

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WANTAGE AND GROVE JOINT ECONOMIC  
FORUM HELD IN THE BEACON, PORTWAY, WANTAGE, ON THURSDAY,  
18 JANUARY 2018 AT 7.00 P.M.**

Present:

Grove Parish Council Representatives      Councillor D Rolfe (part), Mrs J Stock and I Weedon.

Wantage Town Council Representatives      Councillors C S Dickson, Mrs M Gradwell and  
Mrs J Nunn-Price (part).

Vale of White Horse District Council      Councillors Mrs C Dickson, B Mabbett and Mrs J Reynolds (part).

Wantage Chamber of Commerce              Mr J Goodman, Mrs J Hannaby, Mrs J Hutchinson and Mrs S Mudway.

Officers: District Council                      Mr D Cookson  
Town Team Coordinator                      Ms M Norvell  
Wantage Town Council                          Mr W P Falkenau (Clerk)

Observer:    Mr J Wyndham-Rooke (Youth Town Council Deputy Chairman)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C McCarthy and S Trinder, and Dr M Smans, Mr N King and Mr I Nicholson.

**2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None.

**3. Minutes of Meeting held on 7 September 2017**

The minutes were approved and signed.

**4. Matters Arising**

a) 'Love Wantage' promotional shopping bags

There had been a delay on their receipt. The bags were due to be received at the end of February.

b) Shared bike scheme

The scheme was no longer a priority. There were no sponsors to support the scheme.

c) Note re planning use classes

The note from Mr Nicholson had been passed to all members. Mr Nicholson was to be thanked for his input. **Action: Norvell**

Councillor Rolfe arrived.

d) Dressing of former Hodson shop front

Artwork was now being displayed in the shopfront pending the property being sold.

e) Condition of properties in the town centre

The Clerk had not yet referred this to the Conservation Officer.

**Action: Clerk**

**5. To consider need for a Wantage parish newsletter**

It was felt that this was not a matter for the Forum to consider. It was agreed that it should be referred to the Town Council's Promotions, Communications and Events Committee. **Action: Clerk**

**6. Town Team Coordinator's report**

Ms Norvell briefed the meeting as per the attached report.

Parking issues

It was noted that the District Council was reviewing its policy regarding permit issuing. It was agreed that the Forum should support the proposal by Bushbuy to increase the maximum stay time at Kings Park from 2 to 3 hours. **Action: Clerk**

Loyalty Scheme overview

There was a need to clarify ownership of the Loyalty Card data for GDPR responsibilities. It was agreed that this be referred to the Chamber of Commerce. **Action: Norvell**

Councillor Mrs Reynolds left the meeting.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Nunn-Price  
SECONDED BY Councillor Mrs Hannaby

IT WAS MOVED that the Forum meet the cost of the printing of the Loyalty Card application forms and window stickers at a cost of £300. This was approved eight in favour, two against.

The representatives of Grove Parish Council expressed concern that the work of the Town Team Coordinator was not extending to Grove. The Coordinator's current Terms of Reference are only concerned with the town centre. It was agreed to ask the District Council to consider expanding the scope of the Coordinator's work. **Action: Clerk**

Councillor Mrs Nunn-Price left the meeting.

**7. General correspondence and other business**

Mr Wyndham-Rooke advised that the Youth Town Council felt that there was a need to expand and improve the WiFi coverage throughout the town. The coverage in the vicinity of Sainsburys and Manor Road Recreation Ground were poor. Mr Cookson agreed to refer this to the District Council. **Action: Cookson**

**8. Date of next meeting**

19 April 2018 at 7.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 7.58 p.m.

-----

WPF/ME

## **Market Town Co-ordinator Summary - JEF January 2018**

### **Current Focus**

#### **Local Business Awards**

The Local Business Award winners were announced on Dickensian and presented at the Chamber of Commerce Christmas Party, sponsors of the prizes. Five categories - People's Choice Pub and Restaurant, Mayor's Best Kept Shop Front, Exceptional Customer Service Retail & Non-Retail. Good coverage in local press and online.

#### **Then & Now Exhibition**

The 'Then & Now' photo exhibition of the town centre took place during October at the Vale & Downland Museum. Museum fed back it was well attended and it received coverage in local press and on That's Oxfordshire TV. Lot's of interest in the photos on Facebook via the Old Wantage page.

#### **Art Exhibition in ex-Hodson's**

We have collaborated with the Wantage Art Group to install an art display in 1-3 Market Place until the sale goes through. Scheduled to be refreshed 22 January. Positive local feedback and good coverage in local press.

