

MINUTES of the Council Meeting held on Monday 21st June 2021, at 7.00 pm – in the Ballroom, Bentham Town Hall.

Present: Cllrs Swales (Chair), Adams, Burton, Stannard, and Taylor. DCllr Brockbank. The Clerk Christine Downey. And four members of the public.

- 67 Apologies from **members** unable to attend.
- 67.1 To Note Apologies for absence given in advance of the meeting.
Cllrs Bridgeman, Faraday, Handford, Hill and Marshall.
- 67.2 To consider acceptance of reasons for absence.
None.
- 68 Declaration of interests: -
- 68.1 To Note Declarations of Interest not already declared under members Code of Conduct or members register of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
None.
- 68.2 To approve dispensation requests.
None.
- 69 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).

Heather Knowles spoke on behalf of the Bentham Playing Field Association regarding item number 72, the position at the Wenning Avenue playing fields.

I have been asked to speak on issues regarding the difficulties securing a lease on the playing Fields from Angus, who (I'm sure you know) own the majority of the field: a small area being owned by Craven District Council.

The current lease ends on 2nd May 2029.

We have been in discussion with the CEO through our representative, who in turn, approached the board of Angus and the longest they can offer us is five years. Making a total of thirteen years.

The terms of the original lease have been shown to a solicitor from Community First and that response forwarded to Bentham Town Council.

CDC approached us in January this year, interested in our progress, and asked for a copy of the lease, with again their response forwarded to Bentham Town Council.

The most recent response from the CEO of Angus, Paul Williams, on 4th June 2021 is and I quote "I have discussed this with the Board twice in the last six months, once after someone approached the production manager in Bentham to ask the question and then after Thomas Marshall approached me and explained the situation. The board, after some pressure, agreed to extend the lease by another couple of years. I advised Thomas of this about two months ago and have heard nothing back since. Unfortunately, this was as far as the board were willing to go. However, if Craven District Council and the Town Council were to write to me explaining what they were willing to spend, over what time period, and to do so how long the lease would need to be extended by, then I would willingly take it back to the Board and discuss."

We are a very small committee of six on Bentham Playing Field Association and are struggling to see a future for the Playing Fields with the lease as it is at the moment. Grants are available with more than five years on a lease, but ethically, spending thousands on the playing fields

with a very short lease would be a wrong decision. We are really hoping for support from Bentham Town Council and Craven District Council. Thank you for listening.

Heathers comments were followed by some questions and answers.

1. Is there a business plan, or 10-year forecast? No not yet, it's difficult/impossible/pointless trying to prepare a business plan or 10-year forecast until the length of the lease is finally determined. The committee would like to be able to provide a track for walking, cycling and running, and also a junior pump track. In the long term the committee would like to replace the condemned clubhouse but think that it is unethical to spend large sums of money on improvements without obtaining a longer lease first.

2. What assistance do the Playing Field Association need/want from Bentham Town Council? Not exactly determined yet, the association has only recently got out of debt and begun to build up a bank balance. Help and support extending the lease would be a good place to start.

It was pointed out that: -

- A) The playing field is used extensively by various groups. Probably 100 people on there on Saturday.
- B) The school is trying to provide some evidence of use.
- C) The local football league considers it to be the best pitch in the league to play on.
- D) The playing field is a huge resource for the people of Bentham and it would be a disaster for Bentham residents if this open space was lost.
- E) The dilemma facing the committee is that to do a business plan and embark on big projects it is necessary to know that there is continuity of the lease.
- F) It would help if Bentham Town Council could push to extend the lease or consider buying the playing field.

DCllr Brockbank gave an update of the position for CDC. Jill Heseltine of CDC has been in contact with the committee and has provided access to legal representation regarding the lease. A survey on Open Space usage has been sent to the committee for completion. What is needed is evidence for funding, in the form of a local plan and the Open Spaces survey. The Playing Field Association need to respond to the survey in order to be added to the list of Open Spaces. CDC are very keen to support the Playing Field, and have been working with the association, but need evidence. The association should provide evidence that there is a need for the open space, show that there is somebody willing to take it forward, and show that the community (as well as the association) has a need and a want for the playing field.

The discussion continued later in the meeting – see item 72.

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70 To Confirm the Minutes of the previous meeting on 7th June 2021. (Paper 2021/102)
RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings of 7th June 2021 are agreed and be signed.

71 To consider and comment upon new planning applications: -

71.1 2021/22678/**FUL**. Conversion of existing barn and shippon to a garage, games room, multigenerational accommodation as annex to main house and/or short-term holiday let. Barn at Lane Foot Farm, Greystonegill Lane, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7AL.

RESOLVED: The Council has no comments on this application.

71.2 2021/22679/**LBC**. Conversion of existing barn and shippon to form garage, games room and multigenerational accommodation. Lane Foot Farm, Greystonegill, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7AL.

RESOLVED: The Council has no comments on this application.

71.3 2021/22893/**VAR**. Application for variation of condition no 2 (Approved Plans) on original planning permission referenced 2020/22032/HH granted 29 January 2021, at 34 Goodenber Road, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7JD.

RESOLVED: The Council has no comments on this application.

71.4 2021/22897/OUT. Outline application for a single, detached dwelling with all matters reserved except for access. Within the garden curtilage at 1 Pye Busk Close, High Bentham, Lancaster, LA2 7BG.

RESOLVED: The Council has no comments on this application.

72

To discuss the position at Wenning Avenue playing field and to agree a way forward.

It was reported that the clerk has made contact with Liz Cox the HR Manager at Angus Fire Ltd, that information is now flowing between the council and Angus, that Angus were informed about this item on the agenda, and that they are keen to see the minutes from the meeting, which will be supplied to them in due course.

It was agreed that: -

A) The question of whether this facility should be kept or not is very straightforward – yes it should. Because the community as a whole would suffer enormously if it were lost.

B) That Bentham Town Council are committed to supporting the Bentham Playing Field Association in any ways it can; for example, financially, with activities/events, and by listing some of the things done over the last 20-25 years at the Playing Field as evidence of need and usage.

C) That without a lease it's future is uncertain; therefore, the priority must be to sort out the difficulties with the lease, and that the best way of doing so is to get all interested parties around the table.

(Cllr Taylor joined the meeting at 7.20)

RESOLVED: Bentham Town Council to invite representatives from Angus Fire Ltd to a meeting with representatives of the Council, Bentham Playing Field Association, and Craven District Council, as soon as possible.

73

To consider the insurance renewal documentation and agree any changes, if any.
(Paper2021/103)

RESOLVED: That the insurance renewal is agreed.

74

Items for next meeting and minor items for information only.

Howsons have been asked for a quote for the installation of the new defibrillator twice now, the clerk agreed to chase it up.

75

Date of next meeting: **5th July 2021.**

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.28 pm.