

**MINUTES OF THE FARINGDON JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM (JEF)
MEETING HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2013 AT 7:00PM IN THE OLD TOWN HALL,
FARINGDON**

1. Present:

Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC): Cllr Mohinder Kainth.

Faringdon Town Council (FTC): Cllr Andrew Marsden.

Other organizations: Sarah Allen Stevens (Chamber of Commerce), Mrs Daphne Saunders (FAP), Colin Desborough (Faringdon Association of Residents), Eddie Williams (Folly Trust).

Non-voting members: County Cllr Judith Heathcoat.

In attendance: Trudy Godfrey (economic development team leader and minutes Secretary).

Observers: Mirabelle Mack (Faringdon Town Team Project Manager).

Apologies: Cllr Ron Mansfield, Sally Thurston, David Williamson (Farcycles), Cllr Jim Halliday, Cllr Julie Farmer, Cllr Robert Sharp, Cllr Roger Cox, Cllr Alison Thomson, Cllr Jane Boulton, Paul Brame (Chairman, and Chamber of Commerce), Cllr Mike Wise (Mayor).

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Minutes of meeting on 17th January 2013

These would be sent out with the minutes of 18th April for consideration by e-mail.

4. High Street Innovation Fund (HSIF) and Portas Funds

Trudy Godfrey explained that the Vale had received £22,500 funding from the High Street Innovation fund and a further £10,000 from the Portas fund to deliver projects in Faringdon that would improve town centre vitality. Mirabelle Mack presented her update to the group.

5. Economic Development Action Plan for Faringdon 2013/14

Trudy Godfrey had circulated the ED action plan for Faringdon before the meeting and requested that all comments on the plan should be emailed to herself by Thursday 2nd May. This was a working document and she would provide ongoing updates to the group

every quarter. The main projects for the current year would be the delivery of the High Street Innovation Fund and Portas Fund projects, the Oxtrails project and the free Wi Fi service for the town. Trudy had also circulated the Oxtrails reports for Faringdon prior to the JEF meeting and would take any comments on these by Thursday 25th April.

6. Faringdon Neighbourhood plan

Andrew Marsden provided an update on the Neighbourhood Plan which had just entered its 6 week unofficial consultation in the town, after which any necessary amendments would be made and it would then be submitted to the Vale. There would be an Inspector and then the plan would be subjected to a town-wide referendum. Colin Desborough suggested that it would be helpful to have a 2-page summary of the plan.

Action: Andrew Marsden would raise the 2-page summary request at the next Town and Community meeting and send the summary to Trudy Godfrey who would circulate around the JEF.

7. Update reports from:-

- a. **Faringdon Area Project:** Daphne Saunders advised that Andy Hayter was leading a project to generate electricity from the River Thames. Daphne mentioned that it was a shame that TESCO reports that it will not guarantee that its food is not from genetically modified plants or animals.
- b. **Chamber of Commerce:** Paul Brame and Sarah Allen-Stevens have both continued to work closely with the central steering group for the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan. Sarah has built on her sterling work with the Town Council that helped shape the “Our Faringdon, Our Future” document and brought this to the employment sub-group and Paul Brame has been championing the interests of retailers on the retail sub-group. This is an ongoing process and we have been successful in putting forward policies which seek to safeguard the sites which will be allocated for employment and retail use. We will continue to contribute to the process which is now in the consultation stage and will strive to protect the interests of all commercial activity in the town through our responses to that consultation. Sarah advised she was hoping to commission a local planner and economist to write a **20 year economic development strategy** for Faringdon and was acting in close co-operation with the Vale and the Town Council. The Chamber were also looking at the emerging **Vale of White Horse Core Strategy** (currently in consultation) and intend to submit a response to support our member’s interests on this vital opportunity to influence the future development of the town. In terms of housing developments, the Chamber was in close contact with most of the developers who are currently contemplating projects in and around the town. They are keen to engage with these organisations so that should their proposals receive approval, that the financial and other benefits to the town are maximised. Some of the suggestions have included funding for a

