

MINUTES OF BEVERLEY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

At 6.30 pm on 26th May 2022

At the Peter Harrison Room, Beverley Minster

Nine electors of the parish and one member of the public were present.

Also, in attendance were: The Mayor of Beverley, Councillor Linda Johnson; Matthew Snowden, Acting Town Clerk and Libby Woodhouse, Administrative Officer.

1. Mayor's Introduction and welcome

The Mayor, Councillor Linda Johnson welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a report as follows:

- This is an opportunity for residents who live within the parish boundaries to raise issues that affect Beverley.
- Although it is chaired by myself as Mayor of Beverley and serviced by Town Council officers, it is not a meeting of Beverley Town Council.
- If you want to speak, you must be a resident on the electoral role within the Parish of Beverley, which consists of the wards of Minster North, Minster South, St Mary's East and St Mary's West.
- If you raise your hand to speak, I will ask you to give your name and the street on which you live. The Acting Town Clerk verify that you live in Beverley.
- This is important, because the boundaries of Beverley, Woodmansey and Molescroft are sometimes confused and residents who think they live in the Parish of Beverley actually do not. For your help, maps of the Parish Boundaries are attached to the agenda.
- If you do not live within the Parish, unfortunately, you will not be permitted to speak. This is not us being awkward, but is a matter of law as detailed in the 1972 Local Government Act.
- The Parishes of Woodmansey and Molescroft also hold their own Annual Parish Meetings, at which residents of those areas can speak and parishioners from Beverley are not permitted to do so.
- When speaking, please remember that anyone present who is a councillor is not here in that capacity, but as a resident in their own right.
- Any issues raised that cannot be addressed here will either be discussed by the Town Council at the next appropriate meeting, or forwarded on to the correct organisation or authority to deal with, for example East Riding of Yorkshire Council.
- Please refrain from referring to specific individuals and show respect and civility at all times.

The Mayor provided updates from the Town Council:

Skate Park

- We are currently in a tender process to select a specialist company to refurbish the skate park.
- Companies have been contacted and we are awaiting responses to the tender.
- The Town Council has allocated earmarked reserves of £71K, but part of the tender is to provide actual quotes for refurbishment.
- If it is to cost more, either external funding will be sought or the Town Council will review its reserves.

Lamp Post Project

- Thanks to the research of Beverley Civic Society, it seems Beverley has the largest and oldest collection of still-working cast iron lamp posts in the country and possible in all of Europe.
- The Town Council is now working in partnership with the Civic Society to carry out a multi-year restoration project to give these important items of our local heritage a fresh lease of life.

Hanging Baskets and Planters

- Residents will notice the summer planting currently being rolled out throughout the town.
- The Town Council is responsible for hanging baskets, lamp column planters, barrier planters, some barrel planters and three-tiered planters.
- Last year we expanded this scheme to not just include the town centre, but also the Swinemoor and Cherry Tree Estates.
- In addition, this year lamp column planters have been placed along Holmechurch Lane and a tiered planter placed near St Nicholas Church.
- Thanks also to Beverley in Bloom, who also carry out some wonder projects, including the Railway Station, Railways Square, Jubilee Garden, Hengate/Manor Road corner and more.

Partnership Grants

Over the past couple of years, the Town Council has award grants to a range of really important and worthwhile community groups. These include:

- Beverley in Bloom
- Cherry Tree Community Association
- Beverley Rugby Union Football Club
- Beverley Barge Preservation Society
- Beverley Lemgo Twinning Association for their Hansa Project
- Beverley Puppet Festival
- Stage4Beverley
- Two Churches One Town

The support provided affords them sustainability to continue supporting the town and its people.

Christmas Lights

- We tried to do better this year, but unfortunately, we were hit by a range of unexpected technical issues.
- Like with the flowers, we have tried to include wider residential areas, with lights appearing at the Railway Station and at Samman Road Shops.
- Over coming months, we will be working closely with ERYC to improve the electrical infrastructure, with a real tree being placed in Wednesday Market and new statement piece planned for the Cross Tree/Toll Gavel/Butcher Row corner.

