



BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk:
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Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting in **The Lower Hall** on **Monday 28th April 2025** at **7.30 pm**

Councillors present: Cllr Adams (Chair), Paige, Stannard, Marshall and Taylor

1. **Apologies** from members unable to attend: -

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

NOTED

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

RESOLVED- absence approved

2. Minutes of the 2024 Meeting were read out by Cllr Adamas- To **confirm the Minutes** of the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting as a true and correct record.

RESOLVED – APPROVED

3. Mayor's Report:

The 2024/5 council year is now coming to a close. The Council has seen some changes over the year with Councillors Hill, Ryan, Howard and Naylor leaving. Emma Langan our Assistant Town Clerk joined us in March 2025, and is learning council function fast. With Claire Burrow our Town Clerk, this now gives the people of Bentham access to Council services 5 days a week. In addition, the services of Carrie Pillow, looking after the financial side have been integrated into normal business. All of them work extremely hard for council and we thank them.

Planning matters within the parish still bring out the largest public attendance at meetings. The Council realises this is an emotive subject, but it has to balance the requirement to increase housing to maintain reasonable property pricing, with loss of amenity. We realise that the majority of issues surround infrastructure, but this is not unique to Bentham. The council gets very mixed messages about this, and it is hard to distinguish one application with a lot of comments, from a similar size one with none.

The Bentham masterplan team in conjunction with NYC were able to tap into £20,000 for the Bentham Business Boost. This was an incentive for business owners to enhance their retail premises and enrol on training to assist them in Health and Safety, as well as promotional tips and tools for their business. This money was well spent. A proportion was also made available for the mural near to Bentham club which was created by local artist Rhys Midgely. Doesn't it look good? We have also applied to the Vibrant and Sustainable High Streets Fund for £40,000. To hopefully conduct a feasibility study of possible enhancements around the town. We will hear if we have been successful soon.

The year saw the Guardian article on forever chemicals realised. Bentham Town Council has met with Angus Fire on numerous occasions. More recently it met with representatives from the Environment Agency, NYC and the UK Health Security Agency. This was a productive meeting which will lead to a public meeting being held here towards the end of June / early July. There are details in the May edition of the Bentham News. This is a difficult situation and affects all of Bentham in many different ways. The Council has had to balance the concerns of residents, with those of employees and employers.

A number of local residents petitioned NYC with a request for 20mph speed areas within the parish. We have met with highways officials, and this is currently being progressed, it is expected to go out to consultation soon in the next Council year.

The Duke Street Lighting project has progressed and hopefully this will be completed within the next Council year. The Council is also in the early stages of extending the Bentham Cemetery as there are only a couple of years' worth of space available. The Goodenber Play Area Committee have asked Council to take over the management of the play area. Again, we have agreed in principle to this and are working through it. This will then secure the facility for Bentham residents. We also saw a small parcel of land at School Hill transferred to Council, so now the entire area belongs to Bentham

I wish to thank our employees, Anne and Louise Chappell, along with Ruth Green, who look after the users of this building. A thank you also goes out to the Volunteers who staff the Tourist Information Point throughout the summer. We currently have vacancies for assistance in this area and I'm sure we will be glad of any names to add to the Volunteer rota.

The Council is here to try to promote and do the best for Bentham, its residents and workers. This may not always be the perceived objective. I would urge all members of the public to look at the best things about our parish, build on the community, whether it be the shops, pubs, restaurants on the high street, or the many clubs and organisations who provide a wide variety of offerings for our spare time. We are short of Councillors and we would welcome new members, without the local Council, Bentham would lose a lot of what we enjoy. I thank the Council for its support over the past 12 months and the hard work they do for Bentham.

4. Financial Details:

Overview

The financial year 2024-2025 has been a period of strong community investment and continuous improvement across the Parish. Bentham Town Council has successfully delivered several projects and maintained high standards across all its facilities and services, ensuring value for money.

Installation of two new streetlights on Duke Street, improving safety and visibility for residents and visitors.

Erection of a traditional-style fingerpost sign at Green Smithy to enhance the town's wayfinding and preserve its character.

A new external defibrillator installed at the Playing Fields with new pads supplied.

Purchase and installation of an external cabinet for a second defibrillator at Springfield Bowling Club, also with new pads provided.

All defibrillators registered with the North West Ambulance Service through the Circuit system to ensure public accessibility in emergencies.

Launch of a new official Bentham Town Council website on the gov.uk platform, enhancing accessibility, professionalism, and transparency for all parish communications.

Continued investment in the Town Hall, including:

- Upgraded internet, Wi-Fi, and lighting systems.
- Improved lift autodialler for safety.
- Enhanced cleaner facilities and food storage.
- Replacement and fixing of curtains in the Ballroom.
- Purchase of new Christmas trees for community festivities.

Installation of new running gear on the automatic doors, now fully linked to the fire alarm system, ensuring a safer environment for all building users.

