1986.95		2995
Insurance	3151.99	3500	2493.11		3324	-175.85		3500
Caretaker's salary	5795.76	6250	4492.80		5990	-259.60		6400
Clock Winding	127.50	130	127.50		128	-2.50		130
Window cleaning	270.00	380	270.00		360	-20.00		380
Sundries	668.87	500	139.03		185	-314.63		250
Trade Waste	490.66	400	521.16		521	121.16		600
Cleaners	3840.00	4200	2688.00		4032	-168.00		4200
Cleaning / Sanitary Supplies		200	220.69		294	94.25		300
Maintenance	3820.99	3000	784.16		2796	-204.45		4000
			0.00					
			784.16					
Decorating								
Maintenance								
TH Publicity	0.00	400	0.00		0	-400.00		400
PRS	373.35	0			0	0.00		0
FRA	116.66	0			0	0.00		0
Servicing								
Lift Service / Phone	720.70	750	557.69		744	-6.41		750
PAT / Fire	584.60	500	108.00		144	-356.00		500
Boiler	199.50	250	52.00		252	2.00		250
Kitchen appliances	125.25	125	0.00		0	-125.00		125
	26936.21	29455	16076.42		23398	-6057		30655
Predicted budget deviation 2013/14			-6056.68					

Sundries To date

First Aid kits	4.99
Laminating/Photocopying	
Clock	14.99
Mugs	28.04
Dust pan	6.25
xmas trees	56.65
H&S	13.74
Signs	14.37
	139.03

All income and expenditure is listed to end December 2013

AGREED TOURIST INFORMATION BUDGET 2014/15

TIP	Actual 2011/12	Budget 2013/14	Actual Todate (Dec13)	Predicted Year End	Deviation from Budget	Budget 2014/15
INCOME						
Craven Grant	800.00	0			0.00	
Council Grant	1200.00	1400	1400.00	1400	0.00	
Interest	0.83	5	0.67	1	-4.33	
Accommodation List Adverts Sales	854.12	725	208.32	278	-447.24	725
Maps	117.18	120	78.30	78	-41.70	100
Dog Bags	106.80	150	113.08	113	-36.92	150
Books	29.00	50	25.00	25	-25.00	40
Sundries	3.50	10	4.45	4	-5.55	10
Coffee Morning / Xmas Fair	170.88	200	158.55	159	-41.45	200
EOS Dinner (Cllrs)	15.00	35	15.00	15	-20.00	35
Donations	28.88	30	9.81	10	-20.19	30
FOB Leaflet			366.64	367	366.64	850
	3326.19	2725	2379.82	2449.26	-275.74	2140
EXPENDITURE						
Telephone	218.59	200	186.57	245	44.84	250
Broadband	239.88	240	179.91	240	-0.12	
Stationery / Postage Stock	31.84	50	76.28	76	26.28	
Maps	54.86	50	0.00	0	-50.00	25
Dog Bags	0.00	100	80.00	80	-20.00	80
Books / Mags	9.00	25	0.00	0	-25.00	15
Accommodation List	380.00	425	396.00	396	-29.00	425
Staffing	1882.50	1850	1616.25	1838	-12.50	1850
Training	0.00	60	0.00	0	-60.00	
Sundries	98.45	50	96.43	96	46.43	60
Rolling display	30.00	75	0.00	0	-75.00	75
EOS Dinner	223.46	200	186.33	186	-13.67	200
FOB leaflet						1000
	3168.58	3325	2817.77	3157.26	-167.74	3980

TIP Reserves, now in Council account - £1700