

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WANTAGE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN WANTAGE CIVIC HALL, PORTWAY, ON
MONDAY, 15 JUNE, 2009, AT 7.30 P.M.**

Present: Councillor B H Armitage (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs P Brundle, Mrs J Hannaby, P O'Leary,
P Kent, J Morgan, Mrs J Reynolds, Major J Sibbald (part),
Mrs L Todd and Mrs E A Turner.

District Councillor Mrs J Hutchinson and Mr R Turnbull
(Wantage Displays Committee) – Up to item 3(f).

One member of the public.

Clerk: Mr W P Falkenau.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Crawford, A J Geden, E C Goldsmith, M Green, Ms N J Hanna and Dr I C E Turcu. Apologies for later arrival were received from Councillor Major Sibbald.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mrs Hannaby declared personal interests in the Joint Environmental Trust, Twinning Association, Health Committee, Nursing Home Trust, Hospital League of Friends and the Royal British Legion. Councillor Mrs Turner declared personal interests in the Joint Environmental Trust and the Wantage Silver Band. Councillor Mrs Reynolds declared a personal interest in the Wantage Summer Festival.

Minutes of Meeting held on 23 March, 2009

The minutes were approved and signed.

It was agreed that Agenda Item 6 be taken out of order, and that Councillor Mrs Hutchinson and Mr Turnbull, members of the Displays Committee, be invited to speak to the meeting.

**6. Consideration of Organisational Arrangements of the Displays Committee
(Item taken out of order)**

Mr Turnbull gave an outline of the background and history of the Committee. Some years ago the Chamber of Commerce Christmas Decoration Committee had been combined with the Wantage-in-Bloom Committee. The purpose of this was for the two activities to share the same columns and structures in the town centre. New columns had been funded through the Town Council. The Displays Committee had eight members, one being a representative of the Town Council, one from the District Council and the others from the Chamber of Commerce or volunteers. A point had been reached where it was no longer practical for the physical work of the installation and removal of the displays to be carried out by volunteers. Health and Safety and statutory regulations made it necessary for work to be undertaken by contractors. There was no longer suitable storage available to accommodate equipment when not in use. For these reasons, the Committee had decided that the only practical option was to enter into a hiring agreement whereby contractors installed and removed the displays and stored equipment when not in use. In 2008 the displays in Mill Street, Grove Street and part of the town had been significantly improved, and this had been welcomed by the public. In future years the aim was to improve the displays

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throughout the town. For 2009, the income forecast was £9,220, and the expenditure forecast £11,840 (£3,040 for floral displays and £8,800 for Christmas decorations). There was a need to make up the shortfall in some way or cut back on the decorations provided.

Councillor Mrs Hutchinson reported on the background concerning the provision of the floral displays. She advised that in the current economic climate it was proving very difficult to secure funding from local businesses. She was in the process of preparing a constitution for the Committee to enable it to secure a grant from the District Council. Both she and Mr Turnbull felt that there was a need to put in place arrangements for the longer-term future of the Displays Committee, with the possibility of it becoming a sub-committee of the Town Council.

Councillors were appreciative of the work being done by the Displays Committee and were supportive of the suggestion that the Displays Committee become a sub-committee of the Town Council.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Clerk should prepare a draft Constitution and that, if necessary, the Town Council should make up the shortfall in the funding for the Displays Committee in 2009. **Action: Clerk**

A suggestion was made that the Christmas lighting should be installed mid-November, rather than early December. Councillor Mrs Hutchinson and Mr Turnbull agreed to consider this

1. Statements and Questions from the Public

None.

2. Reports from Community Officers : Thames Valley Police

PC Darren James was not present. A comprehensive Neighbourhood Policing update had recently been published and circulated to all Councillors. This gave a full and thorough report on community policing activities, and was welcomed.

3. Matters Arising

(a) Vale and Downland Museum Trust

At the Annual Council meeting it had been agreed that the new Administrator be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to report on his initial experiences and findings in his new role. **Action: Clerk**

(b) Community Group Discounts : Wantage Civic Hall

Councillors Morgan and Mrs Turner declared personal and prejudicial interests being associated with organisations using the Civic Hall, and left the meeting for this item.

