

**MINUTES OF THE FARINGDON JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM (JEF)
MEETING HELD ON 6TH OCTOBER 2011 AT 7:00PM IN THE OLD TOWN
HALL, FARINGDON**

1. Present:

Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC): Cllr Roger Cox (Chairman), Cllr Ron Mansfield, Cllr Robert Sharp and Cllr Alison Thomson.

Faringdon Town Council (FTC): Cllr Jane Boulton, Cllr Alan Hickmore and Cllr Andrew Marsden.

Other organizations: Eddie Williams (Folly Trust), Colin Desborough (FAR) and Mrs Daphne Saunders(FAP).

Non-voting members: Cllr Mike Wise (Mayor) and Cllr Jim Halliday

In attendance: Trudy Godfrey, Secretary, Abigail Brown (Vale's Arts officer).

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Margaret Barker, Paul Brame, Nick Elwell, Cllr Jim Halliday, Cllr Mohinder Kainth Cllr Judith Heathcoat, Jane Haynes, Sally Thurston, Sarah Allen Stevens and Cllr Jack Smith.

3. Election of officers

Chairman: Cllr Mike Wise (Mayor) proposed Jane Boulton. This was seconded by Cllr Alan Hickmore. All voted – 7 in favour and the motion passed.

Vice Chairman: Cllr Roger Cox proposed Eddie Williams and this was seconded by Cllr Alison Thomson.

Treasurer: Cllr Roger Cox proposed Robert Sharp and this was seconded by Cllr Jane Boulton.

4. Declarations of interest

None.

5. Minutes of meeting on 14th July 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2011 were accepted as true and accurate record.

6. To consider amending the Constitution to allow co-opted non-voting members to vote – Councillor Boulton

Cllr Alan Hickmore requested that the constitution should be amended to allow co-opted non-voting members to vote and suggested there was a need to ensure that the outside groups were represented; that there was a need to review annually who the outside members were; and checks should be made that they represented significant members of the town. He suggested there should be a minimum level of membership on which their membership would be determined. If an organization's membership fell below this level then they should be asked to leave the JEF. Cllr Ron and Mansfield and Eddie Williams both said they had no objections to more groups coming into the JEF, but they did not see the need to give all groups voting rights. Cllr Elaine Ware said there was a risk if there were too many members, the JEF would become unwieldy. Cllr Robert Sharp pointed out that the membership of the JEF had changed over the years to reflect the importance of different groups in the town. Cllr Alison Thomson read a statement from Cllr Jim Halliday (who was absent from the meeting). It read "As someone who has been associated with the Faringdon JEF since its formation many years ago, may I comment on the proposal to extend the voting rights to co opted members. From the outset the JEF has had two fundamental characteristics – firstly it has a forum where the Vale Council and the Town Council could meet with the Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties to promote economic initiatives in Faringdon and its immediate hinterland, secondly, all parties have contributed annually to the Forum – the Vale and Town Councils with equal financial grants, and the Chamber with effort in kind. This tri partite approach has been very successful over the years, for example pump priming the start up of both the Farmer's Market and the Craft Fair to name just two initiatives. Furthermore the mere existence of the JEF as a working partnership was the lever to obtain large sums of money from SEEDA. It has always been accepted that people with specialist knowledge and/or skills should be co opted for periods of a year at a time, but also accepted that voting should limited to those representing the core membership. This is why Cllr Heathcoat, although an active member, has not been able to vote as the County Council do not contribute funds. I would urge the forum not to change a system that has worked well for many years. Indeed I fear that if the proposed change were to be adopted then there is a risk that the annual grants from the two Councils could be put at risk." Cllr Alan Hickmore proposed that there was a need to ensure that the outside groups were fully representative and that this should be reviewed annually. This proposal was not seconded. The motion fell. Cllr Mike Wise proposed that the constitution should be updated to reflect 'other organizations' that no longer existed. This was seconded by Cllr Roger Cox.

Action: Secretary to amend the constitution to reflect annual changes to the membership of 'other organizations' at the AGM. This will now read "5 nominated Members from Faringdon's "Other" organizations as agreed by the JEF at the Annual General Meeting"

7. To discuss the Strategy and Action Plan for Faringdon and Wantage

Trudy Godfrey advised that the Strategy and had been revised in line with comments received from the JEF and others and was now a working document. Projects currently

under development included the inward investment fact-sheets to help businesses considering locating in Faringdon; the vacant commercial property database; the Town Maps (a draft copy was available at the meeting for consideration), car parking surveys as well as initiatives to improve broadband – such as the County’s Community Broadband Fund which would be launched imminently. In respect of the Faringdon Town Maps project, Cllr Roger Cox proposed that the JEF would allocate up to £250 towards the costs of producing revised town maps. This was seconded by Cllr Alan Hickmore.

Actions:

1. Secretary to circulate information on the County’s Community Broadband Fund.
2. Secretary to invite members of Faringdon JEF to forthcoming business networking event was planned for 9th November with the theme: ‘How to attract visitors, the media and funding.’ An invitation was subsequently sent to Faringdon JEF.
3. Secretary to invite JEF to comment on the draft inward investment fact-sheet for Faringdon.
4. Treasurer to allocate up to £250 towards the Town Maps project.
5. Secretary to advise Cllr David Price and Cllr Julie Farmer when the County’s broadband fund was launched.

