

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE
COMMITTEE OF WANTAGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD AT THE BEACON, PORWAY,
WANTAGE ON MONDAY 31 JANUARY 2022 AT 7.30 P.M.**

Committee members present: Councillor A Crawford (Chairman)
Councillors A Dunford, A Duveen, J T Hannaby, A C Menzies,
P M O’Leary, J Sibbald, S Third and C Walters.

Others present: W Jestico – Amegos Theatre (part)
R Boulter and H Pittard – Vale Academy Trust (part)

Town Clerk: W P Falkenau

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I R Cameron, A Gilhome,
E L Johnson, A Przybysz, I L Sheldon and C H Wills-Wright.

Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Hannaby declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Wantage Hospital
League of Friends, a trustee of the Wantage Nursing Home Trust, a trustee of the Vale
Community Impact and a Governor of Stockham Primary School.

Councillor Walters declared an interest as an employee of the Vale Academy Trust.

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2021

The minutes were approved and signed.

29. Statements and Questions from the Public

Donation requests:

b) Amegos Theatre

Mr Jestico gave a briefing on the Theatre’s forthcoming production of “Me and My Girl”.
After answering questions, he was thanked for the briefing and he left the meeting.

a) Vale Academy Trust – Character and Citizenship Awards Scheme

Ms Pittard and Ms Boulter gave a briefing on the proposed awards scheme. This involved
primary school children undertaking a series of tasks and activities to complete bronze,
silver, gold and platinum stages to help develop their skills. It was envisaged that the stages
would be completed over a three year period, but this was dependent upon the individual
child. . A major cost was the provision of high quality, durable, printed material. Ms Pittard
advised that whilst the donation was for the Vale Academy Trust schools, she was happy to
share details of the resources produced with other primary schools but would not have the
time to deliver the scheme herself. After answering questions, Ms Pittard and Ms Boulter
were thanked for the briefing and they left the meeting.

30. Matters arising from the minutes

a) Update on plans to pedestrianise western end of the Market Place

A significant outcome was achieved, before Christmas, when the County Council agreed to introduce an experimental order that allowed the area to remain closed for a further eighteen months from 2 January. This indicated that the County Council was giving its support to the pedestrianisation proposals.

A stage had been reached where it was thought that ways of overcoming sight line and other obstacles to the scheme had been identified. The consultants were in the process of bringing together plans for referral to the County Council. The Clerk was to request that these be available for review by the Council at its meeting on 14 February. **Action: Clerk**

b) Future ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the Manor Road Recreational Ground

There was no further progress to report. The District Council was still seeking to recruit staff to fill vacancies.

c) Request for CCTV camera in Wallingford Street

To the question was the camera upgrade and new camera in Wallingford Street still on track for end of March, the District Council had responded by email on 25 January: "I'm not sure – it depends on the availabilities of the company to whom we award the contract. I am particularly mindful about the current issues with staffing generally re. Covid which may impact on product availability and man power to undertake the works. What I can say is that we are pushing ahead to try and get the project completed as soon as possible and we are continuing to make progress."

d) Replacement of street signs

The District Council had invited the Town Council to take over the whole responsibility for the ordering and installation of the signs. There was disappointment at this outcome. The Chairman agreed to engage with the District Council concerning this. **Action: Crawford**

e) Room arrangements concerning holding of physical meetings

The main hall at The Beacon had been booked until the end of February. For some of the recent committee meetings there had only been seven persons in attendance. It was agreed that from 1 March most committee meetings should be held in the smaller rooms with only the full Council and Policy, Management and Finance Committee meetings being held in the large hall. **Action: Clerk**

f) Opening of bank account with Unity Trust Bank

The minutes approving the opening of the account had been signed, but this coincided with the bank suspending the opening of new accounts until 1 January. The Clerk was to proceed with the opening of the account at the earliest opportunity. **Action: Clerk**

POLICY

31. To consider notes of informal online meeting of members of Health Sub-committee on 6 December 2021.

At its meeting on 13 December, the Council had approved a number of actions arising from the notes above. The Clerk had not yet progressed these because this coincided with a rapid increase in Covid cases and subsequent increase of patients in hospital. With these numbers now falling, the Clerk was to progress the actions as soon as possible. **Action: Clerk**

There was a discussion about inviting the MP and the Thames Valley Police Commissioner to council meetings.