Councillor Major Sibbald arrived.

The Chairman, the Town Mayor and the Clerk had been charged with producing a statement which defined the Town Council's approach towards community discounts. The following policy statement was put forward – "Applications will be considered from voluntary organisations which are uniquely based in the local community". All

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applications received would be considered against this policy/criteria. The Clerk advised that applications had been received from Wantage Diving Club, Wantage Field Club, Wantage Art Group, Vale and Downland Beekeepers, Wantage Association of Retired Persons, Wantage Stage-Musical, Wantage Flower Club, Wantage Decorative and Fine Arts Society and Wantage Community Church. The Clerk advised that the Town Council had clear powers to support all the groups, with the exception of the Community Church.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Todd,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the policy statement be adopted and that the applications received be assessed against this.

(c) Town Council Website

Councillor Kent had taken photographs of Councillors. These had not yet been incorporated into the website. **Action: Clerk**

(d) Pedestrian Crossing at Limborough Road Development

There was nothing further to report.

(e) Future of Wantage Civic Hall

Councillors had recently met District Councillor Richard Webber, the Executive Committee member responsible for the Civic Hall. Whilst assuring councillors that the future of the Civic Hall was secure, he had advised that it could no longer continue to operate in its current costly manner. He wanted to work with the local community to find ways of operating it at a much lower cost. It was left with Councillor Webber to consult with others and come forward with proposals for the future operation of the Civic Hall.

Some Councillors expressed concern that there was a lack of information concerning the costs associated with operating the Civic Hall. The Clerk reported that a range of financial information had been passed to the Town Council over the past two years, and that this information was still reasonably relevant. He agreed to collate and distribute this information. **Action : Clerk**

(f) Wantage Market Place Lay-out Proposals : Next Stage

The Chairman reported on recent activities following the consultation days. The display boards had been placed in the Local Services Point and the Wantage Museum, where the public had been given the opportunity to make comments. It was agreed to discontinue any further consultation activity. The Chairman reported that of the 104 forms he had analyzed, 72% had been in favour of plan A, 17% in favour of Plan B, and 11% favoured neither. Work had not yet been undertaken on analyzing points and suggestions contained in the forms.

The proposals concerning the future lay-out involved discontinuing the practice of buses waiting in the Market Place between journeys. It was proposed that during any stop-over, buses should wait in Seesen Way and only drop-off and pick-up passengers in the Market Place. There was no reason why this proposal could not be pursued in advance of lay-out changes. It was agreed that this be referred to the Planning Committee to progress it. **Action : Clerk**

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The Clerk was to distribute a press release reporting on the outcome of the consultation. **Action : Clerk**

It was agreed that Councillors should review and analyze the questionnaire forms for suggestions and comments. The Clerk was to copy the forms to a pdf file and distribute them by email to all Councillors. **Action : Clerk**

Councillor Armitage agreed to complete the analysis of the forms. **Action : Armitage**

Quotes were being sought from consultants for taking the Market Place proposals to their next stage. In anticipation of this, there was a need to start developing presentations and proposals for referral to other local authorities with a view to seeking funding. The Chairmen of this Committee and the Planning Committee were to work together on this. **Action : Armitage/Sibbald**

Councillor Mrs Hannaby agreed to brief District Council and County Council officers on the work being undertaken. **Action : Hannaby**

The intention was to lodge proposals with other bodies in time for them to include a contribution in their budgets for 2010/11.

POLICY

4. Minutes of the Joint Environmental Trust Meeting held on 23 April, 2009

The minutes had only recently been published, and had not been distributed to Councillors. The Clerk was to arrange their distribution. **Action : Clerk**

The meeting that was to be held on 19 June, 2009, had been cancelled due to the ill-health of the District Council's Conservation Officer, Mr. Grant Audley-Miller.

