

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY, MANAGEMENT
AND FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WANTAGE TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN WANTAGE CIVIC HALL, PORTWAY,
ON MONDAY, 16 JUNE, 2008, AT 7.30 P M**

Present: Councillor B H Armitage (Chairman)
Councillors Mrs P Brundle, A Crawford, A J Geden, E C Goldsmith,
M Green, Mrs J T Hannaby, P M O'Leary, Mrs J Reynolds,
Major J Sibbald, Dr I C E Turcu and Mrs E A Turner.

Clerk: Mr W P Falkenau.

Two members of the public (part).

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Griffin, Ms N J Hanna and Mrs L Todd.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Mrs Hannaby and Mrs Reynolds declared personal interests in the Wantage, Grove and District Twinning Association. Councillor Mrs Hannaby declared a personal interest in the Letcombe Brook Trust. Councillor Green declared a personal interest in the Vale and Downland Museum Trust.

Minutes of Meeting held on 1 April, 2008

The minutes were amended. 74(e): Flooding. The last paragraph should read "The Clerk was to enquire whether there was any system in place for". The minutes, as amended, were approved and signed.

1. Statements and Questions from the Public

Wantage Music Festival. Mr. John Carter, Vice-Chairman of the Festival, spoke in support of a donation request to be considered under Item 11.

2. Matters Arising

(a) Analysis of Administration Costs

The Clerk had not yet had time to prepare the analysis of administration costs.

Action : Clerk

(b) St. Mary's School Site Development

The Deed of Easement for the school footpath had been prepared. The Town Mayor had spotted a minor error in the time of day from which the footpath could be used. This should have been 8 a.m., not 9 a.m. The Clerk had amended and initialled the agreement.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Crawford,

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IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Clerk should proceed to seal and sign the deed of easement. **Action : Clerk**

(c) Vale and Downland Museum Trust

The Clerk had not yet received and scrutinized the annual accounts for the Trust and its subsidiary. He had been involved in e-mail exchanges concerning the Trust becoming a company limited by guarantee. He had requested copies of the Memorandum and Articles of Association. It was noted that Ms Linda Baines, Treasurer to the Trust, had recently resigned due to work commitments. Councillor Green, the Council's nominated member on the Trust, gave an update to the meeting on the level of cash currently held by the Trust and its subsidiary. Mr. Steven Dexter had agreed to continue to give support pending the recruitment of a new treasurer. The Clerk was to undertake further reviews of the Museum's financial position in advance of the payment of the next instalment of the grant in October.

Action : Clerk

(d) Willow Walk Cycleway

The Clerk had written to the District Council's Chief Executive, but had not yet received a reply. A letter had been sent to the Wantage Joint Environmental Trust and would be considered at its meeting on 19 June, 2008. The District Council had now agreed to proceed with a submission of a planning application for the proposed cycleway. This would give the opportunity for the wider public consultation that the Town Council had requested. It was agreed that input from Sustrans regarding the cycleway would be helpful. The Clerk was to seek this.

Action : Clerk

(e) Flooding

The Clerk had not yet made enquiries regarding whether there was any system in place for the protection of the Brook. It was reported that the District Council had funds available to support works to relieve flooding. There had again been serious flooding problems in the Wantage area over the past month.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Dr Turcu,

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Clerk should write to the Environment Agency, Ed Vaizey MP, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Water with copies to Gayforth Gough of the District Council and Sally Wallington, the Letcombe Brook officer, pressing for appropriate action to be taken to deal with the flooding problems along the Letcombe Brook.

Action : Clerk

(f) Civic Visit to Seesen in September, 2008

The Town Mayor advised that only three Councillors were available to participate in the proposed civic visit, and despite his best efforts he had been unable to enlist anyone from other community organizations to join the party. Councillor Mrs Hannaby would be visiting Seesen with the Vale Islanders on the dates proposed for the civic visit. The Town Mayor and Councillor Major Sibbald were interested in attending on an individual informal basis, or as members of another party from Wantage.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor O'Leary,
SECONDED by Councillor Dr Turcu,

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IT WAS RESOLVED that the Clerk should write to Seesen advising of this and asking whether it would be acceptable for the Councillors to attend informally without the obligation on Seesen to arrange formal civic events. **Action : Clerk**

(g) Council's Tax Base

The Clerk had not yet conducted his investigations. **Action : Clerk**

The Council rate would be affected by changes to parish boundaries. The changes had been delayed because the Boundary Commission had lost paperwork. It was now being held back until the District Council took on responsibilities for boundary review. It was reported that the District Council was in the process appointing a Boundary Committee. It was agreed to request more information on the powers of the Committee, i.e. what will it do and when will it do it? The Clerk was to urge that priority be given to the proposed changes for Wantage and Grove. **Action : Clerk**

POLICY

3. Minutes of the Joint Economic Forum Meeting held on 29 May, 2008

7 – Wantage Health Check : Draft Action Plan and Public Consultation

It was noted that the consultation was due to proceed on 16 July in Wantage and on 17 July, 2008 in Grove. Volunteers would be needed to support this. Councillors who were able to assist were to advise the Clerk. **Action : All Councillors**

There was a need to advertise the consultation events as widely as possible and with high visibility. The local radio stations were to be informed. **Action : Clerk**

It was noted that the Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy (SCOTS) had been published, but was not widely available. Mr. Terry Stock, the District Council's Chief Executive, had indicated that he was willing to distribute it. The Clerk was to ask him to provide a copy for distribution to Councillors. **Action : Clerk**

8(c) – Undercroft Car Park in Mill Street

It was reported that there appeared to be a design fault with the undercroft car park which was causing severe water intrusion. As a consequence, the District Council had not yet taken over responsibility for the car park.

