

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 4 June 2007, at 7.00 pm in the Town Hall

Present Cllrs Adams, Barnes, Faichney, Heigh, Marshall, Rushton, Stannard & Wills, DCllr Camacho & CCllr Ireton.
Also, the Clerk Mrs Burton and 1 parishioner.

The Council met at 7.00pm to discuss their response to the NYCC bid for unitary status. The clerk summarised the information received from both NYCC and Craven.

NYCC claim that a Unitary will be more efficient, with more joined up thinking - for example it will be responsible for both waste collection and disposal, there will be savings on managerial salaries as departments are centralised (e.g. only 1 planning department instead of 9 as with the current two tier system, only 1 CEO instead of 8). The formation of area committees and community forums will ensure that local voices will be heard. Parishes will be able to take on more if they wish and be paid to do so as long as it is not at the expense of other taxpayers. By providing a single point of access problems should be easier to solve and there should be clear and visible local contacts for services. The Council will have 144 elected representatives which at 1 per 4000 electors is below the national average. Efficiencies should run to £14m / year.

The District Council argues that the current joint working partnership is good and will improve, negating the need for a single tier as joined up thinking should happen between the organisations involved. They believe that a single authority will be too large to offer equitable and responsive local services to cater for distinct community needs, and will be too remote. They question the finances of the new authority, both in terms of the costs and savings identified. They also suggest that many parishes do not want an enhanced role and that a recent Mori poll showed little public support for the new authority.

In the discussion that followed the Council agreed that their dealings with Craven were at rock bottom and that dealing with a single authority could not be any worse. In terms of response from either NYCC or Craven, the only department which appeared to listen to local concerns and respond was NYCC Highways. In general Bentham seems to be a 'forgotten outpost' of both Craven and NYCC and as such the opportunity to have more say in local services at the parish level would be welcomed. However there was concern that nothing concrete in terms of the financial implications had been expressed as these would need to be sensibly funded such that they did not cost local residents more either. The general feeling was that the Districts were attempting to do too little too late, and should have had a counter proposal available when the unitary bid was submitted rather than spending taxpayers money on MORI polls and correspondence at this late stage.

It was agreed that as an outpost, Bentham could not fare any worse from dealing with a single authority and could very well gain from having more say in how money was spent locally on essential repairs and maintenance

RESOLVED: That the Bentham submission give tentative approval of the Unitary bid, with the proviso that the Council needed to understand the full cost implications of taking on local services before making a final decision.

1. Apologies Cllrs Barrington, Burton & Hurtley
2. Declarations of Interest

Cllrs Marshall, Adams & Wills declared an interest in planning item 6.1.3, planning permission 08/2007/7481, Cllr Marshall also declared an interest in planning item 6.1.2, planning request 08/2007/7465. These were noted in the book.

3. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 7 May 2007 were proposed by Cllr Marshall, seconded by Cllr Adams and agreed.

4. Police Report – none present
5. CCllr & DCllrs Reports

DCllr Barrington had sent a report in her absence. She has been appointed to both the Policy and Audit committees of Craven District Council. DCllr Barrington also apologised for taking part in a meeting with Craven officers regarding the Cleveland Square lease which she now realised, as a Town Councillor, she should not have done. CCllr Ireton had nothing to report but responded to the Council's questions regarding the new school. The application has not been before the planning committee yet, and the highways concerns will be considered by NYCC Highways before the application is decided upon.

6. Planning

6.1. Applications

- 6.1.1. 08/2007/7441 New dwelling (resubmission 08/2007/7157) on land adjacent to 4 Goodenber Road, High Bentham
A letter of objection from local residents was read. The Council agreed that this application, in light of other developments in the area and the size and position of the plot did seem excessive and would lead to over crowding. It was also felt that the proposal would have an over bearing presence on the cottages at Tweed Street Court which are on lower ground than the proposed site. Access from Goodenber Road could also be a problem as the entrance is tight and surrounded by other dwellings. The Council decided to ask for a site visit if the planners were likely to pass the site and to ask the District Cllrs to request that the application go before the planning committee
RESOLVED: That this application be recommended for rejection on the grounds of access, cramming and overbearing presence, and that a site visit be requested if the planners are likely to pass it.
- 6.1.2. 08/2007/7465 Single storey rear extension at 29b Main Street, High Bentham.
Cllr Marshall declared an interest and took no part in the discussion.
RESOLVED: That this application be recommended for approval
- 6.1.3. 08/2007/7481 Proposed agricultural implements building at Sandy Hill, Low Bentham Road, Bentham.
Cllrs Wills, Adams & Marshall declared an interest and took no part in the discussion. There was some discussion as to the need for this building as there are already 4 others but as a point of information Cllr Wills informed the meeting that the other buildings were used for the applicant's business whilst the new building was for storing agricultural items. This being the case the Council could see no objections.
RESOLVED: That this application be recommended for approval
- 6.1.4. 08/2007/7485 Conversion of existing farm buildings to form single dwelling, 3 holiday cottages & annex to existing farm cottage. Re-routing of existing farm track at Mill Dam Farm, Mewith Head Lane, Mewith.
RESOLVED: That this application be recommended for approval