A new Union Jack flag has been mounted externally on the side of the Town Hall, enhancing civic representation.

Cemetery Management and Planning

Staff received specialist cemetery training to ensure compliance with current legislation.

Introduction of a new Cemetery Module to maintain accurate, legal, and up-to-date cemetery records.

Planning is underway to extend the cemetery into adjacent Council-owned land, ensuring future capacity for the community.

Continued high-standard maintenance of all Parish areas, including:

- Grass verges, public benches, Philip Harvey Playing Field, the cemetery, and the Goodenber Play Area.

Special projects completed:

- Pruning of trees at Springfield.
- Ongoing management of Japanese Knotweed.
- Planting of a commemorative tree for Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Town Clerk collaborated with the Bentham Business Boost Group to deliver successful business training workshops and initiatives, supporting local economic growth.

Grant Awards (2024-2025):

£15,136.17 awarded in community grants — an increase of £5,854.85 compared to the previous year.

Grants Approved for 2025/2026:

A total of £12,250 in grants has been approved to support projects and initiatives in the upcoming financial year.

Conclusion

Bentham Town Council remains committed to responsibly managing public funds, ensuring investments directly benefit the community, improve services, and enhance the overall environment and heritage of Bentham. The Council thanks residents, partners, and volunteers for their ongoing support and looks forward to another year of positive growth and development. Bentham Town Council currently have Councillor vacancies, Officers are looking forward to welcoming some of the lovely people here this evening as new Councillors and we have Co-Option forms available.

5. Reports from Local Organisations

Annual report from PCSO Jayne Grace:

Annual report can be found - Crime and policing in England which allows you to search re incident recorded in your area www.police.uk

I have put this together for the past year of incidents, so you have an idea of incidents reported.

Annual Report - Bentham - 21.04.24 & 25.04.25 - 412 reported incidents

Annual Report - Bentham - 20.04.23 & 20.04.24 - 492 reported incidents

221 - Reports include – General Admin from other Police force, General Admin from other agencies, Safeguarding, Sudden Death, Civil dispute, lost, found property, Abandon calls/ hoax, wanted/absconders, drugs & Highway disruption

2 - Burglaries – properties

75 - Concern for safety/welfare – checks carried out by police, ambulance, family & friends, Missing persons.

47 - Crime Violence/domestic/sexual/harassment/stalking

20 – ASB Nuisance/personal/neighbour dispute

6 – Criminal Damage – vehicles/graffiti

9 – Theft – shop/vehicles/sheep/cooking oil

17 - Road Traffic collisions

7 - Road Related offence/Highways – manner all over road, medical, suspect drink, drug driving, speed

8 – Suspect circumstances – vehicles/persons/fraud – banking / online

Reports read out from:

- 1. Mencap**
- 2. Bentham and District Pet Rescue**
- 3. The Pantry Bentham**
- 4. The Bay Prostate Cancer Support Group**
- 5. Bentham Parish Church**
- 6. Bentham Playing Fields**
- 7. Bentham Refugee Support Group**
- 8. Bentham Rounders**
- 9. Springfield Bowling Club**
- 10. SELFA**
- 11. Settle District Aid in Sickness**

12. Stepping Stones Baby and Toddler Group
13. Bentham Agricultural Show
14. Ingleton and Bentham Twinning Group
15. Low Bentham Victoria Institute and Public Hall
16. High Bentham Women's Institute
17. Bentham Youth Club
18. Age Concern Thursday Lunch Club (previously Friday Lunch Club)
19. Bentham Community Bonfire
20. Bentham Craft Club
21. Community Link Café
22. CancerCare
23. Collingwood and Longstaffe
24. Friends of Bentham Station
25. Bentham Footpath Group
26. Goodenber Play Area
27. Bentham Hub
28. Longstaffe Educational Foundation
29. Lancaster and Settle Rail Users Group

6. Presentation of Precept Grants

RESOLVED - Community Groups were advised to pass their BACs details on to the Town Clerk, to ensure swift payment.

7. Consideration of the beneficiary of the 2026 Bentham & Beyond Calendar.

RESOLVED - Chair stated the calendar has not been as successful in recent years, and suggestions are welcome from councillors and the local community for new future fundraising ideas.

8. Any Other Business

MOP asked about plans for the public toilets in Bentham to be reopened, councillors stated that the Open Spaces Committee are considering whether it is viable to reopen them in the future.

MOP requested a public toilet sign for Bentham Town Hall, which would be clear to understand for visitors and those who do not speak English.

Town Clerk Claire Burrow thanked High Bentham Women's Institute for their kind donation of women's sanitary products in the accessible public toilets at Bentham Town Hall.

MOP enquired about VE Day Celebration plans. Councillors stated that preparations are underway for the beacon lighting on Burnmoor, but the location may need to be moved due to fire risk concerns, resulting from lack of rain recently and the dry fell.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed at 8:44pm

Emma Langan
Assistant Town Clerk
Thursday 1st May 2025