

# Economic Development Action Plan for Faringdon 2014-15

## INTRODUCTION

This is the annual update to the Vale of White Horse District Council's action plan for Faringdon, authority for which was approved by the Vale Council's executive in September 2010. This draws upon information gathered by the economic development team throughout the year using events, group meetings, individual discussions with partners and through partnership working with the Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the Joint Economic Forum partnership to identify projects that will deliver significant economic benefit for the town and can realistically be delivered in 2014/15.

It is important to recognise that although the market town agenda is vested with the Vale council's economic development service, successful delivery of the plan is dependent on a commitment from a number of services in the Vale council as well as partners in the towns, especially the town councils.

Market towns are a corporate priority for the Vale council and this is clearly articulated in the Vale's Corporate Plan 2012-16 and reflected in the strategic objective: "*building the local economy*" and corporate priority to "*continue to invest to improve the viability and attractiveness of our towns.*"

The vision for Faringdon outlined in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan is of "*an inherently sustainable town with a high degree of self-containment that enables a wide range of people to live, work and socialise, and that meets their day-to-day needs*". It goes on to say that "*The market square will be the bustling heart of the parish*" and identifies a number of key challenges that underlie the actions in this plan including:-

- Faringdon town centre experiences low retail vacancy rates and enjoys weekly markets – the focus should be on increasing footfall to maximise local spending and town centre vitality going forward.
- Faringdon has a low profile for tourism despite its proximity to key attractions, and having its own historic assets – the focus should be on promoting its unique and historic assets.
- The weekly market could be improved to involve the local community to enhance its contribution to the vitality of the town centre – the focus should be on re-energisation and re-animation of the markets with an even greater emphasis on quality and local produce so that it properly complements the shops in providing an attractive offer
- The Market Place is a hub meeting social and shopping needs – the focus should be on encouraging even more social and commercial activities to take place in the market square to generate life and activity.

- Opportunities for Faringdon residents to work locally are fairly limited – the focus should be on continuing to ensure that employment land is available for businesses to grow and residents to work locally.

## Our approach to consultation

The Vale Council’s economic development team hold regular meetings and events with representatives from Faringdon. During the last year, the main events included:

- quarterly meetings with the Faringdon Joint Economic Forum
- regular attendance at Faringdon Chamber of Commerce meetings and meetings with the Town Council
- meetings with individual businesses, and particularly in connection with the [Oxtrails](#) project.

The Vale Council approved a growth bid to recruit two part-time market town co-ordinators to help deliver the Faringdon Action Plan during 2014/15.

## ACTIONS TO IMPROVE TOWN CENTRE VITALITY – FARINGDON ACTION PLAN 2014/15

Aim	Project	Why?	How will we measure this?	What have we achieved so far? (Q1)
Improve town centre vitality	use landlords database to engage with town’s investors to improve town appearance and extend to Park Road businesses	To facilitate town centre improvements and initiatives (e.g. WiFi, Xmas decs, empty units)	Describe what have we achieved by using the database e.g. smartened up 3 shop-fronts, assisted 1 new business to move into town	Writing to 15 businesses to inquire if plans to improve shop fronts...
	Survey Faringdon businesses	To find out about businesses trading conditions and identify ways we can help them	12 businesses surveyed, 7 actions identified and 3 actions delivered	Wanted help increasing footfall - suggested regular events would help
	Work with commercial agents to reduce number of empty units and encourage ‘meanwhile’ uses	Reduce no. of empty units, improve town vitality; increase footfall	No. of new businesses opening up; Number of businesses closing; no. of empty units compared with 2013	Empty shops: Old Butchers, Folly Coffee Shop and DVD / Video hire - AH to contact owners of Video store to find out if we could use it for meanwhile use