6.2. Decisions

- 6.2.1. 08/2007/7198 Retention of externally mounted meter boxes on front elevation of dwellings (variation of condition 7 of planning approval 08/2005/5652) at Wesley Way, Bentham – GRANTED
- 6.2.2. 08/2007/7228 Proposed double garage and workshop at Burton Meadow Barn, Burton Road, Low Bentham – GRANTED
- 6.2.3. 08/2007/7229 Proposed smoking shelter to rear of existing licensed premises at Black Bull, Main Street, Bentham – GRANTED
- 6.2.4. 08/2007/7257 Proposed rear conservatory at 14 Greenfoot Lane, Low Bentham – GRANTED
- 6.2.5. 08/2007/7286 Proposed garage conversion to kitchen/living area at 16 Millers Ford, Low Bentham – GRANTED
- 6.2.6. 08/2007/7303 Conversion of barn to residential use (Holiday let) at Gruskham, Mewith – GRANTED
- 6.2.7. 08/2007/7306(listed) Conversion of barn to residential use (Holiday let) at Gruskham, Mewith – GRANTED

6.3. Correspondence

- 6.3.1. 08/2007/7296 Detached 2 storey dwelling at DellView, Low Bentham Road - WITHDRAWN.
- 6.3.2. 08/2007/7374 Note from James Ellis regarding further procedure – received
RESOLVED: That the District Cllrs be asked to put this application before the planning committee if the officer is likely to pass it

7. Highway Matters

7.1. Response from NYCC to May queries.

Work on Dumb Toms Lane is already timetabled and the surface at Mewith Lane will be considered and then added to the list for repair at the appropriate time. The Council noted that the pothole at Overaigill had been repaired and damaged again

RESOLVED: That NYCC be asked to repair this again as soon as possible

7.2. Ken Martin / Barclays Bank

Following the removal of coin stones from the building again NYCC had agreed to meet with Councillors to discuss possible solutions. It was agreed to meet as soon as possible, and to involve Kiddes and Barclays in the discussion if they were available

RESOLVED: That NYCC and members of the Council meet as soon as possible to discuss possible solutions to the problem of vehicle strikes, and that Barclays and Kiddes be invited to the meeting.

7.3. Other Highway matters

The yellow lines on Greenfoot Lane and it's junction with Burton Road are very warn and a request was made to have them renewed.

RESOLVED: That NYCC be asked to renew the yellow lines on Greenfoot Lane and at it's junction with Burton Road

The hedge on Craven DC land below Bentham Lodge is encroaching onto the road and needs cutting. This is also true of the hedge on the other side of the road, owned by Network Rail. The Council agreed to ask for the hedge to be trimmed, and if not done by the end of June to ask their own contractors to do the job.

RESOLVED: That Craven be asked to cut the hedge back as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That Network Rail be asked to cut their hedge by the end of June.

8. Cleveland Square lease

Both DCllr Camacho and CCllr Ireton left the meeting at this point, following a brief discussion about both Cleveland Square and the Legion Hut. Cllr Heigh asked that CCllr Ireton's comments be minutes when he said that, if the Council wanted to lease these areas they should be allowed to.

The District Valuer has suggested a rolling increase in rent, upto £425 in 2007, £450 in 2008 and £500 until the next review thereafter. This is based on the figure that Craven are paying to lease the car park in Low Bentham. The Council felt that some consideration should be taken to the fact that Craven were supplying car parking for 365 days of the year whilst the market met on only one day per week. It was agreed that the Council would like to keep the market in the Square, but that as it is in decline increases in rent will mean that it no longer breaks even. Therefore, in the absence of any improvements in the Square it felt that a higher rent would be unsustainable. The Council did not however that DCllr Camacho had commented that a further offer should be made shortly and felt that this should be considered before a final decision was made.

RESOLVED: That the decline of the market be highlighted to Craven, but that no firm decision be taken until the new offer has been received..

9. Accounts for payment

It was noted that Grasscare had responded to the Council's requests and that, following a satisfactory cut of the areas in question, the April invoice had been paid.

The accounts for the current month were proposed by Cllr Marshall, seconded by Cllr Faichney and agreed.