32. Minutes of the Climate Emergency Sub-committee meeting held on 10 January 2022.

The minutes were considered. The meeting with KA Academy teachers had been delayed. A request had been received from Zero Hour Oxfordshire seeking the signing of an open letter to Oxfordshire MPs asking them to support the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill. The committee felt the letter was acceptable, with the exception of a statement concerning the establishment of a Climate and Nature Assembly. The Clerk was to inform Zero Oxfordshire of this. **Action: Clerk**

Zero Hour Oxfordshire had also put forward the following quote to be published on the Council's behalf – "Wantage Town Council are proud to support the Climate & Ecological Emergency Bill and invite all councils to follow suit. Councils at all levels are responsible for delivery of both climate change mitigation and eco-system regeneration strategies, which is why we urgently need a robust, joined-up, framework for policy that is in line with the latest science". The committee agreed that the quote was acceptable. The Clerk was to advise Zero Hour Oxfordshire of this. **Action: Clerk**

33. To consider email from the District Council's Democratic Services Officer dated 11 January 2022 concerning members' allowances.

Since 2003, parish councils have had the power to pay allowances to its members. This was separate from the power to pay a Chairman/Mayor's allowance, that predates this. The Town Council had agreed in the past not to pay allowances. The email above also provided guidance on paternity leave. This was not immediately relevant to this council.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Walters
SECONDED BY Councillor Menzies

IT WAS RESOLVED to maintain the policy of not paying members' allowances.

34. To consider giving the Council's support to Parkinsons.me events.

The charity was seeking support for three events. The first, which involved a request to use the Town Council's logo, couldn't be accommodated due to timing. It was unclear what the second event "Turning the Wantage area blue" meant. The third event involved fund raising through an event at The Beacon. The Mayor indicated that he would be happy to give an allocation from his free events for this. The Clerk was to inform the charity of this and of the Council's support in general. **Action: Clerk**

35. To consider invitation to join Friends of the Ridgeway.

It was agreed to join at an annual subscription of £15.

36. Update regarding Kingsgrove Community Hall.

The Clerk gave an update. Work was continuing in trying to sort out the legal arrangements for the construction and management of the hall. He had been advised that there may need to be as many as five separate agreements to cover the obligations arising from the S106 agreement. It was hoped that heads of terms would be agreed fairly soon. There was a view that the lease proposed in the S106 agreement was unworkable and therefore the procedure for amending the S106 agreement would have to be followed. There will also be a need to progress a planning application for the final design of the building. There was a Crab Hill Forum meeting to be held on 14 February at which more information might be available.

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

37. To consider meeting schedule for 2022/23

A draft schedule was considered. The Health Sub-committee was to be held on a Thursday. The Clerk was to check that none of the meetings would be held on the first Thursday in the month, as this would clash with another meeting. **Action: Clerk**

A Council meeting scheduled for the 28 November was to be moved to 5 December. The Clerk was to update the schedule and reissue. **Action: Clerk**

38. To consider the interim report of the internal auditor dated 26 November 2021.

The report was noted.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Walters
SECONDED BY Councillor Menzies

IT WAS RESOLVED that the Clerk prepare a response, in consultation with the Chairman, for referral to the Council meeting. **Action: Clerk**

39. Accounts for Payment.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Walters
SECONDED BY Councillor Menzies

IT WAS RESOLVED that the accounts for payment in the sum of £111,019.36 (attached) be approved.

40. General correspondence.

None.

Confidential items

ON THE PROPOSITION of the Chairman
IT WAS RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded.

41. To consider donation requests

a) Vale Academy Trust – Character and Citizenship Awards Scheme

Councillor Walters left the meeting for this item.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor O’Leary
SECONDED BY Councillor Dunford
IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that a donation of £1,750 be made to the Vale Academy Trust to contribute to the cost of the awards scheme. (power – S137)

The Clerk was to request that the Council’s logo be featured on printed and promotional material. **Action: Clerk**

b) Amegos Theatre

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Hannaby
SECONDED BY Councillor Menzies
IT WAS RESOLVED to make a donation of £800 to the theatre group to contribute to the cost of its forthcoming production of “Me and My Girl” . (power – Arts)

c) Wantage Choral Society

The Society was seeking sponsorship of £350 for a soloist at an event in the parish church on 13 March.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Hannaby
SECONDED BY Councillor Walters
IT WAS RESOLVED to make a donation of £350 to sponsor a soloist. (power – Arts)

d) Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA)

OPA was seeking a donation of £1,000 towards the cost of organising a ‘Play and Activity Day’ in the Manor Road Recreation Ground, scheduled for 30 July 2022. This would be in a similar form to the event held in 2014.

ON THE PROPOSITION OF Councillor Crawford
SECONDED BY Councillor Duveen
IT WAS RESOLVED to make a donation of £1,000 to OPA, with up to a further £500 should a charge be levied by the District Council for use of the Manor Road Recreation Ground. (power – Entertainment)

42. Staffing update.

The market attendant had left the council's employment at the end of December. Following a failure to be able to recruit a replacement, his departure had been covered by White Horse Horticulture dealing with duties in the early morning and a former employee covering the duties in the afternoon.

