

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WANTAGE JOINT ECONOMIC
FORUM HELD IN WANTAGE CIVIC HALL, PORTWAY, ON
THURSDAY, 28 MAY, 2009, AT 7.00 P.M.**

Members present:

Wantage Town Council	Councillors B H Armitage and Major J Sibbald.
Vale of White Horse D.C.	Councillors Mrs J Hannaby (Chairman from item 3) and Mrs J Hutchinson (Chairman up to item 3)
Chamber of Commerce	Ms C Falkenau (part).

Others present:

Wantage Town Council (observer)	Councillor P Kent.
Grove Parish Council (observer)	Councillor P Hadcroft.
District Council (observer)	Mr R Webber.
District Council officer	Mr T Warren.
Deputy Clerk	Mrs H Kell.

The Vice-Chairman (Councillor Mrs Hutchinson) took the chair due to the absence of the Chairman Mr R Turnbull, and welcomed Councillor Richard Webber to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Wantage Town Councillors E C Goldsmith, Mrs J Reynolds and Dr I C E Turcu, District Councillors Mrs Z Patrick and W Mellotti, Mr R Turnbull (Chamber of Commerce), and Grove Parish Councillor Mrs J E Nunn-Price.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Major Sibbald declared a personal interest in agenda item 6(f) as Chairman of the Wantage Branch of the Royal British Legion. Councillor Mrs Hannaby declared personal interests in any items referring to the Chamber of Commerce and Royal British Legion. Councillor Mrs Hutchinson declared a personal interest as a member of the Chamber of Commerce.

3. Election of Chairman for 2009/2010

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hutchinson,
SECONDED by Councillor Armitage,
IT WAS RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Hannaby be elected Chairman of the Forum for 2009/2010.

Councillor Mrs Hannaby took the Chair.

4. Election of Vice Chairman for 2009/2010

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hutchinson,
IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Mr Turnbull be elected Vice-Chairman of the Forum for 2009/2010.

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5. **Minutes of Meeting held on 12 February, 2009**

The minutes were approved and signed.

6. **Matters Arising**

(a) Wantage Health-Check : Progress update

A report from the Town Clerk was noted concerning possible projects for which funding could be sought from SEEDA funding before the fund was withdrawn.

Support for recruitment drive to enlist volunteer drivers for the Independent Advice Centre

Members discussed this proposal at some length, with Mr Warren reminding the Forum that in order for projects to be considered by SEEDA, they must be community projects.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hutchinson,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
IT WAS RESOLVED that although the Town Council supported the scheme to enlist more volunteer drivers, it was not an appropriate project for JEF funding. It was agreed that the Independent Advice Centre be asked to make an application to the Vale's South-East Area Community Committee.

Funding of a person to conduct an audit of the suitability of footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways in Wantage and Grove
(A cycle working group was already looking at cycleways)

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
SECONDED by Councillor Armitage,
IT WAS RESOLVED that Mr Warren continue his discussions with both HARBUG (Harwell Bicycle Users Group) and the County Council and report back to the next meeting. Councillor Kent agreed to contact Councillor Dr Turcu to obtain background information on HARBUG. **Action : Kent**

Work in support of revitalizing the Market Place and surrounding Town Centre including improved signage, attracting activities onto the Market Place and tidying up of shop windows

It was noted that the Town Council had set aside £10,000 in its 2009/2010 budget for Market Place improvements, and that a signage working party had been formed to look at improved and additional signage around the town. The Forum also noted that the "Wantage Rejuvenated" group was arranging a craft fair on the Market Place on Sunday, 5 July, with additional events planned throughout the year. The Chairman reminded members that grants were available from the Joint Environmental Trust for shop front improvements.

Regeneration of Mill Street

It was hoped that the re-opening of Angel Walk in the near future would help to start the regeneration of the area.

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Commissioning of an ecologist to survey and report on local areas

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hutchinson,
SECONDED by Councillor Armitage,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Town Clerk contact Sally Wallington (the Letcombe
Brook officer) to enquire whether she would be prepared to undertake the additional
work. **Action : Clerk**

Re-establishment of Grove Horticultural Show

Councillor Hadcroft reported that the closing of the show had been due to
organizational problems. It was proposed that this might be an appropriate project for
a community development worker for a six-month period, and requested Councillor
Hadcroft to take this proposal back to Grove Parish Council. **Action : Hadcroft**

The Forum congratulated the Health-Check Steering Group for all its hard work and
proposed that SEEDA funding be discussed at the next meeting of the Group.

(b) French Markets

The French markets continued to be successful with the next market in the Market
Place on Sunday, 12 July, 2009.

