

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WANTAGE AND GROVE JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM
HELD IN THE BEACON, PORTWAY, WANTAGE,
ON THURSDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2017 AT 7.00 P.M.**

Present:

Grove Parish Council	Councillor Mrs J Stock and I Weedon.
Wantage Town Council	Councillors C S Dickson, Mrs J Nunn-Price and S Trinder.
Vale of White Horse District Council	Councillors C McCarthy (part), B Mabbett and Mrs J Reynolds.
Wantage Chamber of Commerce	J Goodman (Chairman), Mrs J Hutchinson and Mrs S Mudway.
Officers: District Council	Dr M Smans (part) and N King (part).
Town Team	Ms M Norvell and I Nicholson
Wantage Town Council	Mr W P Falkenau (Clerk).

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Grove Parish Councillors L Foster-Hill and D Rolfe, Wantage Town Councillor Mrs M Gradwell and Chamber of Commerce member Mrs J T Hannaby.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

The Clerk advised that whilst it was the intent to rotate Chairmanship between the nominating bodies, there was no absolute obligation to do so. He gave details of how the Chairmanships had rotated in the past.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Dickson

SECONDED BY Councillor Mrs Stock

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Goodman be the Chairman for the ensuing year.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Goodman

SECONDED BY Councillor Mabbett

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Councillor Dickson be the Vice Chairman for the ensuing year.

4. Minutes of Meeting held on 6 April 2017

The minutes were approved and signed.

5. Matters Arising

a) Lighting in Arbery Arcade

A letter had been sent to the Arcade owner concerning the poor lighting and it had also been mentioned to M&A Electrical, a lighting contractor that had recently occupied a unit in the Arcade.

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b) Business and Innovation Strategy

It was reported that the plan was now available online and that a launch event was due to be held on Tuesday 10 October at 5.30pm at Steventon House Hotel. More details would be published in due course.

The Business Awards for 2017 were due to be launched. There were eight of these and the District Council would be seeking sponsors. Details of potential sponsors should be passed to Dr Smans.

Action: All

6. **Financial statement to September 2017**

The attached statement was noted. It was agreed that the commitment for the Art Shop Trail of £250 should be returned to the general reserves balance.

Action: Clerk

7. **To consider funding for the following projects:**

a) “Love Wantage” promotional shopping bags

Councillor McCarthy arrived.

The Town Team Coordinator recommended the purchase of 500 jute bags with red edge and long handles at a cost of £1,129.95.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Dickson

SECONDED BY Councillor Trinder

IT WAS MOVED that the recommendation be accepted and that the bags be purchased at the cost of £1,129.95.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Stock

SECONDED BY Councillor Mrs Reynolds

IT WAS MOVED that this be amended to short handled bags. The amendment was defeated five in favour, six against. The original proposition was approved eight in favour, two against.

b) Shared bike scheme

A proposal document had been produced by Dr Smans and Mr King. It was noted that the proposal did not include Grovelands Park Shopping Centre where there might be the opportunity to seek business sponsorship. Dr Smans agreed to consider its inclusion.

Action: Dr Smans

Concerns were expressed by Forum members about whether the scheme represented good value for money. There was a need for clarification of the full costs involved.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Stock

SECONDED BY Mrs Hutchinson

IT WAS MOVED that the proposal should not be supported and that any further work on it should cease. This was defeated four in favour, seven against.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor McCarthy

SECONDED BY Councillor Dickson

IT WAS MOVED that the recommendation 14(a) in the proposal “to endorse the Grove and Wantage bike share scheme be adopted subject to more work being done and other funding being sought to reduce the cost to the public purse.” This was approved seven in favour three against.

It was agreed that the recommendation 14(b) “to provide £4,200 funding towards the project” be deferred.

Dr Smans and Mr King left the meeting.

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8. Town Team Coordinator's report

Ms Norvell briefed the meeting per the attached report. Mr Nicholson reported on the section concerning Empty and Available Shop Units. Mr Nicholson had produced a note concerning the planning use classes and how these adversely affected the property market in town centres. He agreed to pass the note to the Clerk for distribution to members. **Action: Nicholson/Clerk**

Concerns were expressed about the state of the former Hodson's shop front. It was currently vacant and the window panes had been obscured.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor McCarthy
SECONDED BY Councillor Mabbett

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Town Mayor should write to the property owner requesting that the windows be tidied up. **Action: Trinder**

It was suggested that some form of shop grant scheme might be considered to encourage owners of other shops to improve their property.

