

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday, 25 April 2018

Present: Cllrs Adams, Bridgeman, Faraday, Handford, Marshall, Stannard & Swales. DCllr Brockbank, also the Clerk & Coordinator and 18 parishioners

Apologies: Cllr Vendy, Mr F Farnill (Indoor Bowls), Mrs J Hodgkinson (Settle Swimming Pool), Mrs M Hodgson (Carnival) & Lisa Almond (Youth Café)

1. Notice convening the meeting was read by the Chairman

2. Minutes of the 2017 Meeting

Minutes of the above meeting were presented, agreed and signed

3. Mayor's Report

Councillor Adams thanked all the organisations for their attendance at the meeting and went on to describe the main points from the Council year, noting the fact that the current four-year term was coming to an end.

The Philip Harvey Memorial Play Area, on the site of Low Bentham School Playing Field, was almost complete. This had been a long journey with the purchase of the field started prior to this Council, and the sale of the old playing field, bequeathed to the Council by Philip Harvey, for £140,000 used to fund its development. The insurance of the area had been confirmed the day of the meeting and an official opening would be arranged shortly.

Yet again the Council had been able to keep the Bentham precept at £85.55 despite rising costs and the need to take on extra work and provide additional services. The Council had decided to take on a Coordinator in 2017 to assist in the administration of the Council, it had also brought cleaning of the Town Hall back in house at the same time as appointing a new Caretaker. To this end Debs Hawkins had been welcomed as Coordinator, Anne & Louise Chappell as cleaners and Marie Ammundsen as caretaker.

The next project for the Council was the refurbishment of locally owned street lights, which have been in place for the best part of 35 years. Their replacement with modern LED equivalents will ultimately reduce both maintenance and running costs into the future. The change in regulations since the original installation has meant more work than originally envisaged so the work will be phased, with phase 1 and 2; Wenning Avenue, Mayfield Road and Duke Street occurring this summer. New schemes to the rear of Grasmere Drive and the bottom of Duke Street were also being explored.

The Council awards grant monies to local organisations from its annual precept, which is not something every Council does, because it believes that this is a benefit to the community. A total of £14920 had been awarded to 13 local organisations, such as Christmas Lights, Community Bonfire & Community Youth.

Once again, the Bentham & Beyond Calendar had been produced with funds going to a local cause. The cost of production was covered by local sponsorship and thanks were expressed to these local businesses. Nearly £1300 was raised for Friends of Bentham School, and the 2019 recipient will be Age Concern. The venture had raised over £15000 for local organisations since conception.

Common themes continued to come up in meetings – Highways, Parking, Dog Fouling, Flooding and others. The Council continued to work to get a better deal for Bentham, although the problems are not unique to the area. It had also assisted with the successful retention of the Post Office and Library.

The Council had been pleased to receive 2 plaques in commemoration of the Victoria Cross recipients from WW1 – Charles Robertson & Theodore Bayley Hardy, which had been installed on School Hill and dedicated in a special service the previous weekend. The Council wished to thank Martin Faichney for his donation of labour.

Cllr Adams closed his speech by thanking the Council for their efforts over the past 4 years. A new Council would be formed in May, with some old and some new faces, ready for the year ahead.

4. Financial / Precept Details

Draft copies of the Reconciliation of Receipts and Payments for 2017/18 (unaudited) were circulated. The clerk emphasised the fact that the accounts had not yet been fully audited and were therefore subject to change. Income was lower than the previous year at £149,098.60, primarily because 2016/17 had been inflated by the sale of the old playing field. The Council had also lost the government Council Tax grant but had seen increased income from both the Town Hall and Cemetery.

Expenditure for the year, at £240,136.11, was significantly higher than the previous year due to the cost of installing the new play area

The Council had ended the year with reserves of £83,500, but over half of this was already earmarked with the final payment for the play area, phase 1 of the street lighting and repointing the front of the town hall which had been delayed because of the bad weather.

The precept for the coming year had been retained at the same level for the tenth year in a row, even though the Council had awarded more grants than before and allocated a further £20,000 for phase 2 of the street lighting refurbishment.

The clerk ended by saying that the Council was still well placed financially and in a position to consider other projects in the coming year. Finally she reminded those present that to continue contacting their organisations after 25 May she would require the GDPR personal data consent forms to be returned.

There were no questions from the audience.

4. Library

Bentham Community Library moved to its new home in May 2017. A successful launch event with Author Leah Flemming had been held in July with over 150 people in attendance. Councillor Ireton had provided funds to purchase a drinks machine and supplies from his community grant budget. There were now 27 regular volunteers running the library and active borrower & visitor numbers were up. Successful ICT help classes had been held in the autumn and regular Saturday story time sessions were run for the under 7s.

Hopefully more will be available in 2018/19, with more sessions being developed for young people. In the autumn a joint project, with Settle Folly, North Craven Museum and Ingleton & Settle Libraries as part of the Changing Landscapes art project, will look at Craven's changing landscape in the aftermath of WW1.

The community library has created a real community hub, which it is hoped will go from strength to strength.

5. Reports from Local Organisations

Reports were received from:

Age Concern, Aid in Sickness,

Bentham First Responders, Bentham Common Land Charity, Bentham Line Dancers, Bentham Youth Café,

Blooming Bentham,

Carnival, Christmas Lights, Churches Together & Christian Aid, Collingwood & Longstaffe Charity,

Community Bonfire, Community Link Cafe,

Footpaths Group,

Goodenber Play Area, High Bentham WI, Indoor Bowls

LASRUG, Looking Well / Pioneer Projects, Looking Well Tuesday Club, Low Bentham Badminton Club,

Low Bentham WI,

Meals on Wheels, NISCU, Nursing Benevolent Fund,

Playing Field Association, Pet Rescue,

Settle Swimming Pool, St Johns Church,

Theatre Group, Toddle In, Tuesday Craft Club, Victoria Institute,

& Women's Social Services and NSPCC

There were no reports from:

Bentham Agricultural Society, Bentham Bees, Bentham Beagles, Bentham Environmentally Sustainable Town,

Bentham Film Group, Bentham News, Bentham Refugee Support Group, Bentham Save a Life, Bentham Tuesday

Club, Citizens Advice Bureau, Ewecross Historical Society, Friends of Bentham School, Friends of Bentham Station,

Ladies Rounders Club, Longstaffe Educational Foundation, Mencap, Sunbeams, Springfield Bowling Club,

The Town Team, We Are Bentham & Welcome In

6. A.O.B.

The precept grants were distributed to recipients.

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm.