

MINUTES of the Town Hall Draft Bentham Masterplan Presentation **by the Bentham Masterplan Team. 7.00 pm**

Cllr Hill Taking Minutes

Presentation of the Draft Bentham Masterplan by Elizabeth Adlington, Shirley Brown, Phil Gerrie and Jim Munday

Cllr Gerrie opened the presentation with a short introduction of the Bentham Masterplan team; consisting of Elizabeth Adlington, Shirley Brown, Phil Gerrie and Jim Munday.

Mr Munday "Introduction - Bentham Masterplan is joint initiative from Craven District Council in partnership with Bentham Town Council and North Yorkshire County Council.

CDC were unable to recruit an outside consultant in Spring 2022. The project remained dormant until Autumn 2022 when a group of appropriately qualified local volunteers offered to take the project on (Bentham Masterplan Team). This was agreed in September 2022 by Craven and Bentham Town Councils. BTC nominated Cllr Gerrie who became a very useful and positive member of the Masterplan Team.

The overall objective remains the same

A clear vision for the future development and rejuvenation of Bentham

Bentham is a distinctive town. It is the second largest settlement in Craven after Skipton. A Key Service Centre serving a wide rural hinterland in North Craven

Bentham's population is growing 3,035 (2021 Census) with 57% of the population of working age. Significantly larger than surrounding settlements – Ingleton 2,186, Settle 2,714 and Kirkby Lonsdale 1,968.

However, when it comes to hospitality, leisure and sport services and infrastructure Bentham has less provision than other comparable settlements in Craven

There has been a lot of house building in Bentham recently, more than 100 homes were completed in 2020. Over 100 more pending and land allocated in the Local Plan for over 400 in total. These should generate a Community Infrastructure Levy (Section 106) which should be spent in improving facilities and infrastructure in Bentham.

This is attracting new people to the area.

Consultation - An essential element of the project was to ensure there was extensive, open, and inclusive engagement with the local community.

This was achieved by the generation and distribution of Bentham Masterplan Questionnaires – one for individual responses and the second for Groups and Businesses. These could be completed on paper or online.

The questionnaires sought the views on Bentham – both good and bad, and their ideas for the future.

Questionnaires for individuals were distributed to ensure the widest possible coverage of all residents, visitors, and workers.

As a loose insert in Bentham News with a covering feature to explain the project and the QR code for those who wanted to answer online. In a press release to local media; The QR code also featured on Public Notices and Social Media. In addition, extra questionnaires were made available in various place around town

Questionnaires for Interest Groups, Clubs, Societies and Faith Groups were emailed directly to just over 50 organisations – from Age Concern through to Yoga. The covering email explained the Bentham Masterplan and included the links to the group online site.

Local shops, Trade and businesses were consulted similarly by email and hand delivery. Fifty-Eight businesses were consulted in this way from Sweetie Sue's to Audioworks.

For a survey of this kind where a 2% response would have been satisfactory.

The results were outstanding. Underling the interest Benthamers have in the projects. Over 10% of the population replied.

What were the results? I'll hand you over to Mrs Adlington"

Mrs Adlington "As councillors will have seen, the Initial Findings of our questionnaire present us with a clear picture of the views of Bentham people about their town. We know that you will not surprised by many of the results as you will have seen them before in previous surveys that have been done by yourselves and others. We have seen many examples of these from 1993 to 2015 and know that our findings are nothing new. Perhaps our main distinction is that as volunteers we have some freedom to decide how we now want to try to take matters forward. We do think that with the large number of responses to the questionnaire and the generally good spread of gender and age we can truthfully say that these ARE the views of the Bentham community.

I'm not going to spend too much of our limited time in going through the detail of all responses. I will assume you have read the report and I will discuss them only briefly. But I would like to make a few comments about how we analysed the results and on our views about what actions we are hoping for next.

We asked people to give us their views in their own words. This made analysis more difficult than if WE had given them multiple choice tick boxes to choose from. I guess we are all familiar with surveys that do not offer us a choice of the answer we really want to give. Having allowed respondents to say anything, we did receive a huge range of suggestions and ideas. Organizing them into categories we could then count obviously excluded some suggestions, so the pie charts we have put in the report can only give a broad view of what people said. However, when compared with some previous surveys done in the town we feel convinced that our findings ARE fairly accurate.

In the responses from individuals we were particularly delighted to find that what people like best about Bentham is the other people and the supportive community ethos. How lucky we are to live in a place where people think that other people are so important. This is an attribute we all want to build on for the future.

No-one will be surprised to hear that the worst things about Bentham are thought to be the traffic, road layout, pedestrian access and parking and the town centre appearance. These are felt to affect the attractiveness and use of the town for everyone; residents, new and existing businesses and visitors. The poor public transport was thought to make this worse.

Road and traffic improvements are, of course, the responsibility of the county council so any radical improvements are their business. But the town centre appearance is, we think, very clearly

something Bentham can begin to address. If the town council and residents are jointly determined to improve the look of the town centre much could be achieved by committed individuals willing to work to plan possible strategies and, where necessary, to find funding sources.

Other problems with the town centre were considered to be the lack of fast broadband and its impact on local businesses, the lack of leisure and training opportunities for young people, the paucity of spaces for relaxation and a desire to see better use of under and unused buildings, such as the Town Hall. Here again we think there are possible projects that could be promoted making use of some of the specialist skills, enthusiasm and experience of residents who have already offered to help take the Masterplan forward.

Requests for immediate improvements to public transport were frequent. As we all know revival of the bus service and more trains would provide better access for workers to employment opportunities and for everyone to essential health and professional services based further afield. Community bus services operate in other parts of North Yorkshire and could be re-established here, with support from the local authority, if local energies were mobilized, as they were in the past. The failure of the 'little red bus' service was not systemic but a result of criminal behaviour, as you will all know.

Long term changes hoped for are that Bentham will remain a sustainable, healthy working town and not be subsumed into the tourist focus of other local towns. More community facilities and opportunities for local enterprise were all mentioned, such as energy generation from the river and/or the wind and support to local businesses including the agricultural sector.

The responses from businesses and organisations were largely in accord with those from individuals and included a number of suggestions about increasing the footfall in the town, building on the community enterprise that already exists and improving the premises and facilities that businesses and organisations currently use. The significant difficulties presented by the poor road and pedestrian infrastructure and limited WiFi services were again held responsible for many of the problems experienced by this sector.

Finally, there is our Appendix, which we prepared specifically for this Town Council meeting. It gives you our personal views. We are grateful for all the ideas and suggestions we received from respondents and have thought about what we can now do to bring some of them to fruition. There are three strands to this:

1. We will have to work with Craven/North Yorkshire to prepare a detailed Masterplan of the kind they originally envisaged. They have told us that the new authority will prioritise the needs of market towns and money will be available but without a local plan none of our needs will be integrated into the long-term planning of the county. This applies to road improvements, but also to such issues as housing and increased business premises etc. etc. We are meeting them again on Wednesday to progress this, but it will not be a quick fix.
2. However, we can quickly begin to make use of the offers of help we have had from respondents and create some small development groups of local people to plan and take forward specific ideas. This is something Bentham is already good at and organisations such as Community First Yorkshire exist to support and encourage community action of this kind. We have begun to plan how to do this and will, of course, keep you informed as we progress.

3. And thirdly, we intend to pay specific attention to some of the more fully developed ideas which were suggested by respondents. Having recognised the need to plan for the future this would probably involve bringing in partners from local, regional and national specialist organisations, universities and businesses to help us to build services and opportunities suitable for the 21st century. We already have a potential collaboration with Lancaster University through a local resident. Again, this will not be quick but if successful could radically improve Bentham's role as a Key Service Area.

The Town Council's support, and where possible involvement, in all these strands of action will be essential and we look forward to including you and others in helping to take them forward.

There is a lot still to do, but we are sure that the desire and willingness to contribute is present within the community. Let us all work enthusiastically to establish ways in which this can be used for the benefit of us all."

At the end of the presentation.

Members of the Council praised the Bentham Masterplan Team for their efforts so far; which were all encouraging and pleased to support them where they can going forward. Cllr Gerrie confirmed he was happy to continue as a Council representative and keep the Council informed about progress.