It was agreed the Conservation Officer should be invited to inspect the buildings in the town centre and comment on their condition. **Action: Clerk**

9. General Correspondence and Other Business

a) What's on in Wantage

It was noted that the format and title of this publication had been changed. It no longer focused solely on Wantage. It was suggested that consideration be given to introducing another publication that solely related to Wantage parish. It was noted that Grove already has its own parish newsletter. It was agreed that this matter be referred back to the next meeting. **Action: Clerk**

10. Dates of future meetings

18 January and 19 April 2018.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

WPF/ME

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WANTAGE AND GROVE JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2017/18 AS AT SEPTEMBER 2017

	2016/17	2017/18
INCOME		
Wantage Town Council	1,000	1,000
Grove Parish Council	1,000	1,000
Vale of White Horse District Council	1,000	1,000
Total income	3,000	3,000
EXPENDITURE		
What's On - Wantage.com advert	100	50
Love Wantage website	-	360
Betjeman Bust	5,000	-
Walking/Cycling route cards production	1,597	-
Other	-	-
Total expenditure	6,697	410
NET INCOME/EXPENDITURE	(3,697)	2,590
Reserves balance bfwd	10,780	7,083
Reserves balance cfwd	<u>7,083</u>	<u>9,673</u>
Commitments		
Shopping centre traffic signing	-	1,000
Wantage.com advert	50	50
Drovers Art project	-	-
Art shop trail	250	250
Total commitments	300	1,300
General reserves available	6,783	8,373

wpf 24 August 17

Market Town Co-ordinator Summary JEF September 2017

Current Focus

Parking & Cycling

Parking is a big issue at the moment, with illegal parking and capacity issues at Portway in particular. Portway will improve when the work on the retirement is complete ('Autumn'). Letters have been delivered to town centre businesses on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce to raise the issue of staff parking in the centre and leaving their cars for long periods in short stay areas, thus reducing the number of spaces available for potential customers. Lack of long stay affordable parking and lack of enforcement were the main topics of feedback from the businesses. The District Council permits are all taken and have a waiting list. Civil Parking Enforcement or additional funds for the Police (as Cherwell) would be welcome. The Town Centre Parking report has been updated.

Feedback from cyclists with valuable bikes is still that they would like visible racks in the town centre, preferably near cafes for visiting cyclists so they can keep an eye on them. Some example racks pictured below, prices requested.

There are complaints that the reduced town bus services are stopping people coming and creating more car users in town. Wantage & District Chamber of Commerce have reported there are businesses considering relocation

Promotion

Promotion of the town and businesses continues on social media platforms including Twitter (@wantagetownteam) & Facebook (Wantage Markets/Love Wantage/Wantage & Grove Events). Several blogs have now been produced and appear on [Love Wantage](#).

Love Wantage Promotional Shopping Bag

The proposal is in, with various quotes and a suggested purchase of -
Large Jute, 40cm(w)x35cm(h)x20cm(d) with 65cm handles x 500 via sea:
£1079.95 / £2.16 per bag
or as above with red edging x 500 via sea:
£1129.95 / £2.26 per bag (now agreed 07/09/17)
If this option is taken there is a 12-14wk delivery time to take into account.

Loyalty Scheme

Recent joiners are The Fitness Space, Marmalade, Bronzing Boutique. 72 Businesses, 1740 Cardholders, 1271 signed up for email. New GDPR data laws from May 2018 will affect the scheme data. Vale DC will be advising required measures.

Market

Some actions have been agreed with Wantage Town Council for improvements to the Wednesday market layout and they have a steering group in place to deliver. Moving all stalls to the west and releasing the east side parking is the part of the action plan. Stevenson's have now stopped attending so we have an even larger gap on the west side. New signage options for promoting the market and preventing parking are under consideration.

Video Project

Chris Carter had to cancel again and reschedule for 20th October for the final film in the local heroes series.

Then & Now Exhibition

Scheduled for 2-14 October providing the timescale enough for preparation (only confirmed today). If not it will happen in January.

Café Scientifique

'Wantage: The Last 600 million Years' in July was well attended and easier to manage in the larger room. Took a break for August and we're back in the Beacon cafe for September 12th talk based on an Oxford University study about the connection between genes and mental health.

Town Maps

New maps due this week.

Placemaking - Town Appearance

Several of the businesses around the town centre have poor frontages and have been contacted. Waitrose have had work done, Barclays & Scrivens have works agreed. Nationwide say they are waiting for planning to approve and Mind are pursuing with their head office. No joy yet with Savers & Card Factory. The VC Forecourt maintenance has been approved, yet to be actioned. Thomas Cook have been unable to locate a key for the window display box so I will be contacting agents.

Next Quarter/Ongoing EDAP Focus

- Placemaking – town look
- Then & Now Exhibition
- Parking and cycling provision
- Local Business Awards/Small Business Saturday
- Tourism
- Market support
- Digital walking apps proposal
- Social media promotion
- Loyalty scheme support

Empty and Available Units

We're starting to see movement on a number of the units discussed at the last JEF. Ex-Lifestyle and ex-Heart to Heart are let subject to contract. We have a proposal in to run one of the remaining units as a pop up shop and are considering making a similar offer on a second. The landlord of ex-Valentina is considering a number of offers.

Two units on Mill Street (ex-St Clair Vintage and ex-M&A) are coming onto the market now. The previous agent for ex-M&A Market Place is exploring timings for that going back onto the market.

Two units (ex-Hodsons and the new build on Wallingford Street) have to be sold before being let.

Headline figures:

- Empty and available 7
 - Available but not on the market 4
 - Available but occupied 3
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