

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Precept Meeting held on Monday 12 January 2015, at 7.00 pm in the Town Hall

Present Cllrs Adams, Bridgeman, Cowling, Hey, Marshall, Stannard (Chairman), Swales, Townson & Vendy
Also, the Clerk Mrs Burton and 5 parishioners

176. To Receive Apologies from members unable to attend
Cllr Pritchard

177. Declarations of Interest

All interests were declared in item 181, grant applications. Cllrs Adams, Bridgeman, Townson & Vendy declared interests under appendix B as Council Representatives with various of the organisations applying. Cllr Townson also declared an interest as General Secretary of LASRUG.

178. To Receive Comment & Concerns

It was agreed that members should speak up due to the exercise class going on in the Ballroom

179. To consider the Projected Assessment for 2015/16, based on accounts for 2014/15 to end of December, and make any necessary changes

The clerk circulated copies of the projected assessment for the year 2015/16. She explained that the predictions for the current year were based on actual income / expenditure to the end of December 2014, 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.

The Council as a whole was under budget this year to date, mainly due to rate relief being confirmed part way through the year and spending on fuel bills being lower than predicted due to the mild winter.

The clerk confirmed that Craven were again passing on the Council Tax grant but that it would be reduced by some 26% in the coming year, however any increase in the precept would forfeit that grant. This meant that the Council needed to consider its spending carefully as a £2000 increase in budget would mean a £6500 increase in precept with the loss of the grant. She also pointed out that 2016/17 would see a possible relaxation in budget controls as the loan repayments would be completed during that year potentially freeing some money to be spent elsewhere. 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 the clerk's salary was added to the budget, and provision was made for extra hours to be worked should this be deemed necessary. Budget adjustments were also made to allow payment of other wages at the living wage. It was agreed to maintain the Town Hall maintenance budget at £4000 and to also have a similar figure for special projects, subject to discussion in the next items.

RESOLVED That the initial proposed budget be accepted for the main areas of Council expenditure, subject to discussion of grants and special projects

180. To consider any Special Projects

180.1. Inclusion of Low Bentham School Playing Field grass cutting

A cost of £910 for the coming year was accepted to add the school playing field to the grass cutting agenda, assuming the purchase is completed during the year. A further £1600 was budgeted towards the fencing of the area with any extra being taken from reserves.

RESOLVED That the cost of £910 to cut the Low Bentham School Playing Field be included in the budget, along with £1600 towards the fencing costs

180.2. Inclusion of 'Urban Grass Cutting' which NYCC will no longer perform

The Open Spaces Committee had recommended that the Council should takeover the grass cutting that NYCC will cease doing in the coming year, at a cost of £1300

RESOLVED That the Council budget £1300 to takeover NYCC's 'urban' grass cutting from April 2015

RESOLVED That Low Bentham School Field and Urban grass cutting be added to the next grass tender document due for consideration in the autumn

180.3. Heritage Trail maintenance

An outline of work – maintenance of information boards and provision of extra marker posts - had been provided by the Footpaths Group, who have agreed to walk the Heritage twice a year and keep the vegetation cut back. It was mentioned that the Town Team still have some funds left and agreed that enquiries should be made as to whether this can be used to complete the refurbishment of the Trail. The Council agreed to fund some works out of the Parish Caretaker budget rather than to set a specific figure

RESOLVED That the Council fund some maintenance of the Heritage Trail from the Parish caretaker budget

RESOLVED That the Town Team be asked to contribute if funds are still available

- 180.4. Oil Change in Town Hall lift
 180.5. Replacement of Town Hall noticeboard
 180.6. Creation of document store in Wenningdale Room
 180.7. Others, if any

It was noted that part of the Town Hall maintenance fund had been earmarked for redecoration of the Wenningdale Room and stairs. The clerk provided quotes for the projects listed in 180.4 – 180.6 but the Council was also informed that the removal of the Christmas Trees the previous weekend had shown that the landing windows needed replacing and no quote was yet available. It was agreed that the Town Hall maintenance and Special Projects budgets should be maintained at £4000 each giving the flexibility to the Buildings Committee to prioritise the most important within the funds available, acknowledging that some projects may need to wait until 2016/17.

RESOLVED That the Council budget £4000 for Town Hall Maintenance and £4000 for Special Projects and allow the Buildings Committee to prioritise the tasks once all the estimates are available with the least important being left for 2016/17

181. To consider and decide upon Grant Applications

There had been 14 applications for Precept Grants. Those Cllrs with an interest left the room when their organisation was discussed. Each application was discussed according to its merits, income / expenditure versus reserves, fund raising efforts and the benefit to Bentham residents.

The initial proposals were summarised after all applications had been considered and then over £500 of adjustments made so the proposed grant spending fitted the budget. Considerable discussion was held about the applications from Settle Swimming Club and Burton in Lonsdale Bowling Club with numerous proposals being considered before a decision was made. It was agreed that organisations receiving grants could ask the Council to buy and donate goods if preferred as the Council can reclaim VAT on donations to other organisations

RESOLVED: that a grant of £150 be awarded to Age Concern
RESOLVED: that a grant of £250 be awarded to the Community Bonfire
RESOLVED: that a grant of £750 be awarded to Bentham Youth Café
RESOLVED: that a grant of £1000 be awarded to Bentham Playing Fields Association
RESOLVED: that a grant of £50 be awarded to the Cancer Support Group
RESOLVED: that a grant of £250 be awarded to Bentham CARNIVAL
RESOLVED: that a grant of £85 be made to the Community Link Café
RESOLVED: that a grant of £1000 be awarded to the Goodenber Play Area.
RESOLVED: that a grant of £200 be awarded to LASRUG.
RESOLVED: that a grant of £400 be awarded to Bentham Christmas Lights.
RESOLVED: that a grant of £100 be awarded to Little Stars nursery group.
RESOLVED: that a grant of £750 be awarded to the Victoria Institute
RESOLVED: that a grant of £100 be awarded to Settle Swimming Pool
RESOLVED: that no grant be awarded to Burton in Lonsdale Bowling Club.

Fourteen applications were received for 2015/16, and the following grants were approved:

Playing Fields Association	1000
Goodenber Road Play Area	1000
Bentham Youth Cafe	750
Victoria Institute	750
Christmas Lights	400
Community Bonfire	250
CARNIVAL	250
LASRUG	200
Age Concern	150
Little Stars	100
Settle Swimming Pool	100
Community Link Cafe	85
Cancer Support	50
Burton Bowling Club	0

5085

The total value of grants awarded for 2015/16 is some £355 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 £5085 be awarded to local groups and associations

182. To agree the Precept for 2015/16

The inclusion of the proposed spending for special projects and the grant awards led to a budgeted expenditure of £120890 (approx £1000 lower than the previous year), with a budgeted income of £12040 if the precept was kept the same and the reduced Council Tax Support Grant of approx £4420 received. The Council agreed that it should apply for the grant.

RESOLVED: that the Band D precept cost of £85.58 be maintained for another year, raising a precept of £101730

RESOLVED: that the Council apply for the Council Tax Support Grant of approximately £4420 (to be confirmed by Craven District Council)

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.50pm