	work with the Chamber to support and develop the town-wide loyalty card scheme, using social media, e-newsletters and web presence	To raise awareness of the number of local businesses, to promote specific businesses and product ranges	To increase no. of loyalty card holders from 750 to 1,000 members; no. of people using the cards; +""% increase in town centre footfall	AH to survey businesses; AH to survey cardholders; Residents survey at FollyFest; relaunch 1/11, investigate ways of promoting the scheme to increase # cardholders
	provide ongoing support for, and monitor impact on business from free car parking, public Wi Fi	to provide the infrastructure to allow business growth and encourage longer dwell times by visitors and residents	Measure impact of free car parking on businesses (survey); +2% increase in town centre footfall; 50 persons using town centre WiFi every day	WiFi installed and operating in town centre – 65 users to date. TG planning shopper survey to investigate impacts of 2 hours free car parking (10/14)
	Improve existing markets, introduce new market(s), engage the interest of younger people in markets	To increase visitors, spending and footfall in the town centre	Increase no. of stalls by 2, Increase no. of people visiting markets by 10%, 4 'mini' events to support the markets, 4 articles to promote the markets	AH planning 'childrens market' for end September 2014; French market in November
	Work with Faringdon Schools and Young Enterprise to get young people more involved in town / business	To increase current and future spending in the town centre businesses	3 town centre initiatives involving young people	Working with FCC & FJS to have Sat Market in Sep - Teenage Market
<b>Supporting local businesses</b>	work with the Chamber and FTC to deliver economic development strategy for Faringdon	to encourage commercial investment and commercial development in Faringdon	Produce the economic development strategy by Q3, deliver 1 action from the strategy in Q4	EDS draft 16/7;
	Hold at least one project that will 'celebrate' and raise awareness of independent businesses	To raise awareness about local businesses and increase footfall and turnover in town centre	Hold at least 1 business competition involving 5 businesses	Independents Day 4/7 and 5/7 - new shop (Davis DIY) plus posters and /FB campaign and new Sat Market
	Hold a series of mini-events and engage with businesses	To increase footfall and spending in the town centre	No. of mini-events held and numbers visiting each event (approx), footfall to increase by 2% yoy	Blackbird day - 6/5 (+50 visitors), 17/18 May (+400 visitors, people going into shops) - SURVEY/FEEDBACK? Next event? Sat Market 5/7

	Produce a 12 month event calendar and work with businesses to max local spending	To increase footfall and spending in the town centre	produce an annual diary of events, record the no. of businesses involved, footfall to increase by 20% on event days	BT will produce this by end July 2014
	Work with Pink Pigeons, drama and art groups to encourage and develop programme of public arts to support town centre businesses	To increase footfall and spending in the town centre	No. of arts events in town centre, no. of visitors to each event	BT to develop set of PDFs to promote Faringdon using shopping, history, culture, great outdoors as 'hooks'
	Improve the appearance of Park Road's commercial district	To encourage more people into the town and visitors to the town centre	describe project and visual impact on town	Children in schools entered 'Faringdon Flags' competition – the best one will be the Faringdon Flag, produced and put into Park Road and Town Centre.
	produce a new residents welcome pack, promoting town centre businesses	to encourage footfall and spendign in the town centre	new residents pack produced, no. of businesses promoted, no. of outlets distributed to	BT and AH to develop by November 2014
	Promote local business successes through Vale4Business, Tourism website, Vision newsletter	To promote the district as a great place to do business	No. of Vale4Business members; No. of 'Spark Vale' entries; No. of 'tweets'	Met with Chariots and Cherry Pie to help forge connections with town
	Provide businesses with up-to-date news and 121 advice or assistance	To support business growth	No. of businesses in district; No. of Vision e-newsletters issues and read; no. of businesses assisted, business satisfaction survey?	working with owner of 4 and 20 site; Bethia working with Karl (David DIY)
	work with local businesses to benefit from national campaigns, such as 'Independents Day' on 4 July, Small Business Saturday and English Tourism Week	To promote the district as a great place to do business and support business growth	No. of towns participating in each campaign; no. of 'tweets'; no. of hits on web-pages	4/7 Independents Day - BT/SAS - posters in shops; 5/7 new Sat market (BT & AH)

	encourage businesses to take advantage of Oxtrails app promotion opportunities	To increase spending in Faringdon businesses	No. of value of vouchers redeemed by visitors in Faringdon businesses	The Rookery (get one free drink with every lunch purchased)
	Promote the Bybox locker scheme and improve linkages with local businesses	To increase footfall in the town centre and increase spending in local businesses	No. of deliveries to Bybox lockers; No. of local businesses supported; spend taken by local business (Bybox data?)	20 deliveries to June 2014
<b>Supporting the visitor economy</b>	Improve Faringdon pages on www.southernoxfordshire.com and promote via social media	To increase visitors to Faringdon	Establish baseline for no. of hits on Faringdon page	700 - 1,000 page views per month
	improve Faringdon content on third party web-sites such as Trip Advisor, Visit Oxfordshire, Enjoy England, Visit South East England, Walking Britain	To increase visitors to Faringdon	No. of pages of improved copy; establish baseline for no. of hits on Faringdon page	BT developing weekend itinerary highlighting quirky & eccentric nature of Faringdon
	promote the town to visitors through literature, social media, events and news stories	To increase awareness of Faringdon and ultimately visitors to Faringdon	No. of leaflets distributed to 'fringe' attractions, no. of stories created about Faringdon, no. of events held	BT leading on social media promotions and content for town
	consider opportunities for installing charging points for electric vehicles	To increase visitors to Faringdon and celebrate 'eco' credentials	No. of EV charging points installed, no. of visitors using EV charging points	AH advised too expensive
<b>TOTAL</b>				