

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WANTAGE AND GROVE JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM
HELD IN THE BEACON, PORTWAY, WANTAGE,
ON THURSDAY, 19 APRIL 2018 AT 7.00 P.M.**

Present:

Grove Parish Council	Councillor R Ackers, D Rolfe, Mrs J Stock and I Weeden.
Wantage Town Council	Councillors Mrs M Gradwell, Mrs J Nunn-Price (part) and S Trinder.
Vale of White Horse District Council	Councillors C McCarthy.
Wantage Chamber of Commerce	J Goodman (Chairman) and Mrs J Hutchinson.
Officers: District Council	Dr M Smans.
Wantage Town Council	Mr W P Falkenau (Clerk).
Others present:	One member of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Wantage Town Councillor C S Dickson, Vale of White Horse District Councillors Mrs C Dickson, B Mabbett and Mrs J Reynolds, District Council Officer N King, Town Team Coordinator Ms M Norvell and Chamber of Commerce members Mrs J T Hannaby and Mrs S Mudway.

2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 18 January 2018

The minutes were approved and signed.

4. Matters Arising

a) Update on condition of properties in the town centre

Details of properties requiring attention had been passed to the Conservation Officer. It was noted that none of the properties were in such poor condition that the Conservation Officer would be able to take legal action. The Town Mayor had contacted some shop owners in the town centre requesting that attention be given. It was noted that none of the shops in Grove fell within a conservation area and therefore the Conservation Officer would have no powers to intervene. A few years ago, there had been a Shopfront Grant Scheme administered by the Town Council and funded by others. Dr Smans agreed to investigate whether there were any District Council funds that could be made available for a Shopfront Grant Scheme.

Action: Dr Smans

b) Update on need for a Wantage parish newsletter

This had been referred to the Town Council. The Town Council had advertised for volunteers to see if a newsletter was viable. It was agreed that no further action be taken by the Forum on this matter.

c) Update on parking issues

There had been no progress on extending the free parking time on the Kings Park parking spaces from two hours to three hours. The Clerk had recently received a complaint from a member of the public about a lack of a Pay and Display parking spaces in the Limborough Road area for longer stay parking. The person had been unaware of the District Council Pay and Display car parks. The Clerk suggested that consideration be given to installing signs directing visitors to the spaces for longer stay.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor McCarthy
SECONDED BY Mrs Hutchinson

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IT WAS RESOLVED that the Clerk should seek quotes for the signs. **Action: Clerk**

d) Update on Loyalty Scheme GDPR responsibilities

It was noted that the District Council was deemed to be the Data Controller.

e) Update on need to expand and improve the WiFi coverage throughout the town

Dr Smans reported that an investigation was being undertaken to identify what improvements might be needed to improve WiFi in Wantage and Grove.

5. Wantage and Grove JEF briefing paper – District Council Market Town Support

The briefing paper was noted. It was advised that the District Council was to employ a Market Town Coordinator to cover all the towns and Grove in the district. It was agreed that thanks be recorded to Ms Norvell and Mr Nicholson for their work in supporting the Town Team over the past few years.

The briefing paper did not indicate whether the funding previously provided for the Town Team Coordinators was being maintained at the same level. Dr Smans agreed to provide clarification concerning this. **Action: Dr Smans**

The briefing paper put forward different scenarios for the future of the Forum and the Town Team. It was noted that any changes to the constitution of the Forum or its disbandment were the responsibility of the constituent parties i.e. the District Council, Wantage Town Council, Grove Parish Council and Wantage and Grove Chamber of Commerce.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Goodman

SECONDED BY Councillor Mrs Nunn-Price

IT WAS RESOLVED that the briefing paper be referred to these constituents. **Action: Clerk**

Councillor Mrs Nunn-Price left the meeting.

6. To note receipt of Love Wantage shopping bags and consider arrangements for their distribution

There was discussion about whether the bags should be sold or given away.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor McCarthy

SECONDED BY Councillor Trinder

IT WAS MOVED that the bags be given away and that authority be delegated to Chairman and Clerk to determine how to distribute. This was approved six in favour, none against.

Ideas on how to distribute were to be referred to the Chairman or Clerk. **Action: All**

7. To consider renewal of the Love Wantage website hosting contract for a further year at a cost of £360.

It was noted future plans of the District Council involved promoting the Love Wantage brand. It was noted that the service provided was more than hosting and included maintenance of the website.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Goodman

SECONDED BY Councillor Trinder

IT WAS RESOLVED that the website contract be renewed at a cost of £360.

8. Town Team Coordinator's report

The attached report was noted. The Forum reiterated its thanks to the Town Team Coordinator for her work.

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A number of items within the report fell within the responsibility of Wantage Town Council. It was agreed that these were matters for the Town Council to take forward rather than the Forum.

9. General Correspondence and Other Business

None.

10. Dates of future meetings

28 June, 6 September 2018 and 17 January 2019.

The meeting closed at 8.15 p.m.

WPF/ME

Market Town Co-ordinator Summary JEF April 2018

Final Update Report

This is the final report of the current Market Town Co-ordinator and includes some suggestions for consideration going forward.