5. Minutes of the Joint Economic Forum Meeting held on 28 May, 2009

6(a) - Wantage Health-Check : HARBUG

It was noted that the Harwell Bicycle Users Group (HARBUG) intended to conduct surveys concerning the suitability of cycleway links in Wantage and Grove.

6(h) – King Alfred's Statue Repairs

It was reported that the axe on the Statue had been reinstated.

6. Item taken out of Order

7. Consideration of whether the Town Council should make a Financial Contribution to the Newly-Formed "Wantage Rejuvenated" Committee

It was noted that the Committee was not seeking contributions. However, the Town Council was incurring costs in distributing notices for the Craft Fair, and in closing the Market Place. It was agreed that no further financial support was required.

The Clerk reported on a request by the Icknield Way Morris Men to use the centre of the Market Place for a dance-off on Saturday 4 July. It was unlikely that the greengrocer would be able to vacate the western side of the Market Square in time to accommodate this. An alternative would be to hold this on the eastern side. The

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Clerk was concerned that there would not be adequate barriers to separate the dancers from the highway. It was agreed that he should investigate whether some form of temporary barriers could be hired or borrowed to accommodate the use of the eastern end by the Morris dancers. **Action : Clerk**

8. Review of Membership of Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks

After a two-year trial, the Clerk reported that the services provided by the Society of Local Council Clerks were of insufficient standard to allow the Town Council to drop its Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils membership. This membership gave access to the National Association of Local Councils' services upon which all parish councils relied for providing up-to-date information and advice.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Morgan,
SECONDED by Councillor Armitage,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the membership of the OALC be maintained, and that the membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks be discontinued. **Action: Clerk**

9. Parish Boundary Review : Draft Vale of White Horse District Council Order 2009

The District Council had not yet produced maps to go with the boundary proposals. The Clerk was to advise the District Council that whilst the boundary proposals were welcomed, maps were needed to allow these matters to be given proper consideration. **Action : Clerk**

10. Request by Lockinge Country Buildings Protection Trust to take over Storage and Display of Victoria Cross Pictures

The Trust had offered to take over the storage and display of the prints of the Victoria Cross Gallery collection.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Todd,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the offer be accepted, subject to there being a formal agreement confirming the Town Council's ownership of the pictures. **Action : Clerk**

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

11. Review of the Council's Risk Assessment

The risk assessment prepared by the Town Clerk was reviewed and accepted. There were concerns about the security and safety of office staff working alone in the office. There was a need for some form of usable panic alarm. This was equally an issue for District Council and County Council staff using the building. It was agreed that this should be referred to the District Council with a view to ascertaining whether some form of central monitoring system could be installed. **Action : Clerk**

12. Financial Statements and Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March, 2009 and Report from Internal Auditor

The work of the internal auditor had been completed, and the Clerk was due to meet him the following day for the sign-off of the annual return. The accounts and returns would be referred to the Council meeting agenda for formal approval and signature.

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13. Requests for Donations

Stockham County Primary School Parents Association

A donation towards the School's sensory garden was requested. Councillors Kent and Mrs Hannaby declared personal and prejudicial interests being governors of Stockham School, and left the meeting for this item.

It was felt that the School should approach the County Council for a contribution.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Morgan,
IT WAS RESOLVED that a donation of £250 be made, with the advice that an additional contribution might be considered should sufficient funding not be secured from other sources. **Action : Clerk**

14. Accounts for Payment

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Major Sibbald,
IT WAS RESOLVED that accounts for payment in the sum of £43,158.09 be approved.

15. General Correspondence

St. James's School, East Hanney

It was noted that the school had been short-listed as one of ten finalists to win a prize of £7,500, to build a new amphitheatre. The winner will be the school that collects the most vouchers. Councillors were urged to deposit vouchers collected from the Oxford Mail at Sainsbury's.

Confidential Items 16 and 17

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
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, and they were instructed to withdraw.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the resolutions made in confidential session be adopted.

The meeting closed at 9.55 p.m.

WPF/KR
