

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Council

held at 7.00 pm on Wednesday 17 July 2013
at the Guildhall, Abingdon



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillor Mike Badcock (Chairman), Eric Batts (Vice-Chairman), John Amys, Marilyn Badcock, Matthew Barber, Yvonne Constance, Roger Cox, Tony de Vere, Gervase Duffield, Jason Fiddaman, Debby Hallett, Jeanette Halliday, Jim Halliday, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Dudley Hoddinott, Simon Howell, Angela Lawrence, Pat Lonergan, Sandy Lovatt, Ron Mansfield, Sue Marchant, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Aidan Melville, Elizabeth Miles, John Morgan, Michael Murray, Jerry Paterson, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts, Fiona Roper, Robert Sharp, Val Shaw, Andrew Skinner, Alison Thomson, Melinda Tilley, Margaret Turner, Reg Waite, Elaine Ware, Richard Webber and John Woodford

Officers: Steve Bishop, David Buckle, Steven Corrigan, Matt Prosser, Margaret Reed and Anna Robinson

Number of members of the public: 2

Co.12 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Julia Bricknell, Charlotte Dickson, St John Dickson, Bob Johnston, Bill Jones, Mohinder Kainth, Gill Morgan, Janet Shelley and Catherine Webber.

Co.13 Minutes

RESOLVED: to adopt the minutes of the annual meeting held on 15 May 2013 as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Pat Lonergan in the list of apologies and correctly recording Judy Roberts as a member of the Audit and Governance Committee, and agree that the Chairman signs them.

Co.14 Declarations of interest

None.

Co.15 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Jeanette Halliday to the council following her election at the Abingdon Fitzharris ward by election on 4 July 2013. He also

congratulated Councillors Catherine and Richard Webber on the arrival of their second grandchild.

Co.16 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting Council

None.

Co.17 Urgent business

None.

Co.18 Petitions under standing order No.13

None.

Co.19 Questions under standing order 12

1. Question from Councillor Tony de Vere to the Leader of the Council, Councillor Matthew Barber:

‘Please would the Leader reassure council that under no circumstances will he allow a change in the branding of ‘Science Vale UK’ before bringing the issue back to full council?’

Councillor Matthew Barber responded that there were no plans to change the branding but that it was a matter for the Science Vale Board.

In response to a supplementary question asking whether he was aware that Oxfordshire County Council had already discussed a change of name, Councillor Matthew Barber responded that as far as he was aware no proposal had been submitted to the Science Vale Board and it had not been raised as an agenda item.

2. Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to the Cabinet member for economic development, Councillor Elaine Ware:

‘Please would the Cabinet member update Council on the percentage Retail Occupancy rates for each of our Market Towns?’

Councillor Elaine Ware responded as follows:

“Economic Development undertakes annual retail vacancy surveys in each of the towns in September as there is evidence that vacancies are affected by seasonality, particularly around Christmas, Easter and summer. As a result we will not have a full updated vacancy position for all the towns until later this year.

However, I am pleased to report that due to ongoing work in two of the towns the retail vacancy rate in Wantage has decreased from 26 units in September 2012 to 15 units in July 2013. The vacancy rate in Wantage has therefore fallen from 14% to 8%. In Faringdon the number of vacant units increased from 1 to 3 in the same period but 2 of these units will shortly be in use which means that the vacancy rate remains unchanged at just under 2%.

Additionally in Botley there is 100% occupancy and therefore 0% vacancy rate.

The figures quoted may be compared to the National retail vacancy rate of 14.1% published in May 2013.

With regard to Abingdon, as already mentioned there will be a full survey undertaken in September. The shopping centre redevelopment has only recently been finalised and although there are a number of vacant units one of the larger units in the centre will shortly be let and we are hopeful that once there is an anchor tenant in place that the other units will quickly be filled. There will be an announcement about this by Scottish Widows early next week. In addition the former West End News shop (next door to Costa) is to become a Parsons Bakery, work has already begun and Costa Coffee will be expanding into the former Jessop's store that closed when the company went into administration nationally. Officers tell me that another shop outside the centre has recently been purchased and will start trading by the end of summer – more details will be available once legal work is completed. Wetherspoon's are investing significant sums of money in the Old Post Office and Phase one of the Old Gaol development is nearing completion. We are confident that this time next year, the number of vacant units in Abingdon will be much lower and we should see some improvement by the time the survey is carried out.

