

Minutes of the Meeting of the Strategy Committee in the Community Office Held at 8pm on Tuesday 24th May 2011

Present:

Councillors:

Ian Hill
Di Tolan
Robert Barber
Ted Backhouse
Harvey Batten
Tim Horton
Roger Beattie
Barry Adby
Tony Williamson
Rhian Woods

Officer:

Kristina Tynan

Press:

Jennifer Maxfield – Henley Standard

Members of the Public:

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The meeting opened with Ian Hill presiding.

41/11 Apologies for absence

Nick Greaves, David Tindale, Charles Rowton-Lee, Nick Hancock.

42/11 Election of Chairman

Robert Barber proposed Ian Hill and Tony Williamson seconded. There were no other nominations.

Resolved: That Ian Hill unanimously be elected as Chairman.

43/11 Election of Vice-Chairman

Resolved: To defer this item to the next meeting.

44/11 Chairman's Remarks

There were none.

45/11 Minutes of the Strategy Meeting held on 26th April 2011 received by Council 10/5/2011 to be signed as a correct record.

Resolved: That these minutes were a correct record of this meeting and that they be signed by the Chairman.

46/11 Declaration of Interests

To receive any declarations on interest from Councillors relating to items to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions of the Councils Local Code of Conduct.

Grant to Age Concern - Tony Williamson declared a prejudicial item in this issue as he is a Director of Watlington and District Age Concern. He signed the 'Declaration of Interest' book and left the room for this item.

47/11 Matters Arising

Changes to Bus Services (Minute 36/11 refers) – It was noted that Tim Horton is going to the meeting in Oxford tomorrow, 25/4/2011 on the issue of the 101/106 services. Ian Hill has prepared a note on this. A number of comments were made that Councillors would like addressed.

- It was noted that instead of serving a whole shopping centre, it will now only serve 1 supermarket.
- It was asked if the Iffley Road Closure will affect this service.
- A Sunday bus service may be very well used if it was offered. A commercial service should be viable on a Sunday.
- The vitality of bus use on Friday and Saturday nights. The bus company has said that it would be running an empty bus, but comments made have suggested that these nights could be very well used.
- Pensioners Bus Passes is a major issue. A lot of people who travelled to Cowley Centre were pensioners. The Government have reduced money for bus passes. It was noted that the bus company do not get given a full amount for the journey when bus passes are used. Comments have been made that users would not mind paying something towards the fare rather than not having the service at all.
- It was noted that a different bus route could be used to get from Sandford into central Oxford that would go past the Cowley Centre.

Resolved: That Tim Horton prepare a written report to the next Full Council meeting following the meeting on the 25/5/11.

This will then be an Agenda Item for the next Full Council meeting.

Insurance – It was noted that at the Full Council meeting on 10/5/2011 it was resolved to change our insurance company from AON to Zurich Munciple.

48/11 Short Discussion Items

Website – Business Directory

There has been various articles and reports on this in the Henley Standard and Watlington Times. It was noted that an agreement had been reached regarding this issue to help promote membership of the Business Association. It was noted that this was not a unanimous decision of the last Council and not all Councillors were happy with the agreement reached. This agreement was subject to having a 6 month review in September/October. The Parish Council have set up the Business Directory and the WBA were then to manage the site.

Since this agreement, the Clerk has sought advice from OALC on the following:

Advertisements - If the website is in the ownership of the Parish Council then it is for the Parish Council to lay down the terms and conditions under which local business can include their details. There are two issues that to consider carefully:

1. The Parish Council could open itself up to criticism if it appears to favour those businesses that are in membership of the Watlington Business Association (WBA)
2. If there are any charges whatsoever for advertisements on the site the Parish Council will be making a business supply and will have to register and charge VAT.

The simplest way forward could possibly be for the Parish Council website to contain a link to the WBA Business Directory on a WBA site which would be their property and responsibility. The terms and conditions for advertisers would be up to the WBA.

Donations towards costs of website - If any organisation wanted to make a donation to the Parish Council to contribute towards the costs of the website, this would not be a problem. However the Parish Council should be careful that there are no strings attached to any such donations. As previously stated the website is in the ownership of the Parish Council and it is for the Parish Council to stipulate how it is run and what is included.

It was noted that to date no payment has been received from the WBA and that the Parish Council have paid for all the work done on the Business Directory to date. The Finance Committee was asked to look at the costs paid to date and Tony Williamson and the Clerk were asked to re-do the costs of this based on no income being received.