A member of the public spoke about the subject of fibre broadband, in particular B4RN and how it is disappointed that the majority of Main Street does not have access to fibre broadband. They expressed how members of the public need to register their interest on B4RN's website, in hope they extend fibre throughout Bentham.

MINUTES of the Council Meeting held on Monday

6th March, at 7.30 pm – in the Lower Hall, Bentham Town Hall

Cllr Hill Taking Minutes

Meeting started at 19:40 after the Presentation of the Draft Bentham Masterplan by Elizabeth Adlington, Shirley Brown, Phil Gerrie and Jim Munday

Present: Cllrs Adams (Chair), Hill, Burton, Gerrie, Jones, Paige, Stannard and Pearce

330 Apologies from members unable to attend: -

Cllr Marshall

330.1 To Note Apologies for absence given in advance of the meeting.

NONE.

330.2 To consider acceptance of reasons for absence – if consideration of reason requested.

NONE.

331 Declaration of interests: -

331.1 To Note Declarations of Interest not already declared under members Code of Conduct or members register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

NONE.

331.2 To approve dispensation requests – if dispensation requests received.

NONE.

332 To Receive Comment & Concerns: Public Participation – to hear matters raised by members of the public or Cllrs with an interest (that are allowed to speak) either on agenda items or for future consideration.

(NB: for non-agenda items Members of the Council are not permitted to respond, except to ask questions for the purposes of clarification; The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 20 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting. A member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes).

A member of the public expressed their concerns for residents parking inconsiderately on the road outside Felstead, Low Bentham. Despite all houses having two parking spaces allocated, it was voiced how it is a danger to both pedestrians: especially school children and vehicles travelling from a 30 MPH zone to a possible 40 MPH speed limit.

333 To consider written applications for the office of councillor and to fill vacant seats by co-option, if any.

NONE.

334 To Confirm the Minutes of the previous meeting on 20th February 2023. (Paper 2023/67)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of 20th February 2023 are agreed and signed by Cllrs Burton and Mark

335 To receive the Police Report & allow members to ask questions for information – if any.

Received – see email

336 To receive a report from the Public Safety Officer & allow members to ask questions for information – if any.

No report received

337 To receive the Clerks Report (for information only).

Received.

338 To receive Reports from CClr & DCllrs (for information only) - If any

No report

339 Planning

To consider and comment upon New Planning Applications:

339.1.1 **2023/24814/VAR.** Application for variation of condition no 3 (CDC Materials), 5 (CDC SDCS) and 6 (Landscaping) to approved planning application referenced 2020/22363/FUL. Little Croft Barn, Sunderland House, Burton in Lonsdale, Carnforth, LA6 3LN

RESOLVED: That the council has no comments on this application.

339.1.2 **2023/24828/VAR.** Application for variation of condition no 2 (Approved Plans) to approved planning application referenced 2022/24039/FUL for 2022, for revisions including raising roof height to accommodate 5th bedroom. Land North of Fern House, Burton Road, Low Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7ER.

RESOLVED: That the council has no comments on this application.

339.2 To receive Planning Decisions

339.2.1 Appeal Decisions – see clerks report.

Received.

339.2.2 **2023/24714/CPL:** Valley Field, Low Bentham Road, Low Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7BT. Craven District Council hereby certify that on 16th January 2023 the development described in the first schedule to this certificate in respect of the land specified in the second schedule to this certificate and cross hatched on the plan attached with this certificate, was lawful within the meaning of Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

RESOLVED: No further action.

340 To consider and note Highway Matters for information. (Councillors can comment on any minor highway issues currently causing concern. NB: Councillors may report all concerns online to NYCC).

NONE.

341 To receive the Operational Inspection Report of 01/02/2023 on the Philip Harvey Playing Field and to agree a way forward. (Paper 2023/69)

RESOLVED: No further action required at this moment in time.