Property

- The Town Council does not own its offices, but rents them.
- Councillors feel these are no longer fit for purpose and so are actively looking at alternative properties, for which it has built up over many years the ring-fenced £350,000 of earmarked reserves for this purpose – suitable properties in Beverley are not cheap and are few and far between.
- We are aware that over the coming months ERYC are reviewing their assets, so we hope there may be the possibility for the Town Council purchasing a property ERYC may find surplus to requirements.
- Much of this is still uncertain, but we believe Beverley should have an accessible Town Council Office that can be used for more than just council meetings and which is owned by the town, rather than renting something that has gradually become unsuitable.
- This is not something that will be rushed into, but is an issue we may be able to progress over coming months.

Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

Beverley Town Council has organised a community day of music, entertainment and celebrations to mark the Platinum Jubilee.

Taking place on Friday 3rd June, events include:

- A community tea party in North Bar Within
- A concert stage in Saturday Market which will host performances from the Humberside Police Band, All for One Choir, the Syd Lawrence Orchestra, Catterick Army Band and the Culture Orchestra
- Activities in Wednesday Market Place
- A Platinum Party at Flemingate with tribute acts from every decade of the Queen's reign.

We are delighted to announce that a special Hurricane aircraft fly past is scheduled to place on the day at 3:30pm (weather dependent).

A resident – queried the need for the skatepark project as the Council had £71,000 in earmarked reserves this could be used to pay for hours of football for young people at the Leisure Centre instead as there was no public football pitches and where is the incentive for other children who do not wish to use the skatepark. A needs assessment and impact assessment would be required.

The Mayor – responded that this could be looked at by the Council, but that the skatepark was in the ownership of the Town Council and needed updating. A needs assessment etc had been done through ERVAS that had been commissioned by the Town Council.

A resident – queried whether there could be a youth council and that there should be a valid structured survey of the local youth. Could the Town Council look at its budget and ask itself what it was allocating youth reserves for – the priority should be the youth and not the Council looking to re-house itself. It was confirmed to the resident that a needs assessment structures survey had been done that via ERVAS but the Council could look at what other consultations could be done.

A resident – reported that the Town Council did have a MUGA until the land was required by ERYC when it was built on. A replacement one has not been achieved. The Mayor confirmed that a MUGA was built at Mudhills.

2. Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 28th April 2021 (circulated at the meeting)

Proposed: Ian Gow **Seconded:** Margaret Pinder

RESOLVED: *That the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 28th April 2021 are approved as a true and correct record.*

3. Any matters of interest or concern relating to Beverley raised by residents who live within the Parish Boundaries of Beverley.

A resident had raised issues surrounding the Gas Supply to the Town Council Offices on Well Lane.

- It has been in the media that the Council owed £17,000 for a gas supply to the Offices. Why was this not on the list of payments over £500 on the website? – the Acting Town Clerk will do this.
- He was concerned about the history of the service of the boiler – why wouldn't the Council release the report?
- Ofgem
- As soon as the Town Council discovered there was an issue regarding paying a gas supplier, they contacted Northern Gas Networks.
- Subsequently an account with British Gas has been set up.
- Northern Gas Networks have been paid the amount of £17,200 which they calculated as the amount of gas used since 2004.
- The £17,200 was made available via an end of year underspend that was allocated to the Utilities budget line.
- The matter is still currently being dealt with under the Town Council's policies and procedures.

2. Failure of the External Auditor to certify completion of the 2019/20 and 2020/21 accounts of the Town Council.

- The External Auditor has not yet completed this work due to a member of the electorate sending correspondence to them regarding the Town Council's returns.

- Due to the External Auditor's workload their final comments on this have yet to be made, but we should have information from them in the near future.
- The External Auditor is commissioned by the Government – therefore the Town Council has no say in this or control over how they work.

3. The level of Earmarked Reserves held by the Town Council.

The Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) nationally governs how councils work, including management of reserves.

JPAG is enshrined in law and is known as the Proper Practices through the Accounts and Audit Regulation 2015.

- JPAG states: “As with any financial entity, it is essential that authorities have sufficient reserves (general and earmarked) to finance both their day-to-day operations and future plans.”

