

MINUTES OF THE FARINGDON JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM (JEF)
MEETING HELD ON 19TH APRIL 2012 AT 7:00PM IN THE OLD TOWN HALL,
FARINGDON

1. Present:

Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC): Cllr Mohinder Kainth, Cllr Robert Sharp, and Cllr Alison Thomson (non voting, left early), Cllr Jim Halliday.

Faringdon Town Council (FTC): Cllr Jane Boulton (Chairman) and Cllr Andrew Marsden.

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

Non-voting members: County Cllr Judith Heathcoat, Mark Harrison (Farcycles), Mrs Margaret Barker.

In attendance: Trudy Godfrey, Secretary.

Apologies: Cllr Ron Mansfield, Sally Thurston, Cllr Roger Cox, Cllr Mike Wise (Mayor), David Williamson (Farcycles) and Sarah Allen Stevens (Chamber of Commerce).

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Minutes of meeting on 26th January 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2012 were accepted as true and accurate record.

4. To discuss the Strategy and Action Plan for Faringdon

Trudy Godfrey advised that last year's projects were complete including the inward investment fact-sheets to help businesses considering locating in Faringdon; the vacant commercial property database; the Town Maps (final copies were left for the Town Council to install in notice boards in car parks), "Things to do around Faringdon" brochures and footfall surveys. A new action plan had been drafted for 2012/13 and the projects had been discussed independently with both the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council. New projects for 2012/13 include the introduction of free Wi Fi in Faringdon town centre and a new loyalty card scheme for the town. Comments on the draft action plan were to be emailed to Trudy Godfrey by 26th April.

Actions:

1. All to email comments on draft Action Plan to Trudy Godfrey.

5. Progress Reports from:

a. Focus on Faringdon SEEDA Funding and JEF projects

- i. **Folly Tower.** Eddie Williams reported that the work to the Tower was now complete. Extra wooden sculptures, vista boards had now been installed in the Woodlands and in the Tower. The Belvedere Room was now available for bookings and they had many bookings (one per week) during 2012. They had had an inquiry from a couple thinking about having their wedding at the Folly Tower and had hosted a few Beer Society meetings. The Folly Tower were hoping to increase visitors to the woodlands (open 24/7).
- ii. **Skateboard Park.** Cllr Alison Thomson advised that the skatepark was now complete (except for final landscaping) and that land had been transferred to the Vale and the park was now open to the public. SK8 had invested in a 'grasscrete' solution to stop mud being spread onto the park as this was a safety concern. An opening party was being planned for Sunday 8th July.
- iii. **Things to do around Faringdon maps.** No further update from Focus on Faringdon.

b. Faringdon Area Project

Daphne Saunders advised that Hidden Britain had been working with FAP, the Town Council, the Vale and the Chamber of Commerce to help the town to promote itself to the wider world. James Turner (a director of Hidden Britain) had visited Faringdon on a number of occasions to do 'mystery shopper' surveys and also to hold two workshops in the town, focusing on what the town had to offer. James would return to Faringdon in May 2012 to do a further workshop and finalise his report. FAP expected there would be some actions identified for projects that would improve economic vitality that the JEF may like to fund. Cllr Jim Halliday proposed that Daphne should let James know the date of the next JEF meeting so that the Hidden Britain report can be circulated prior to this meeting, and the actions discussed and any potential funding could then be ring-fenced for the delivery of key projects. Daphne also advised that she had attended a recent event run by the Action for Market Towns "How to survive the supermarkets" and this event had been very informative. Key recommendations included: having a 'town team' to think about the range of types of retailers and businesses that should feature within the town and actively target to achieve this; free car parking close to the Market Place to encourage shoppers; events to bring shoppers into the town such as car boot sales, antique markets, farmers markets, and Armed Forces Day. It was also suggested that business rates should be capped. Daphne advised that one

town had been successful in getting £10,000 from Boots to help improve the appearance of the Market place. Paul Brame noted that there were some very interesting ideas here and the Chamber of Commerce might be interested in taking forward a few of these projects for Faringdon.

c. Chamber of Commerce

Paul Brame advised that the Faringdon loyalty card scheme would be launched on 9th June 2012 and all businesses who would like to join the scheme should email Denise@presentationgifts.co.uk. So far, over 30 businesses in Faringdon have agreed to be part of the scheme – retailers, beauty therapists, hairdressers and builders. The Wantage & Grove loyalty card scheme started with 60 businesses, but in population and business terms, this was over twice the size of Faringdon. Paul explained that the scheme was open to all businesses in the town, not just retailers although it was particularly suited to retailers. The Chamber were going to under-write the costs of the scheme but would like to ask the JEF for £875 to pay for the design costs. This would pay for the design of the loyalty card, the design of the brochure and the design template for posters for the shops. This motion was proposed by Cllr Jane Boulton and seconded by Cllr Mohinder Kainth. There were 5 votes in favour and none against.