4. Report from Police Neighbourhood Action Group

A number of Councillors had attended a recent training session given by the Police. There had been a good response to the public survey, and an analysis of the outcome was awaited. The Police were holding a consultation event at the Oxford Belfry Hotel on the evening of 21 July, 2008. This was the date for the next meeting of this Committee. Anyone wishing to attend the Police event were to advise the Clerk. If no volunteers were forthcoming by the Council meeting, it was agreed to advise the Police that Councillors were unable to attend due to the conflict of meetings. **Action : Clerk**

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5. Review of Wantage Town Council Website

The Committee felt that it would be helpful if the website could be more actively used to display Council minutes and agendas and more information concerning the Councillors themselves. The Clerk advised that this was not technically difficult with the existing Wantage.com site. The website could easily be updated and maintained by office staff, but the output would not necessarily be of the highest design standard. Councillors were not immediately concerned about the design, the priority being to provide additional information.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hannaby,

IT WAS MOVED that a Working Group be established to consider the use and development of the website. Members were to be Councillors Armitage, Crawford, Green, Major Sibbald and the Town Clerk. Consideration might be given to involving a student from King Alfred's Community and Sports College to attend to and improve the aesthetic appearance of the site.

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

11. Requests for Donations (Item taken out of order)

Wantage Music Festival

A grant was sought towards the running costs of the 2008 Festival.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Dr Turcu,

IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that a donation of £200 be made.

POLICY (Continued)

6. Refurbishment of Market Place

The Clerk had requested more information from BHP Harwood, the architects involved in preparing the scheme, but this had not yet been received. The Clerk was to press for the information to be provided as soon as possible. **Action : Clerk**

7. Consideration of the Council's Representation on the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils

Following the Annual Council meeting, the Clerk had investigated and found that the OALC had held only two meetings in the past year. The Association's Annual General Meeting had been held on 9 June, 2008. This was a Monday which coincided with a Council Committee meeting. The Clerk advised that generally the role of the OALC itself seemed to be diminishing and more and more direct communication was coming from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). Events arranged by the NALC tended to be some distance from Oxfordshire. In 2007, the Clerk had suggested that he become a member of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) in order to see whether membership of this organization, at a much lower subscription, might provide the same or better benefits than membership of the OALC. The Clerk was unsure about the benefits being derived from membership of either organization, but would not necessarily feel comfortable in recommending terminating membership. Both organizations were available to provide specialist support when needed.

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ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Dr Turcu,
IT WAS RESOLVED to continue with the subscriptions to the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks for the years 2008/2009, and that further monitoring be conducted over the coming year to determine whether it would be appropriate to cease membership of either organization. **Action :Clerk**

8. Meeting Attendance Report

This had not been produced for some time. The Clerk had received a request from one Councillor for its production. Members felt that Councillors could derive this information themselves from reviewing the past minutes, and it was felt that given other priorities, that production of this was unnecessary.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,
SECONDED by Councillor Dr Turcu,
IT WAS MOVED that the attendance report should not be produced. This was approved 10 in favour, one against.

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE (Continued)

9. Review of the Council's Risk Assessment

The Clerk had sent a memorandum updating the risk assessment from the previous year. Councillors were asked to consider whether there were any major risks that had been overlooked or whether any information in the memorandum was considered incorrect. Any points were to be referred to the Clerk before the next Council meeting.

Action : All Councillors

10. Financial Statements and Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March, 2008

The statements prepared by the Clerk were considered. The Internal Auditor was not due to complete his work until later in the month. Subject to any amendments that might arise from the audit, it was agreed that the Financial Statements and Annual Return be referred to the next Council meeting for approval.

It was noted that allotment income in 2007/8 was much higher than the directly contributed costs. The Clerk pointed out that whilst this might be the case, there were fairly significant administration costs being incurred in supporting the allotment sites. This had prompted the Council's request for him to provide an analysis of administration costs.

12. Banking and Payroll Arrangements

Councillor Armitage and the Deputy Clerk had recently met with a representative of Barclays Bank. The Clerk was in the process of reviewing proposals from Barclays Bank for the provision of banking and payroll services. He would report back to the Committee when he had completed this. **Action : Clerk**

13. Accounts for Payment

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Armitage,

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SECONDED by Councillor Dr Turcu,
IT WAS RESOLVED that accounts for payment in the sum of £49,632.27 be approved.

14. General Correspondence

(a) Letters concerning Government Polyclinic Proposals

There were public concerns that the polyclinic proposals might affect the future of local surgeries. It was agreed that this be referred to the Hospital Committee for consideration.

Action : Clerk

(b) Lark Hill Allotments : Rent Review

The County Council proposed an increase in rent from £300 per annum to £375.77 per annum. The Clerk advised that the rent had not been increased for many years, and that the increase was modest having regard to this. It was agreed that the increase be accepted.

Action : Clerk

(c) Vale of White Horse District Council : Vale Community Safety Forum -
Meeting 3 July, 2008 in Wantage Civic Hall at 9.30 a.m.

Councillors were invited to attend.

(d) Wantage Churches Together

The organization was considering starting a 'street pastor' activity. It was agreed that this be referred to the Council meeting for consideration.

Action : Clerk

Confidential Items 15 and 16

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

The meeting closed at 9.56 p.m.

WPF/KR