role to promote the town and help create an economic development strategy and a brand to help attract occupiers (of all types, not just retail) to the town. On the practical side, inclusion of the maximum amount of employment land and where this is not possible consideration of live/work units and facilitation of easy links to the centres of commercial activity whether by public transport, car, bike or on foot. Also, the provision of bike racks in the town centre. Some of the developers can also lend practical experience of fostering commercial activity and have expressed willingness to assist with this. **Town Centre Project Manager:** the Chamber are working closely with Mirabelle Mack to support her in the projects which are sponsored by the Chamber, such as the loyalty card scheme, the landlord's register, shop "wrapping" and the development of midweek/weekend town markets. **The Christmas Ball:** an early warning of our annual black tie ball at the Sudbury House Hotel, which this year is to be held on Saturday 23th November 2013 and will raise money for Churches Together in Faringdon and one other charity to be announced. Ticket prices to be confirmed soon! Last year, the Chamber raised £1,700 for Help for Heroes. **Tesco:** the Chamber are continuing to engage with Tesco to try and capitalise on any opportunities that may present themselves as the store takes shape later in the year. They will be presenting to our meeting in July. **Chamber meetings:** meetings are on the second Monday of the month, with the formal part starting at 6:30pm, speaker/networking from 7pm. We look forward to seeing you.

- c. **Faringdon Residents Association:** The residents association had been involved in the Neighbourhood plan, Colin Desborough suggested that the consultation draft of the Neighbourhood plan was not what they had expected.
- d. **Faringdon Farcycles:** Eddie Williams advised that the Farcycles group had been very active on Twitter and Facebook and membership was growing. They were promoting a 70 mile cycle ride to support Folly Fest 2013.
- e. **Pink Pigeons:** Eddie Williams advised that the Pink Pigeons were looking forward to working with Abi Brown now that she had returned from maternity leave from the Vale.
- f. **Faringdon in Bloom:** Mirabelle Mack had been having discussions with Sally Thurston about this and would update the group at future meetings.
- g. **Folly Tower Trust:** Eddie Williams advised that the blue plaque was now on the Tower and there were 450 people at the last opening (an all-time record)! Eddie distributed Folly Tower bookmarks with beautiful illustrations of the Folly Woodlands carvings.

8. Economic development news from Abingdon

The Choose Abingdon Partnership had been very busy progressing the High Street Innovation fund and Portas fund projects. CHAP had recently hosted a 'Young Entrepreneur's Award' and two young entrepreneurs stepped up to receive the Infineum Young Entrepreneur of the Year 2013 award on March 22nd at the Good Living Event in

Abingdon. Abingdon's 3rd "Good Living Event" was on 22nd March and again sponsored by Miele. It was a great success with dozens of local businesses represented. CHAP had also recently completed an audit of signage and moorings, had relaunched their new Community shop and were planning to trial a business hub in the community shop.

9. Financial Report of JEF

Cllr Sharp was not present at the meeting.

Action: Cllr Sharp to claim £500 grant from Faringdon Town Council.

10. **Next meeting dates.** Dates of the next meetings are:

- **Thursday 18th July 2013**
- **Thursday 17th October 2013**

All meetings will be held in the Old Town Hall at 7pm.

Trudy Godfrey

Secretary

APPENDIX A

JEF MEMBERSHIP 2012/13

Voting members:

Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC):

- Cllr Roger Cox
- Cllr Mohinder Kainth
- Cllr Robert Sharp
- Cllr Alison Thomson
- Cllr Jim Halliday

Faringdon Town Council (FTC):

- Cllr Jane Boulton
- Cllr Julie Farmer
- Cllr Andrew Marsden
- Cllr Jack Smith
- Cllr. Karen Draper

‘Other Organizations’:

- Paul Brame (Faringdon Chamber of Commerce)
- Sarah Allen-Stevens (Faringdon Chamber of Commerce)
- Colin Desborough (Faringdon Association of Residents)
- Daphne Saunders (Faringdon Area Project)
- Eddie Williams (Faringdon Folly Tower Trust)

Non-Voting members:

- Mayor of Faringdon (Cllr Mike Wise)
- County Councillor for the Faringdon Division (Cllr Judith Heathcoat)

Co-opted members (non-voting, not more than four persons):

- Alison Moore (Women’s Institute)
- David Williamson (Chair of Faringdon Twinning)
- Sjoerd Vogt (Pink Pigeons)

Observer (non-voting):

- Cllr Elaine Ware (VWHDC)

In attendance (non-voting):

- Trudy Godfrey (VWHDC officer and minutes secretary)