#### **Parking Issues**

Discussions have continued regarding parking issues and these currently fall into three main areas – enforcement, parking for town workers and increasing the length of stay at King's Park.

We remain without effective street parking enforcement and the town centre is subject to cars being left for long periods in prime spaces and in problematic locations. No recent updates on Civil Parking Enforcement or alternative options received at co-ordinator level. The Police are issuing occasional tickets but resource unavailable for regular enforcement.

Town workers have expressed the need for affordable parking and we have looked at the permit situation in Vale car parks. Headlines are: All permits have a waiting list. A seven day activity report indicates there is capacity at Limborough Road only, certainly enough to clear the 3 on waiting list, with consideration for more. Discussion regarding allowing more business permits over residential permits would need to happen (currently 50/50). There is an argument that business permits are more of a benefit to the town centre economy than residential parking in prime spaces. A more extensive review would be helpful to inform this issue. There is also quite a jump in price between the two (£143 residential/£455 business) which could be reviewed as prohibitive to those on lower salaries. Also, until enforcement is resolved workers can usually park on the streets without penalty, lowering the incentive to pay for a permit in the first place.

Bushbuy would like to see the maximum stay time at King's Park increased from 2 to 3 hours. This would reduce the parking tickets issued there, a positive improvement, and has the potential to ease capacity issues at Portway. It would need agreement from the signatories of the original development agreement (SSL, Vale & OCC) and this is being looked into. If an increased stay length has to include the Vale DC car park on King's Park then this is a wider issue and less easily achievable.

#### **Love Wantage Promotional Shopping Bag**

Bags are on order although delivery has been delayed due to a supply issue. Now due end-February. The supplier has offered a quantity airfreighted at their expense if required.

#### **Facebook Workshop**

A Facebook workshop took place on 17 January to help local businesses maximise the use of the platform for promotion. 15 participants attended, funded via VW HDC. More workshops may be worth consideration after feedback assessment.

### Loyalty Scheme Overview

The loyalty scheme launched in December 2011 as a platform to promote local businesses and create a database of local shoppers from card purchases. Cards are sold to participating businesses for £1.50 each and sold on to shoppers for £2, a one off purchase that entitles them to all the offers of the businesses in the scheme. It is still performing as a database with 71 businesses and 1758 cardholders on the system, 1318 signed up for the monthly email newsletter. The average email open rate in 2017 was 40% with 149 clicks on links. The newsletter is used to introduce new businesses, promote town projects and events and list the loyalty card offers.

Currently the scheme is 'ticking over' and would benefit from a review next quarter if the town team work continues, to explore possibilities for increasing card sales and proactive business engagement. The application form and business information leaflet are due a reprint with estimated costs for design and print work of £200. Vinyl window stickers 1<sup>st</sup> quote is £99.

Recent joiners to the scheme are The Volunteer Inn, Bold Antiques and M & A Electrical. 72 Businesses in total. [Sign up to the newsletter here.](#)

### Video Project

All the Local Stories videos are complete now, Morris Men and Garry Kingett are live on the LW YouTube channel and website, Chris Carter to be released early Feb. [View here.](#)

We have some new joiners to town and some in the pipeline since the initial Food, Drink and Shopping videos, and consideration could be given for town centre update video/s later in the year if the town team work continues. Approx £150-250.

### Café Scientifique

We are pretty much at seating capacity in the Beacon for Cafe Scientifique now, with 51 people attending the last talk on Wind & Solar Energy. Four more speakers are booked so far for 2018, with the next talk on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb about Silicon Fuel.

### Empty and Available Units

#### **Empty & Available                      4 units**

Ex-Valentina Newbury Street; New Build, Wallingford Street (sold STC now to be let as 1 or 2 units); No 7 Retail Park, Ex-HSBC, Market Place (from March)

#### **Available but not on market              2 units**

Ex-Villa Chinese, Mill Street & Ex-Jade Palace, Market Place (same owner),

#### **Available but occupied                      2 units**

Mind, Market Place (looking for lease assignment); NatWest, Newbury Street (branch to close on 23 May 2018)

#### **Under Offer                                      5 units**

Ex-Zagros (awaiting action by new owners); M&A Market Place (subject to planning); Ex-Lifestyle, Market Place (Let STC - Greens); Ex-Enhance Beauty, Market Place Courtyard (on market with RS Retail); Ex-Hodson's, Market Place (subject to planning. Town Team-facilitated art display in as meanwhile use)

To Note:

Arbery Arcade is now fully let again with recent arrival, Bold Antiques, having moved to a larger unit and their first unit taken by new comer to the town, Bisoux Jewellery.

-----