Place Management

Excellent improvements have been made, notably the work of WTC improving the VC forecourt area and statue cleaning. As per the previously circulated photos there are a collection of buildings that would benefit from some external work to help maintain the appearance of the town centre. Dialogue with relevant parties to encourage improvements has been successful in the past and is recommended, and if any fall under conservation control to follow this up where appropriate.

Other areas for consideration include -

Shopping trolleys remain very visible in the Market Place, storing cones etc for the market and the 3 tiered planter to the west end spends much of the year empty and unattractive. Suggest revisiting these via WTC Leisure & Amenities to consider improvement options.

The parking signs for Vale car park are very dirty and are in the front line for visitors. Requests have been made regarding this via the co-ordinator and Cllr Trinder and cleaning may now be scheduled. Monitor.

The [High Street UK2020](#) project identified appearance at number 2 in the top 25 factors to increase performance of a town centre, a topic to prioritise for Wantage!

Then & Now Photo Exhibition

This may reappear as window display in an available unit, options under discussion with voluntary support from Cllr Goodman going forward. The Museum can offer temporary use of 2 display boards. For the complete display 3 boards are required.

Art Exhibition in ex-Hodson's

The Wantage Art Group temporary display remains in 1-3 Market Place and any action required will be overseen with voluntary support from Cllr Goodman.

Love Wantage Promotional Shopping Bag

500 bags are now available for resale via shops/Museum and/or promotional give-aways. A discount of 15% was applied to the original price due to the delayed transit, bringing the final price per bag to £1.90.

Town Centre Crime Communication

Following thefts from businesses in Church St, Arbery Acade and Newbury St, discussions have taken place with retailers, Cllr Trinder and the Police. This resulted in the creation of a WhatsApp group to provide a method of fast information sharing among town centre businesses in the event of an incident. The WhatsApp platform has proved a useful addition for rural crime reporting, according to the Police. The group has a pilot of 6 business members and the Police. Steve Taylor of Toy Planet will act as administrator.

Wantage & Grove Loyalty Scheme

The future of the loyalty scheme is unconfirmed at the time of writing. The updates to leaflet and application forms referred to in January summary have not proceeded. Some design work had been completed with the costs covered by VWHDC.

Café Scientifique

Topic for 8th May is 'God and Science'. Faith Culshaw and John Vandore have kindly agreed to act as volunteers taking Cafe Scientifique forward separately from the Town Team and will oversee the talks we have booked for the rest of the year. Visit [Cafe Sci Facebook page](#) & [Cafe Scientifique](#) for more information.

Wantage & Grove Facebook Events

The outgoing Co-ordinator, Mim Norvell, will continue to administer the [W & G Events page](#) voluntarily, separate from the Town Team.

Cycling & Pedestrian Provision

As part of the Co-ordinator updated parking report, suggestions were made for additional bike racks in response to requests for more racks in the town centre, in prominent places for extra security and a visible reminder of cycling as an option. An example of a [branded rack](#) suggested by Oxfordshire Cycle Network is pictured below. Suggest as an item for further discussion via WTC Leisure & Amenities.

Another item on the report for consideration was crossing ramps/speed tables at the main road entrances to the Market Place. If considered appropriate these would improve the pedestrian experience around the centre, particularly for the less able, buggy and wheelchair users. Safety-wise ramps would slow the traffic and perhaps encourage use of the roads that bypass the town centre by drivers cutting through. Mill Street entrance in particular would benefit from pedestrian improvement. Bus/lorry use and noise are among consideration factors. Example of Faringdon ramp below.



Love Wantage Website/Social Media Platforms

Any updates required to the content and the Google maps will be completed by end April.

Chamber and VWHDC in discussions regarding management of the site going forward at the time of writing and it is understood the new Market Town Officer will take responsibility for all Love Wantage activity.

Markets

Promotion has continued via the Markets [facebook page](#) and a decision is required whether this will be passed on to WTC or be discontinued. Currently 811 followers.

The Wednesday market is still very patchy and the previous suggestion of moving the fruit and veg over to the west side (as per Saturday market) is still felt worthy of consideration, releasing parking on the east side and to tighten up the appearance and improve the footfall to the other stalls on the west side. Consideration for relocating the fruit & veg lorry currently taking spaces is required.

Google My Business

This project is complete and most town centre business now have an up to date presence on GMB.

Google Trail Maps

Maps are being created on Google to match the Walking Routes and will go live on the Love Wantage website by the end of April on the [Maps & Guides](#) page.

Empty and Available Units

Empty & Available **4 units**

Wallingford St new build, Market Place Courtyard, ex-HSBC, No 7 Retail Park

Available but not on market **2 units**

ex-Jade Palace, ex-Villa Chinese

Available but occupied **2 units**

Mind, NatWest

Under Offer **3 units**

ex-Lifestyle, ex-Zagros, ex-Hodsons

There will be one further report from the town team in its current line-up, submitted to Vale at the end of April. It is the co-ordinator's conclusion that had the empty and available units been left solely to market forces over the last five years we would have less diversity of businesses in the town. Consideration for future support in this area is recommended.

We are extremely grateful for all the enthusiasm and support received during our term and we wish this wonderful town all the very best for the next stage of town team support.

Mim Norvell & Iain Nicholson