Mopps	339.00	Craven DC	87.60
E On Energy	56.02	HB Plumbing	27.03
V Craven	200.00	Grasscare	949.40
Viking Direct	141.70	C Louth	84.84
BT	273.59	R Green	471.93
Andrews	29.61	J Burton	616.53
Yorkshire Water	115.17	C Newsam	97.50
B&Q	37.46		
Phone Coop	1.46		

9.1. Insurance Quotes

The renewal premium for the Council's insurance from Zurich was £3918.39. The quotes from Norwich Union and Aon were both lower than this, Norwich Union by £1200 with interest free credit to spread payments over 12 months. The quotes were all on a like for like basis. It was agreed that the Norwich Union quote of £2771.16 should be accepted.

RESOLVED: That the Council's insurance cover be moved to Norwich Union.

10. Correspondence

10.1. Review of Passenger Transport Services & Home to School Transport in Craven

The Council agreed that this review was important but that it needed help in answering the questions fully. It was proposed that the letter should be copied to Community Transport for their comment and that a version be added to the website.

RESOLVED: That a copy of the letter be passed to Community Transport for their comments, and a version be posted on the website for general comments.

10.2. Bank erosion at Ellergill Beck

A resident of Stonegate had written asking for the Council to look at the banking on the playing field side of Ellergill Beck. Cllr Adams had already been to look at the beck and brought some photos to be considered. He commented that both sides of the beck needed to be looked at more closely. Cllr Marshall explained that, as the Environment Agency is responsible for watercourses, if remedial work was required this would probably need to be done under license. The Chairman and available Low Bentham councillors agreed to meet at the beck on Tuesday 5 June to consider the problem. It was also agreed that ownership of the land between the Playing Field fence and the water should be established

RESOLVED: That the Chairman and available Low Bentham Cllrs will look at the problem on Tuesday 5 June.

RESOLVED: That ownership of the land between the Playing Field fence and the water be ascertained.

10.3. Letter re Allotment Garden

Two letters had been received asking about allotments. The Council does not currently have any allotments, but if there is sufficient demand it would need to find land in the parish to lease. Obviously the availability of such land and the cost of leasing it would affect the value of any subsequent rent.

RESOLVED: That a reply be sent explaining the Council's current position

RESOLVED: That a request be put to Craven District Council to see if they have any suitable land in the parish.

10.4. Standards Committee, election result

Margaret Nicholson (Glusburn) was elected as the parish representative

10.5. Craven Area Committee, election of parish representatives.

Nominations are required by 8 June. Interested Cllrs should contact the clerk.

11. Reports from other bodies

Cllr Burton had attended a Bentham Development Trust meeting and sent a report. The Trust are lobbying for the all-weather pitch to be retained for community use if/when the school moves. The lease on the Station was still causing problems. The Little Red Bus will be launched in Harrogate in July and the Taxibus contract has been extended until April 2008. Active Bentham have submitted a grant to the Big Lottery fund for improvements to the Victoria Institute. An office is being set up in the Institute for Active Bentham staff to work out of as eventually the Station Road office will close when Community Transport moves to the Station.

Cllr Adams confirmed that the bonfire will go ahead this year, provisionally on 27 October.

Cllr Wills had been to a LASRUG meeting and a High Bentham School Governors meeting. A new member of staff has been appointed to replace the deputy head who is moving to take up the headship in Hellifield.

12. Items For Information

12.1. NY Criminal Justice Board Newsletter

12.2. Lancaster LDF Submission of Development Plan Document

12.3. Safer Craven Newsletter, May 2007.

12.4. YLCA Advice Note – Internal Audit

12.5. YLCA Advice Note – New Code of Conduct

12.6. White Rose Update, May 2007.

12.7. YLCA Minutes, 21 April 2007.

12.8. InfoRegio News, March 2007.

12.9. Craven Area Committee Agenda, May.

13. AOB - minor items only

The clerk had received three pieces of correspondence too late for the agenda.

The new Monitoring Officer at Craven will start in July, until then Peter Jordan from Harrogate will give part time cover.

There will be a Developing Communities seminar on Parish Planning and Local Play Areas on 10 July at Skipton Town Hall

A letter requesting funding had been received from Relate Time to Talk. It was agreed that they should be asked to reapply at precept time.

Cllr Marshall confirmed that he would be attending the Gateway to Bowland steering group meeting on 6 June and asked for comments regarding a proposal for the development of the new car park in conjunction with housing in the area. It was agreed that this should not be rejected out of hand, but that far more information was needed before a decision on what was best for Bentham could be made.

Cllr Stannard asked if something could be done about the stone chippings that are being spread on the pavement on the road from the new track to the barn conversion near Punch Bowl Cottage. The clerk agreed to contact the planning department regarding the requirements laid down when permission was given.

Cllr Wills informed the meeting that he had just received a letter of resignation from Cllr Rushton who was moving overseas in July. He thanked her for her work on Council over the last year and all the Councillors present wished her the best for the future.

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