

This is not a precise update, just those areas we thought were most relevant to those areas the Chamber has been involved in:

Terry Boswell, Sukey Jones (of Local Roots) and Jill Carver attended the Town Council Meeting, for which there was an audience of about 60 (including a number of Councillors).

The Town Council gave a thorough update on their actions in the last year and answered a number of questions from the floor.

One of the most noticeable elements of this meeting was the difficulty the general public has differentiating between which council is responsible for what, and so the TC got asked questions regarding areas they had no responsibility for, though may have an interest in.

Examples:

Speed of traffic up Radley Road

Car parking in the Brewery development

Sale of the Old Gaol site

Others were at least partly related to their work:

Demise of the watering of hanging baskets on residential properties

Request for a shelter at the bus stop in the Vineyard (going towards Oxford)

The times the Police Community Support Officer who is partly funded by the TC was on duty and the role they perform

Exact positioning of secure cycle parks at bus stops at the North end of Oxford Road

More interestingly from a Chamber perspective was that The Chamber was mentioned a number of times by the Councillors giving the updates, in a very positive manner, as a body who they worked with on a number of issues and hoped to continue to do so.

Terry raised the tourism non-funding issue and asked if the TC wish to get involved in saving 'tourism' as the Vale divests themselves of the costs! Julie Mayhew-Archer, on behalf of the TC, indicated that they were concerned about this and felt that their Visitor Information Point was an asset.

The cost of car parking was discussed briefly with a variety of comments about free parking. Julie Mayhew-Archer stated that all decisions regarding no free parking had been made years ago when monies had been allocated elsewhere. Terry quite rightly commented that this decision must surely be questioned in the light of new activity elsewhere, including Didcot.

A question asked of the TC was regarding the idea of a Town Manager and Julie Mayhew-Archer asked Jill Carver (of the Chamber) to speak. JC responded that this was being looked into by the Chamber and the JEF and that the Chamber had met with a Town Manager Consultant and was working with the TC and VWHDC through the JEF to establish a Town Plan which may in effect lead to a Town Manager. JC also referred to the BID idea, concerns over the positioning of such a role, and the chicken and egg problem of needing the Town Manager to organise all of this!

Another question re why wasn't Abingdon going 'plastic bag free' as per Wallingford and Wantage had JC expressing the Chamber view that the choice was not so simple, but that once again, we were giving consideration to all options and would be taking some action in the not too distant future.

JC also stood and told the audience that we were looking at alternatives for the bridge over the Thames to assist congestion in the town centre, and that the Chamber hoped for support from the TC in this venture and that, as we would be needing funding, if anyone had a few spare million pounds we would be very grateful!

There did seem to be general concern over the town centre with the first question very much being along the lines of the town is dying and what are the TC going to do about it but there

was also some positiveness in the meeting. Hester Hand and Bobbie Nichols (who Stuart Bates and JC have met with re the promoting of Abingdon) were there asking all to pull together and to have a co-ordinated approach to the improving of Abingdon.