The Vale's percentage vacancy rates compared with the National average are extremely encouraging and no doubt reflect that the introduction of 2 hours free car parking has had a beneficial effect.

I shall ensure that details of the full survey are provided to all councillors as soon as they are available”.

Councillor Judy Roberts asked the following supplementary question:

"To what extent is any increase in the four market areas attributable to the introduction of 2 hours free car parking and/or the implementation of the £100,000 Portas money at the start of 2013?"

Councillor Elaine Ware agreed to provide a written reply.

3. Question from Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer to the Cabinet member for economic development, Councillor Elaine Ware:

‘Please would you report to Council on the present state of the Vale lease of Abbey Fishponds and its future?’

Councillor Elaine Ware responded as follows:

“The existing manager of the site BBOWT (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust) does not wish to continue being involved with the site after the end of this year.

We are giving active consideration to entering into a management agreement with a local charity that is well experienced in the management of environmentally important sites.

As the Vale is only the leaseholder we have involved the owner of the site in those discussions with a view to having new agreements in place in time for the expiry of the lease”.

In response to a supplementary question Councillor Elaine Ware confirmed that meetings between representatives of the trust and district council were important to the success of the Abbey Fishponds.

- (4) Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to the Cabinet member for environmental health, Councillor Roger Cox:

'The Botley Air Quality Management Area was created in 2008. The Air Quality Updating and Screening Assessment report of 2012 concluded that it was necessary to develop an Air Quality Action Plan for Botley. Please would the Cabinet member for environmental health comment on the efficacy of the Vale's current Action Plan for reducing nitrogen dioxide air pollution in the Botley AQMA along the A34 corridor, and point us to where the public can see that Action Plan.'

Councillor Roger Cox responded as follows:

"I have instructed officers to produce a district wide strategy and action plan incorporating measures needed to deal with the air quality issues identified at Botley, Abingdon and Marcham.

The rationale for this approach is that the cause of the air quality issues in each of these areas is road traffic emissions and we consider that a district wide approach, in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council, the highways authority, will achieve more tangible results".

Co.20 Recommendations from Cabinet, individual Cabinet members, and committees

Council considered the following recommendation from the General Licensing Committee

Hackney Carriage Tariff in Vale of White Horse District Council area

At its meeting on 9 July 2013 the General Licensing Committee had considered a report on the removal or retention of a council set hackney carriage tariff in Vale of White Horse District Council area. The committee recommended council to retain a council-set hackney carriage tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade to restructure and update the tariff.

RESOLVED: to retain a council-set hackney carriage tariff and undertake a statutory consultation with the trade to restructure and update the tariff.

Co.21 Designating the council's section 151 chief financial officer

Council considered the report of the strategic director on the appointment of the head of finance as the section 151 chief financial officer.

RESOLVED: to

1. designate William Jacobs, the Head of Finance, as the council's section 151 chief financial officer from 1 September 2013;

2. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to make any consequential changes required to the council's constitution to reflect this change.

Co.22 Abingdon Fitzharris by election - review of political balance

Council considered the report of the head of legal and democratic services regarding changes to the make-up and membership of committees following the by election for the vacancy in the Abingdon Fitzharris Ward, held on 4 July 2013.

RESOLVED: to

1. agree the revised membership of the Planning Committee as 8 Conservative and 6 Liberal Democrat members;
2. allocate an additional seat on the Planning Committee to the Liberal Democrat Group; and
3. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to make the appointment to the vacant Planning Committee seat in accordance with the wish of the Liberal Democrat Group.

Co.23 Community Governance Review - draft terms of reference

Council considered the report of the chief executive on draft terms of reference for a community governance review – a review of parish arrangements within the district.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the draft terms of reference set out in Appendix A of the report of the chief executive to the Council meeting on 17 July 2013 for a community governance review of the Vale of White Horse;
2. establish a working group comprising five councillors (three Conservatives and two Liberal Democrats) to oversee the review; and
3. authorise the head of legal and democratic services to make appointments to the working group in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group.

Co.24 Report of the leader of the council

The Leader of Council reported that Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property, had taken a decision on 30 May 2013, as a matter of urgency, to enter into a contract for the replacement of the two artificial turf pitches at Tilsley Park, Abingdon and approve the virement of £29,913.18 from the Vale council's contingency budget to the YC16 'Tilsley Park-replacement of artificial pitches' capital budget. The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and Chairman of Council had agreed that any delay caused by the call-in process would prejudice the council's and public's interest because such a delay would threaten the manufacture of the carpet before the summer factory closure, disrupt the hockey season, risk injury to users, and potentially increase the loss of income claims from the council's contractor for loss of business.