342 To agree the Accounts for Payment.

To:	For:	Amount:
Tim Wheildon	Community Youth Building - drain down hot water / cold water and heating systems	144.00
Local Council Consultancy	Associate Support- Job Evaluation (Staffing Review)	657.00
Clearglass Cleaning	Window cleaning at Town Hall	120.00
Waterplus	Waste water at Town Hall	80.70
Craven District Council	Green Waste Cemetery	43.50
Kingsdale Projects	Tree removal and small jobs from inspection report at PHPF and power wash.	600.00
Business Stream	Water Town Hall	56.77
Thomas Graham	Cleaning supplies	316.07
Brake Catering Equipment	Hot water boiler for galley kitchen	678.00
Howsons	Fire alarm and emergency light repairs	1,001.40
Christine Downey	Refund of PlusNet charges clerks mobile phone 07/06/22 to 08/02/23	78.66
Salaries and Mileage	February / March 2023	7382.89
BT Group Plc	Phone Bill TIP	51.36
IONOS	Internet	18.00
Total Energies G & P	Electricity Town Hall	748.52
SSE Swalec	Unmetered Electric Supply	92.35
Craven District Council	Trade waste	55.10
Premium Credit Ltd	Insurance	354.02
NEST	Pension contributions February / March 2023	243.66
TOTAL		12,722.00
The Cumbria Clock Company Ltd	Bentham Town Hall Clock Repair	8752.80
GRAND TOTAL		21,474.80

RESOLVED: Approved.

RESOLVED: Cllrs Burton and Gerrie to authorise the payments.

343 Tourist Information Point: -

343.1 To discuss and agree arrangements for opening TIP.

RESOLVED: To open the TIP on Saturday 8th April 2023; Cllr Stannard to coordinate volunteers

343.2 To discuss and agree arrangements for TIP Coffee Morning on 24th June 2023.

RESOLVED: Not to proceed with a TIP Coffee Morning; TIP Volunteer Christmas Lunch to be paid with monies set aside at Precept Meeting on 9th January 2023

344 To review the revised room booking rates, as recommended by the Town Hall Management Sub-committee, and agree a way forward. (Paper 2023/75)

RESOLVED: Agreed and proceed with revised booking rates going forward

345 To consider the following Correspondence and to agree a way forward and/or a response: -

345.1 Pantomime posters 1909. (Papers 2023/70 to 72)

RESOLVED: That the Town Hall to accommodate Pantomime posters in a suitable location to be agreed. Cllr Hill to respond via email

346 To Receive Reports from Councillors who represent the Council on other bodies (for information only) - If any.

Cllr Gerrie reported Friends of Bentham Library has now dissolved the charity group. The library will now come under the control of Pioneer Projects. All remaining funds raised by FOBL will be passed to Pioneer Projects, on the understanding that it will be used for the Library (£1752.00).

Cllr Pierce reported that BEST had a successful film showing of Riverwoods on 24th February with over 60 members of the public attending which was followed by a talk from the Lune Rivers Trust.

347 Items for next meeting and minor items for information only.

Cllr Jones confirmed that he would be attending Craven District Council Legacy Awards 2023 as a council representative.

Cllr Paige to follow up email from Electricity North West in regards to donation to Bentham Christmas Lights.

Cllr Stannard confirmed that a new Town Hall bookings email (bookings@benthamtowncouncil.co.uk) was up and running. Future bookings are to be encouraged to use this email and Cllr Jones plans to set an autoreply on emails in the interim period. Cllr Stannard had kindly added email address to the website and Cllr Hill to contact Bentham News for publication.

348 Date of next meeting:

Wed 8/03/2023 Archive Evening - 19:00

Mon 20/03/2023 Full Council meeting - 19:30

349 To resolve that in accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and by reason of the confidential nature of the remainder of the business, that the public and press be excluded further from the meeting, whilst items **350 and 351** are considered:

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting

350 To consider items of correspondence received regarding the Community Youth Building (if any) and agree a way forward. (Papers 2023/73 and 74)

RESOLVED: That the recent offer to purchase the property is declined.

That the request to use the building in the meantime prior to sale is rejected

351 To discuss the new clerk position and advert and to agree a way forward

RESOLVED: That the clerks advert Cllr Adams proposed is agreed with the deadline adjusted to 31/03/23

That Jo Burton is appointed as interim Town Clerk until a new Clerk is appointed – Proposed by Cllrs Adams and Hill

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20:42.