Tony Williamson stated that the promotion of businesses came from SODC paying a Consultant firm to expand their market strategy in Henley, Didcot, Thame and Wallingford. Watlington PC met with these consultants (at no charge) and their main message was to treat Watlington as a whole, not look at things piecemeal. Everyone would gain from interactions between the organisations in Town, which was where the initial idea of a single Watlington website originated. The new watlington.org is an amalgamation of the two previous WPC websites (the tourist website and the Parish Council website with additional input from the WBA website that was being developed. Our aim was to have a website of value to the Town that included everything eg Events Diary, Parish Council information, Directory for Businesses and all Local Organisations and Tourist Information.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL; That the arrangement with the Watlington Business Association regarding the Business Directory be withdrawn following advice from OALC. A meeting to be set up with the WBA and that a paper be prepared for the next Full Council meeting on June 14th 2011 on this issue.

Website – Minutes – When should minutes be put on the website?

Advice has been given that it is good practice to publish minutes as soon as possible after a meeting as it keeps people informed and up to date. The minutes should be labelled as draft or unapproved as they are not the official minutes until they are approved.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That minutes be put on the website in their unapproved form as soon as is practicable following them being checked with the Chairman of the relevant committee.

**Shirburn Road/Love Lane - Consultation with Residents – note was attached to agenda
Deferred to the next meeting**

**Cuxham Road – note was attached to agenda.
Deferred to the next meeting.**

Grant to Age Concern – information was given in the May Full Council Pack

It was noted that this grant was awarded in March 2007 for works to the Age Concern Building at 33 High Street. It was noted that since then Age Concern have moved to new premises at 26b High Street.

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That we invite Age Concern to re-apply for a grant as the old application does not relate to their current premises.

Anonymous letters

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That Watlington Parish Council will not deal with anonymous letters as they cannot follow up on the issues. In almost all cases the Council need to be able to get further information and clarify details to enable us to pursue matters. If a resident has a concern and good reason to seek anonymity please address

the letter as confidential and we will treat it accordingly. There are a number of ways to deal with the Parish Council and residents can contact the Clerk or individual Councillors on any issues.

That WPC do not reply to anonymous letters in the press

49/11 Main Topics for Discussion

Election Process – *Discussion of issues that concern Watlington in this process.*

There are many issues of concern and it is noted that the District Council have appointed a person to conduct an independent review of the recent local elections and AV referendum in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse. Tim Horton reported that he has personally written to the District Council on this issue and has asked for information under the Freedom of Information Act. He stated that this is not the first election to have problems, there was also problems with the last election in 2007. Discussion took place and Councillors reported their own experiences about the Election process. It was noted that an impression has been given that the problem is seen as a failure of Royal Mail to deliver postal vote forms. As these forms have not yet been delivered nearly three weeks later it appears that they were never posted and that the problem is more likely to lie within the Shared Electoral Services Team. Under these circumstances a review commissioned by the SODC and Vale Returning Officer is clearly not independent. A fully independent review conducted by an independent national organisation such as the Electoral Commission stands a better chance of delivering a convincing report.

Council believes that the internal review should be halted, and a more searching and longer ranging enquiry commissioned immediately. It was agreed to compile a detailed list of problems which goes well beyond the issue of postal votes, which will include problems at the polling station in Watlington, the availability and accuracy of information for voters disenfranchised by the failure of the postal vote system, and security at the count in Thame. If the internal review does proceed we will of course submit this list to that review with the hope that it is properly investigated, but should the review not address these issues we will take the matter further.

Resolved: That an initial letter be sent to the District Council stating that we have an extensive list of items that need to be investigated and have some concern over the independence of the review that has been commissioned by the Returning Officer, David Buckle

Standing Orders – Discussion on co-option onto committees, length of grant allocations and change of Full Council date every 4 years to the third Tuesday of the month.

Nb All Councillors have a current copy in their packs.

Resolved: To discuss these issues in January when Standing Orders are scheduled to be reviewed.

Pavilion Summer Opening

It was noted that if this happens, the Sports Club would not want a different group running the pavilion when the pavilion was open for matches as the Sports Club would be providing drinks etc themselves and are are happy for the toilets to be used. It was noted that some days may have prior booking in the week and it would possibly be difficult for it to possibly be open 5 days a week. We would need to check the diary for the summer months and have terms and conditions in place. A business person could run it or we could see if it would be possible to run it by volunteers

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL: That the Operations Committee do what they can to see if the Pavilion facility could be operated for the summer months.

Car Park Financial Issues

Deferred to the next meeting.

50/11 Correspondence - attached

1. OALC – notification from NALC on one amendment to the model standing orders – **noted.**
2. Environment Agency – intention to advertise the Denver License Variation - **noted**
3. Review of Subsidised Services from June 2011 including timetables (held in office)- **noted.**

51/11 Items for Future Meetings

Refer to Forward Plan

Items for June/July 2011

Election Process – detailed list to be compiled

Car Park

Cuxham Road

Changes to Shirburn Street Parking

Pavilion Committee Issues

52/11 Any Other Business to note – Items to be notified to the Clerk in advance of the meeting.

THERE BEING NO OTHER BUSINESS THE MEETING CLOSED AT 10PM