He reported that following an appeal against the council's refusal to grant permission to build 159 houses to the east of Drayton Road in Abingdon (P12/V2266/FUL) the Planning Inspectorate had granted planning permission. Because this had implications

for the whole of the district he had instructed officers to seek legal advice on the potential for challenging the decision and if positive to consider involving other parties in any challenge.

Co.25 Motions under standing order 11

1. Having received the consent of Council to alter a motion of which he had given notice, Councillor Sandy Lovatt moved and Councillor Jason Fiddaman seconded the following motion – additional words shown in bold and deleted words crossed through.

‘This Council instructs officers to **bring forward the planned** review of the policy on street trading **for the whole district, and in particular** to consider including as consent streets in Abingdon the following areas of the Town Centre:

- a. The Market Place
- b. The Undercroft of the County Hall Museum
- c. The Abbey Gateway
- d. Bath Street from the High Street to Stratton Way
- e. ~~The Square~~ **Old Station Yard**
- f. The High Street from the Market Place to Ock Street

and to bring a report to the General Licensing Committee for consideration.’

RESOLVED:

That Council instructs officers to bring forward the planned review of the policy on street trading for the whole district, and in particular to consider including as consent streets in Abingdon the following areas of the Town Centre:

- a. The Market Place;
 - b. The Undercroft of the County Hall Museum;
 - c. The Abbey Gateway;
 - d. Bath Street from the High Street to Stratton Way;
 - e. Old Station Yard;
 - f. The High Street from the Market Place to Ock Street; and
- to bring a report to the General Licensing Committee for consideration.

2. Motion proposed by Councillor Robert Sharp and seconded by Councillor Melinda Tilley:

‘This Council requests the Licensing Acts Committee to consider restricting the use of Chinese lanterns as a condition for licensed events in the Vale.’

With the consent of Council the mover and seconder of the original motion accepted a proposal to include a request that officers also investigate prohibiting the use of Chinese lanterns on council owned land.

RESOLVED:

That Council requests the Licensing Acts Committee to consider restricting the use of Chinese lanterns as a condition for licensed events in the Vale and requests officers to investigate the option of prohibiting the use of Chinese lanterns on council owned land.

3. Motion proposed by Councillor Jerry Patterson and seconded by Councillor Richard Webber:

‘When considering sharing accommodation with others, it is this council’s will that Vale of White Horse District Council should continue to be based at Abbey House, Abingdon.’

In seconding the motion Councillor Richard Webber stated that whilst supporting the guiding principle behind the sharing of accommodation to achieve savings, Abingdon is the historic centre of the Vale and Abbey House should be seen as the home of Vale of White Horse District Council, retain a staffing presence and all Vale only activities.

RESOLVED:

That when considering sharing accommodation with others, it is this council’s will that Vale of White Horse District Council should continue to be based at Abbey House, Abingdon.

The meeting closed at 7:20pm

**Written replies to questions
under standing order 12
at the Council meeting held on
17 July 2013**



This document sets out the written replies to questions asked at the Council meeting on 17 July 2013.

Q2 Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Elaine Ware:

Supplementary question:

'To what extent is any increase in the four market areas attributable to the introduction of 2 hours free car parking and/or the implementation of the £100k Portas money at the start of 2013?'

Councillor Elaine Ware's response:

'Thank you for raising the supplementary question about car parking and Portas funding.

The introduction of two hours free parking and the implementation of the Portas High Street Innovation Funding/Town Team funding have positively contributed to improving the viability and attractiveness of Abingdon, Botley, Faringdon, and Wantage.

In December 2012, the economic development team carried out a business survey to understand what impact the free two hours parking has had on businesses in these areas. Almost 70 per cent of businesses reported that the free two hours car parking had a positive impact on their business, with 52 per cent reporting an increase in visitors to their premises.

The Portas funding has allowed the economic development team to deliver a range of projects and promotions across the four areas increasing their vitality. The funding has attracted additional investment to the area, including match funding and in-kind contributions from town councils, businesses, and community groups.

The measurement of any increase in the use of market towns or district centres is a complex matter, but from the responses gained, I believe that the free parking, injection of Portas money and other associated investment we have been able to attract, have had a positive impact on the local economies in each of these areas. There are still challenges ahead but we remain focussed on supporting our local economy to see positive impact now and for the long term future of the Vale.'