

**MINUTES OF THE FARINGDON JOINT ECONOMIC FORUM (JEF)
MEETING HELD ON 18TH OCTOBER 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, Cllr Roger Cox, Cllr Alison Thomson, Cllr Jim Halliday.

Faringdon Town Council (FTC): Cllr Jane Boulton, Cllr Andrew Marsden, Cllr Julie Farmer.

Other organizations: Paul Brame (Chairman, and Chamber of Commerce), Colin Desborough (Faringdon Association of Residents), Sarah Allen Stevens (Chamber of Commerce).

Non-voting members:

In attendance: Trudy Godfrey, Secretary.

Apologies: Cllr Ron Mansfield, Sally Thurston, Cllr Mike Wise (Mayor), David Williamson (Farcycles), Eddie Williams (Folly Trust), Mrs Daphne Saunders (FAP), County Cllr Judith Heathcoat, Mark Harrison (Farcycles).

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Election of Officers

Chairman: Cllr Roger Cox proposed Paul Brame. This was seconded by Cllr Alison Thomson. All voted – all in favour and the motion passed.

Vice Chairman: Cllr Alison Thomson proposed Cllr Mohinder Kainth and this was seconded by Cllr Roger Cox. All voted – all in favour and the motion passed.

Treasurer: Cllr Roger Cox proposed Robert Sharp and this was seconded by Cllr Alison Thomson. All voted – all in favour and the motion passed.

Actions: JB / AM to ask June Rennie to nominate two more voting members. AT to check who would replace RM. TG to circulate new membership list.

4. Minutes of meeting on 19th April 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th April 2012 were accepted as true and accurate record.

5. **Update on Local Plan and Employment Land Review**

The Vale's Planning officer (Andrew Maxted) gave an update on the progress made with the local plan. Part 1 was concerned with key strategic sites and part 2 would detail development management policies and would allocate small sites as necessary. The plan would be published in February 2013 in draft. There would be a pre-submission consultation. The Employment Land Review was being updated from the 2008 position and would take a view on whether there was adequate provision of strategic employment sites across the Vale. The Local Plan identifies the total quantity and the larger strategic sites (e.g. Didcot A, 4 and 20 sites in Faringdon and the site south of Park Road, Faringdon) as well as improving local sites in Faringdon, Wantage and Grove. The Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity to identify smaller sites in the town, and would provide more detailed plans. The JEF may be asked to comment on the Local Plan before public consultation.

Action: Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan Employment Group to meet with the Neighbourhood Plan consultants to progress ideas for employment sites.

6. **Update on Neighbourhood plan**

Andrew Maxted advised that consultants held 3 public meetings and took on board comments from everyone present. There were 120 people at each meeting. They are preparing a draft report for the end November. This report will then be passed to the Vale for any amendments and then presented to Faringdon Town Council for their consideration.

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

Trudy Godfrey advised that there was satisfactory progress with most projects. The free Wi Fi service had stalled because of difficulties getting written permissions from Barclays and the Folly Coffee Shop.

Actions: PB to write to Barclays on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce.

Update: TJames Telecomm project manager had left the company so further delays were inevitable.

Trudy Godfrey advised that Faringdon was to benefit from £22,500 funding from the High Street Innovation Fund, and a further £10,000 Portas funding. This funding was to be invested in the town to improve town centre vitality. Trudy was working with the Chamber of Commerce to set up a 'Town Team' to deliver the projects that would report to the JEF. Projects likely to be funded included: Berners Banners, floral baskets, TESCO shop wrapping, support for the loyalty card scheme and a tourism project. Projects had to be delivered by end March 2013.

Action: Set up a Faringdon Town Team and plan delivery of projects funded by the High Street Innovation fund and Portas fund.

8. Progress Reports from:

a. Faringdon Area Project

A written update was provided after the meeting. Jane Haynes has continued to work with Faringdon Area Project and provided ongoing administration support to Daphne Saunders: the current chairman. Faringdon Health Group, as part of Faringdon Area Project, found that there was a lack of ante-natal care available in the town – to access ante natal care new parents need to be able to travel to Abingdon!. A series of classes were set up with the help of a local midwife. The classes were held in Faringdon Family Centre. The classes were attended by a small number of expectant mums (and dads), but unfortunately the midwife was not able to continue due to family commitments and the classes have now ceased.