The above only covered the market duties. The Clerk had still been unable to find anyone willing to take on the parking attendant duties. The Clerk was to investigate whether some arrangement could be made with the other parking bodies which had attendants visiting the town. **Action: Clerk**

43. Arrangements for grass cutting contract for the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Quotes were due to be sought for the coming grass cutting season. The current contractor was currently providing a wide range of services to the Town Council beyond the contract. The provision of these services could be put at risk, if another contractor was employed. It would seem inappropriate to seek quotes from others, if it was almost certain that the contract would be placed with the current contractor. It was agreed to consider suspending standing orders and financial regulations. The Clerk was to refer a proposal to the Council meeting for its consideration.

Action: Clerk

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

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Wantage Town Council		Accounts for Payment - November 2021 to January 2022			
Date	Payee	Description	Powers	Ref	£
01/12/2021	Abbey Properties	Market Attendant's shed rent	OA 1985	SO	100.00
01/01/2022	Abbey Properties	Market Attendant's garage rent	OA 1985	SO	250.00
01/12/2021	VWHDC	Cemetery Rates	Burials	DD	87.00
01/12/2021	VWHDC	Rates for Market	OA1985	DD	247.00
01/12/2021	VWHDC	Rates for car park	OA1985	DD	404.00
01/01/2022	VWHDC	Cemetery Rates	Burials	DD	87.00
01/01/2022	VWHDC	Rates for Market	OA1985	DD	247.00
01/01/2022	VWHDC	Rates for car park	OA1985	DD	404.00
04/12/2021	Barclays	Bank charges	LGA 72	DD	10.90
06/01/2022	Barclays	Bank charges	LGA 72	DD	13.30
15/11/2021	BNP Paribas	Photocopier lease	LGA 72	DD	227.19
19/11/2021	NEST	Pension contribution payments	Office	DD	405.28
19/11/2021	Staff - various	November payroll	Office/OA1985	Bacs	8,688.64
21/12/2021	NEST	Pension contribution payments	Office	DD	404.50
21/12/2021	Staff - various	December payroll	Office/OA1985	Bacs	9,922.68
21/01/2022	NEST	Pension contribution payments	Office	DD	358.62
21/01/2022	Staff - various	January payroll	Office/OA1985	Bacs	9,038.70
		Total direct debits			<u>30,895.81</u>
11/11/2021	Barclaycard	Quickbooks/adobe subs, stationery, keys cut	Office, allotments	Online	111.19
11/11/2021	HMRC	PAYE October	Office/OA1985	Online	1,974.61
11/11/2021	M Merchant	Design of Christmas market leaflet	Information	Online	80.00
29/11/2021	Aasvogel	Cemetery skip	Burials	Online	288.00
29/11/2021	Barclaycard	Quickbooks/adobe Survey Monkey subs, three laptops,	Office	Online	1,302.16
29/11/2021	Charlton Environmental	Weedkilling treatment	Highways	Online	954.00
29/11/2021	HMRC	PAYE November	Office/OA1985	Online	1,863.48
29/11/2021	L Smith	Bus shelter cleaning	Street furniture	Online	110.00
29/11/2021	Peggy Ley	Newsletter design	Information	Online	225.00
29/11/2021	SGW Payroll	Payroll services November	Office/OA1985	Online	66.12
29/11/2021	Solopress	Newsletter printing	Information	Online	524.47
29/11/2021	Windowflowers	Winter floral displays	Tourism	Online	3,012.00
06/12/2021	VWHDC	Beacon room hire	LGA 72	Online	561.60
10/12/2021	CDC Electrical	Installation of Christmas lights	Tourism	Online	8,853.00
10/12/2021	W P Falkenau	Cable ties for Christmas decorations	Tourism	Online	15.00
10/12/2021	IAC Audit	Internal audit review	LGA 72	Online	428.00
10/12/2021	M&C Belcher	Entertainment at Christmas market	Tourism	Online	310.00
10/12/2021	Red Corner	Photocopier charges	Office	Online	17.50
10/12/2021	SB Builders	VC Forecourt maintenance	LGA 72	Online	162.00
10/12/2021	VWHDC	CCTV contribution	Crime prevention	Online	2,135.98
10/12/2021	VWHDC	Refreshments for Lord Lieutenant event	Entertainment	Online	121.25
23/12/2021	Be Free Young Carers	Donation	Information	6618	6,000.00
29/12/2021	Aasvogel	Cemetery skip	Burials	Online	288.00
29/12/2021	BT	Telephone services	LGA 72	Online	103.41
29/12/2021	Crab Hill Developments	Rent for Grove Road allotment site	Allotments	Online	342.00

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