- **General Reserves**

JPAG states: “General Reserves... comprises its cash flow and contingency funds to cover unexpected inflation, unforeseen events and unusual circumstances. The smaller the authority, the closer the figure may be to 12 months expenditure, the larger the authority, the nearer to 3 months.”

- **Beverley now has only slightly over 3 months' worth of General Reserves. In the past, this level was higher, but has been reduced to fulfil JPAG (£68,224 based on the precept of £272,894). The Internal Auditor was satisfied with this.**

- **Earmarked Reserves**

JPAG states: “There is, in practice, no upper or lower limit to Earmarked Reserves... save only that they must be held for genuine and identifiable purposes and projects, and their level should be subject to regular review and justification (at least annually and at budget setting), and should be separately identified and enumerated.”

- This is exactly what Beverley Town Council has done.
- All reserves have been allocated to budget lines or projects we hope will be completed in this financial year, or for longer term goals, which is also permitted (for example allocated a specified amount each year for a project that will come to fruiting in 5 years time, to spread the cost rather than require it in one lump).
- In addition, the Town Council's Internal Auditor, Internal Audit Yorkshire, was satisfied with how the Town Council is managing its reserves. If they had been unhappy, we would have pulled up on this.
- The one thing we need to do is to adopt a Reserves Policy – this will be done so in the coming months.

Quote from the End of Year Internal Audit: “Earmarked reserves must be genuine and held for intended purposes, and their level should be subject to regular review and justification (at least annually), and should be separately identified. Earmarked reserves are generally held to finance future plans and projects. The Town Council has identified a range of earmarked reserves ... In our last year audit we had recommended that the Town Council adopts a General Reserves policy which we note is in progress.”

If anyone would like a copy of the list of Earmarked Reserves, you are welcome to collect on at the end of the meeting.

4. The proposed Local Governance Review for the Beverley area.

- The East Riding of Yorkshire Council is carrying out a local governance review across the whole county regarding ward and parish boundaries as communities change and grow. This will involve every town, parish and ERYC ward across the whole of East Yorkshire.
- ERYC have confirmed they will be looking at Beverley, especially due to the significant number of new homes being built to the south of the town which actually fall outside of the parish of Beverley and are in Woodmansey, despite people assuming themselves to be in Beverley.
- Molescroft and Woodmansey Parish Council will have also been contacted by ERYC about this, so have the opportunity to state their own cases.
- The Town Council has suggested ERYC may wish to consider incorporating areas of Woodmansey and Molescroft Parishes that link directly with Beverley together to form a larger Beverley Council OR to at least establish formal joint meetings between the councils to work together on issues that affect all residents.
- However, this will be something ERYC will consult on over the following months and the final decision will be theirs.

Note: Each agenda will have a copy of the boundaries attached, so you could point people to it to show the anomalies such as Beverley Parklands, Lincoln Way, Butterfly Meadows, etc.

Questions/Issues raised by Beverley Resident Ronald Laden

1. The spend of the allocation of the sum of £17,000 made to BTC by ERYC in September 2019 for the renewing of information boards around the beck.

- Beverley Town Council has NOT received this funding.
 - It has been ringfenced by ERYC Commuted Sums, but has not been made to the Town Council.
 - As a point of clarification, this is not for the renewing of information boards around the Beck, but creating new interpretation boards to form a nature trail to provide information about the natural heritage of the area.
 - It was never connected to any boards about the built heritage of the area that are already in existence.
-

2. When was this £17,000 spent - and how was it spent

- It has not been spent as it has not been given to the Town Council.
 - Residents can corroborate this by contact the ERYC Commuted Sums team.
-

3. If not spent - why not and what actions are in place to spend this money as agreed, on information boards.

- Project development work was due to start, but the pandemic struck, meaning it had to put on hold.
- Subsequently, due to officer capacity with the absence of the Town Clerk and other higher priority matters needing addressing, this project has been put on hold.

- But the Council is neither in receipt of or holding any actual money from ERYC relating to it in the way the resident believes.

Signature:

Date

DRAFT