Daphne Saunders is a Committee Member of OCVA and continues to make sure that Faringdon is known about county-wide and beyond. This year Daphne nominated Gene Webb for an OCVA Community Awards. This means that for the second year a volunteer from Faringdon has been recognised and will be receiving an award for their voluntary efforts. Gene will collect her award at a ceremony at Oxford Town Hall on 23rd October.

Faringdon Area Project continues to support all local groups including; the Food Group, Farcycles, Ecoweek, Faringdon Scouts and many more.

b. Chamber of Commerce

Town Map: Denise Palmer has worked closely with Trudy Godfrey of the Vale District Council to develop a town map, that shows visitors where businesses are situated around the town centre. The maps are now displayed in both of the town centre car parks and are available in leaflet and electronic versions.

Loyalty Card: We have successfully launched and continue to market a loyalty card scheme for businesses in Faringdon. Denise Palmer is leading this in conjunction with Trudy Godfrey and several of the town's retailers. This scheme is based on a similar project which is running successfully in Wantage and Grove. So far there are over thirty business who participate in the scheme and there are now 300 card holders. A card costs £2 and is available in most participating businesses. The retailer or business will then set the offer applicable for each month and this information is sent out to all card-holders – thus maintaining profile for the participants and the scheme generally. There is a website at <http://www.faringdonloyalty.co.uk/>

Networking and The Christmas Ball: The Chamber also provides a forum for members to lobby and discuss issues that concern them as well as a monthly opportunity to network. The Chamber continues to foster close links with the

Faringdon Business Breakfast Club, which Paul Brame also helps to run. There is also the annual black tie ball, which this year is to be held on Saturday 24th November 2012 and will raise money for Help For Heroes.

High Street Innovation Fund: The Chamber helped facilitate a meeting to allocate funding which was made available (at fairly short notice) via the VoWHDC as a result of the Portas Review. £22,500 was available for Faringdon and we are now waiting for feedback on our submissions, which had to comply with Mary Portas' recommendations, had to be sustainable and most importantly had to be capable of being delivered before March 2013. The ideas included the following; formation and support for a Town Team to market the town, a contribution to the existing project to create eye-catching banners for the town centre, floral decorations, signage (both within and outside of town), shop wrapping (particularly the Tesco's frontage on Park Road), development of the loyalty card website and the creation of a register of local landlords.

c. Faringdon Association of Residents

Colin Desborough advised that the Faringdon residents group were involved in the Neighbourhood plan through the 'housing group'. The consultants were excellent and gathered the views of the 'hard to reach' residents by face to face interviews in the Market Place.

e. Farcycles

No update provided.

f. Pink Pigeons

No update.

g. Faringdon Twinning Association

No update.

h. Faringdon in Bloom

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

9. Economic Development News from Abingdon and Wantage

Trudy Godfrey advised that the Choose Abingdon Partnership had commissioned Hidden Britain to undertake research on visitors in the town. The main messages from the research is:

- Abingdon does not present a clear and consistent offer or identity to the visitor, there is no consensus about what the destination has to offer, what an experience there consists of and chiefly why a visitor would want to come.
- When communications are made, the channels and media are poorly adapted to the needs of the visitor.
- Abingdon is underperforming on expectation but certainly delivering on experience. This is a position of strength to build from and is certainly more advantageous than the reverse and it is therefore consequently easier to address the key issues.

Action: TG to circulate the Hidden Britain research.

Wantage were holding a community and business event 'Shaping Wantage event' to gather ideas about how to improve town centre vitality and to find out what facilities and shops residents wanted in the town. This event would be held on 27th November at 7pm in the Civic Hall.

10. Financial Report of JEF

Cllr Sharp advised that the current balance was £2,554.64. This included £1,000 grant income from the Vale. Matching grant was to be claimed from Faringdon Town Council. Robert Sharp proposed to accept the accounts, this was seconded by Colin Desborough.

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 17th January 2013**
- **Thursday 18th April 2013**
- **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)