8. 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 and the building was water-proof. The Folly Tower Trust had received an additional funding allocation of approx. £12,000. They were using this funding to replace around 50 bricks on the outside of the tower, introducing new vista boards to explain the views, and installing a new system for Christmas lights. Eddie Williams advised that attendance figures for the Folly Tower had reached their highest ever level – and revenues for Sunday 2nd October were £360. He also advised that the Folly Tower had been shortlisted by the Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Association for the ‘most creative fund-raising project’ and it had also been commended by the Action for Market Towns, 2011 as an excellent project. Cllr Elaine Ware congratulated Eddie Williams and the Folly Tower Trustees on the success of the project.
- ii. **Skateboard Park.** Cllr Alison Thomson advised that progress had been slower than expected because of difficulties securing the WREN funding contract. These had eventually been resolved and work was scheduled to begin in October 2011.
- iii. **Things to do around Faringdon maps.** Jane Haynes provided a written report advising that the cycle routes are now being published on a monthly basis in The Advertiser. The routes are also available to download on

www.focusonuk.co.uk website. Focus On Faringdon has been working with the Vale of White Horse District Council, Wantage Chamber of Commerce and Abingdon Business Partnership to produce a book called "52 Things to do - far from the madding beaches." The book will contain a cycle route around the Vale of White Horse. The routes that are published include advertisements for local places to eat and drink. Over the next few months these advertisements will be developed further and will enable the publication of the routes to become self financing. This project is now completed.

- iv. **52 things to do ... far from the madding beaches.** Trudy Godfrey advised that the 52 team would be publishing the book (and having a book launch) before Christmas. The book would be available in book stores and at tourist attractions and would make an ideal Christmas present.

b. Chamber of Commerce

Trudy Godfrey advised that the Chamber were working hard to recruit new business members, particularly amongst the retail sector. They had decided to offer 6 months free Chamber membership to all retailers in the town. Faringdon had also attracted 3 new businesses to the town, and leases were currently being signed. All would be revealed in the coming weeks. However once these extra businesses had moved into their new shops, there would only be one vacant retail unit in the town. The Chamber advised that Sarah Allen Stevens would represent the Chamber for future meetings.

c. Faringdon Residents Association

Colin Desborough advised that Faringdon Residents Association had been receiving significant numbers of inquiries from people wanting to move to Faringdon and asking to find out more about the social and 'things to do' in the town. Cllr Andrew Hickmore suggested that they contact the Tourist Information Centre, based in the Town Council offices.

Action: Secretary to include the telephone number for the Tourist Information Centre (01367 242 191 and email tic@faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk) as a permanent record in the minutes.

d. Pink Pigeons

Abigail Brown advised that she had written a press release about the Pink Pigeons and arts in Faringdon and this would be released using social media and other connections (e.g. using the Vale's Comms Team) to help promote Faringdon more widely. Cllr Elaine Ware agreed to put this article in the next edition of the Shrivenham News. Mike Wise advised that plaques were being discovered all over Faringdon, a phonebox in Canada Lane would soon be made into a local work of art. Abigail Brown offered to help the skatepark with their artwork and advised there was an ongoing project to dye pigeons pink.

e. Faringdon Twinning Association

Cllr Mike Wise advised that Faringdon Twinning Association had its AGM and Dr David Williams was taking over as Chairman. There were 48 French people from La Mele coming to Faringdon on 11th November for a weekend staying with Faringdon families.

f. Farcycles

Trudy Godfrey advised that Farcycles had met with an engineer from the County Council in October to go around the proposed cycle route. They had been advised they would have to get a 'cycle path order' for the project to proceed.

9. Economic Development News from Abingdon and Wantage

Trudy Godfrey advised that the Choose Abingdon Partnership had held an event in Abingdon Business Park for retailers to promote their outlet to employees working in the Business Park (e.g. Standard Life employees). The idea was that it would encourage employees in Abingdon Business Park to go into town and use local retailers during their lunch break. The Partnership had also planned Phase II for the loyalty card scheme and had increased take-up amongst businesses – there were now over 30 businesses taking part in the scheme. The Abingdon Walking Packs had also been produced and feedback had been very positive.

In Wantage, Trudy Godfrey advised that around 40 businesses had decided to join the Wantage & Grove loyalty card scheme. This new scheme would be launched in November (prior to Dickensian evening) and was a project that Wantage JEF had sponsored.

Action: Trudy Godfrey to speak to the Faringdon Chamber of Commerce about promoting a scheme that would support retailers in the town. E.g. the 'Christmas Passport'.

10. Financial Report of JEF

Cllr Sharp advised that in the accounts to September income was £1,200 (grant from the Vale of White Horse District Council) and the JEF had awarded a grant of £1,000 to the Folly Tower. The current account had a credit balance of £3,113.53.

Action: Cllr Robert Sharp to draw down grant from Faringdon Town Council.

10. Next Meeting

Dates of the next meetings are:

- **Thursday 26th January 2012 in the Old Town Hall**
- **Thursday 19th April 2012 in the Old Town Hall**
- **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 was not available, the meetings would be held in an alternative venue (e.g. the Pump Rooms or Crown Coaching Inn).

Trudy Godfrey
Secretary

DRAFT

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)