(c) Business Directory on Wantage.com

The Forum received a full report which had previously been circulated by Howard
Hill.

- The Wantage.com site had now been moved to a new server and re-written. This was much improved and was partly sponsored by the Forum at a cost of £500.
- The town diary was now improved with a lot of activities listed.
- There was a new page on “Wantage Rejuvenated”.
- The Summer Festival had its own page and the current programme was available.
- There was a new page for JEF.

Mr Hill had not received any correspondence on the Wantage Council website
regarding enhanced photographs. However, the Chairman proposed that photographs
recently taken by Councillor Kent of the Market Place from the direction of the
Church could be used on the website. It was agreed that the Chairman contact Mr
Hill in order to arrange a meeting with Councillor Kent. **Action : Hannaby**

It was noted that Mr Hill was a busker who played in a number of local music and
dance bands and supported lots of local events.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hutchinson,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Deputy Clerk enquire of the District Council whether
an Entertainment Licence was required for occasional music events on the Market
Place. **Action : Deputy Clerk**

(d) Undercroft Car Park in Mill Street

Councillor Mrs Hannaby reported that Sainsbury's, as the owners of the undercroft
car park, were responsible for bringing it up to the agreed specification before the

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District Council would take over its running. The District Council was concerned at the loss of revenue from the car park which had remained closed for eighteen months.

(e) Joint Economic Forum Website

This item was covered under Mr Hill's report at item (6c)

(f) "Welcome Heroes Back" Campaign

Mr Warren reported that the initiative for this campaign was started in Scarborough where local traders offered discounts to returning service personnel. Signs were available for local traders who wished to take part in the campaign. The Forum considered that this could be undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce, and discounted leisure activities could be considered by the District Council. Ms Falkenau reported that finding volunteers from independent businesses was difficult. Consideration could be given to advertising on Wantage.com.

Ms Falkenau left the meeting.

(g) Pedestrian Crossing at Limborough Road

Discussions were taking place between the District and County Councils regarding the most appropriate crossing point in the area. £40,000 had been made available from Section 106 agreements in respect of the David Wilson Homes development.

(h) King Alfred's Statue Repairs

The fixing of a steel rod in the axe handle to make it more robust was causing some problems. The Forum recommended that advice and approval should be obtained from the District Council's Conservation Officer. **Action: Deputy Clerk**

(i) Town Council Market Place Fund

£10,000 had been set aside by the Town Council in its current budgets. The Signage Working Party was meeting on Sunday, 7 June at 10.30 a.m. to consider new and additional signage around the town.

(j) Treatment to shopping area walkways in icy conditions

The Chairman reported that the Town Council had agreed a policy for treatment of Town Council-owned land in icy conditions.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hutchinson,
IT WAS RESOLVED that arrangements be made for officers of the County Council's Highways Department to speak to the Chamber of Commerce. **Action : Clerk**

7. Financial Statement 2008/2009

The financial statement was noted. The reserve balance as at 31 March, 2009 was £14,573.

8. Request for Funding from JEF to Support Town Centre Rejuvenation Initiatives

Wantage Rejuvenated

The Forum rejected a request from the group for funding until a business plan was produced.

ON THE PROPOSITION of Councillor Major Sibbald,
SECONDED by Councillor Mrs Hannaby,
IT WAS RESOLVED that the Clerk obtain details for discussion at the next meeting
of the Forum. **Action : Clerk**

Wantage and District Chamber of Commerce

A report had been received stating that the Chamber of Commerce was considering a further Vale poster to be placed in the previously-owned W H Smith premises at a cost of £1,700. The Forum did not consider that it was an appropriate use of JEF funding, and proposed that the Chamber of Commerce should contact the owners of the property, St John's College, Oxford, to enquire of its future plans for the building.

Action : Turnbull

9. General Correspondence and Other Business

Market Place : Public Consultation

The Chairman reported that the plans for the Market Place refurbishment were now on display at the Vale and Downland Museum and the Wantage Library. 70% of the completed questionnaires were in favour of a change to the lay-out of the Market Place. However, the Town Council wished to widen public consultation by leafleting every household. The Chairman reported that at the next meeting of the Forum she would be asking the Forum to contribute to the printing costs of the questionnaire.

Market Town Awards

Mr Warren reported that the Market Town Award ceremony would be held in Faringdon at Segsbury Hall on 21 July, 2009. Those members wishing to attend should email the South East Co-ordinator, Tim Palmer, on tim.palmer@ccbarks.org.uk by 8 July, 2009.

10. Date of Next Meeting

6 August, 2009, at 7 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

WPF/HK/KR