Actions:

1. Treasurer to write a cheque for £875 to the Chamber of Commerce to pay for the design work associated with the loyalty card scheme.
2. Paul Brame to speak to Cllr Margaret Barker about joining with the Town Council to organize a joint Winter Ball in 2012.

d. Faringdon Association of Residents

Colin Desborough advised that the Vale were currently helping the Town Council undertake a parking survey. A brief had been prepared by John Backley (Vale) and this had been circulated to the Town Council and Residents association for comments. This would shortly be put out to tender.

e. Farcycles

Mark Harrison (Farcycles) advised that they had registered as a charity. The National Trust had agreed to provide building materials, labour and machinery as an ‘in kind’ contribution. Oxfordshire County Council had prepared a technical report examining the specification, but Farcycles were concerned that this was over specified. They were almost in a position to submit the LEADER funding application, but needed matching finance.

Actions:

1. Cllr Judith Heathcoat to make inquiries at County Council.

Trudy Godfrey advised that Farcycles had met with County Council and that an engineer had been out to scope a new route that the group was hoping to develop. Cllr Judith Heathcote had given considerable support to this project and had instigated the officer meeting with Farcycles, and visited on-site with a representative of Farcycles and officers from Oxfordshire County Council. A report was awaited from County Council that would highlight technical solutions and provide indicative costs. It would also outline the consultation requirements. Farcycles were currently working with the National Trust and would begin fund-raising in earnest in order to match fund a grant application they would put to Southern Oxfordshire LEADER.

f. Pink Pigeons

No update.

g. Faringdon Twinning Association

David Williamson provided an update by email. Recent events included a fundraising dinner at Rat's Castle 19 January and quiz night 16 March. Forthcoming events:

- Group visit from Le Mele 17-20 May (26 visitors expected)
- Cultural visit to Milestones, nr Basingstoke 18 May
- Shared supper 18 May
- Pre-Olympics Activities Day 19 May
- Barn Dance 19 May
- Youth exchange Le Mele to Faringdon 7-14 July
- Youth exchange Faringdon to Le Mele 21-28 July
- Group visit to le Mele 8-11 November

Finances:

- Grant application to Oxfordshire County Council for Youth Programme (Olympics theme)
- Fundraising activities for financial support of youth leaders, entertainment of French group (May) and youth group programme July)

Contacts for enquiries:

- David Williamson, Chair 240033 dllm.williamson@btinternet.com
- Jeanie Pugh, Secretary 240374 jeaniepugh@talktalk.net

h. Faringdon in Bloom

Cllr Jane Boulton advised that it would not be happening this year because of Jubilee events.

i. Jubilee Celebrations

Daphne Saunders advised that there would be a large bonfire and a beacon in the field between the Folly Tower and the A420 to commemorate the Jubilee. A barbecue / picnic and possibly hog roast was planned. Musicians were needed for the Jubilee event. Cllr Alison Thomson advised the official Vale beacon would be lit at Lockinge Point to Point.

Cllr Jane Boulton advised that the Town Council had established a Jubilee Committee and were planning lots of events in the town including: 3 legged pub crawl, fair at Tucker's Park, silly games. There was a need to co-ordinate all the events so that the people of the town knew everything that was planned. Cllr Judith Heathcoat advised that Great Coxwell were having a 'big lunch' in the Tithe Barn.

j.Economic Development News from Abingdon and Wantage

Trudy Godfrey advised that the Choose Abingdon Partnership had submitted a bid to become a 'Portas Pilot' town and were going to be embarking on phase 2 of the loyalty card to recruit more businesses to the scheme.

Wantage had just completed workshops with Hidden Britain (a charity set up to work with rural communities and help them to promote themselves more effectively.) The Chamber of Commerce had invested in a web-site to support the loyalty card scheme and this would generate electronic newsletters. A planning application for a 40-bedroom hotel had also been submitted to the Vale.

10. Financial Report of JEF

Cllr Sharp advised that the current balance was £2,861.52. This included payment for £252 for the Town Maps and included £1,000 grant income from the Vale. Matching grant was to be claimed from Faringdon Town Council.

Actions:

1. Cllr Robert Sharp to write to June Rennie at Faringdon Town Council to claim £1,000 grant contribution from Faringdon Town Council towards the JEF funding.

11. Any other business

None.

12. Next meeting dates. Dates of the next meetings are:

- **Thursday 19th July 2012**
- **Thursday 18th October 2012**

All meetings would be held in the Old Town Hall, where this was available. Where this room is not available, the meetings would be held in an alternative venue (e.g. the Pump Rooms or Crown Coaching Inn).

Trudy Godfrey

Secretary

APPENDIX A
JEF MEMBERSHIP 2010/11

Voting members:

Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC):

- Cllr Roger Cox
- Cllr Mohinder Kainth
- Cllr Robert Sharp
- Cllr Ron Mansfield
- Cllr Jim Halliday

Faringdon Town Council (FTC):

- Cllr Jane Boulton
- Cllr Margaret Barker
- Cllr Alan Hickmore
- Cllr Andrew Marsden
- Cllr Jack Smith

‘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)
- Chairman of the Vale of White Horse District Council (Cllr Alison Thomson)
- 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):

- Toby Warren (VWHDC officer)
- Sally Thurston (FTC officer)
- Trudy Godfrey (VWHDC officer and minutes secretary)
- Cllr Elaine Ware