



TOWN NEWS

A NEWSLETTER
PRODUCED BY
WANTAGE
TOWN COUNCIL



Gesælige Cristesmæsse Wanating!

Jim Sibbald, Councillor Major, Town Mayor of Wantage

I am writing this as we come out of the second lockdown and go into Tier 2 restrictions. Our town businesses have been hit hard so please do what you can do to support them.

The Festive Season is upon us and you all rightly deserve some cheer; cautious cheer as we are not yet at the end of this pandemic.

The Christmas trees and lights are up in the Market Place brightening the town. The winter flower baskets are proving to be popular and I look forward to them blooming even more. Hopefully some Seasonal virtual events are going to be offered by town organisations so I would keep an eye out for announcements on



the Council's website, Facebook page and the notice boards.

I ask that you continue with the marvellous community spirit that you have so magnificently shown not just this year but every year that I have had the privilege of living in the Wantage area.

Help those who are vulnerable and require assistance, those who may be lonely as their family cannot join them and remember to keep smiling.

Please follow the Government guidelines to assist in keeping the number of those affected in our town as low as we can.

So I bid you in the tongue of King Alfred,
**Gesælige Cristesmæsse,
Wanating!**
(Merry Christmas Wantage).

Statement from Wantage Town Council

COVID 19 – SAFER PUBLIC SPACES – MARKET PLACE PEDESTRIANISATION SURVEY

Firstly, a huge thank you to all who engaged with the survey. It will help the council so much when making decisions about this. Thank you also to the Chamber of Commerce for their survey of transport users of the Town Centre, and Sustainable Wantage for their Community Survey that closed on 3rd December and included questions relating to options for changes in the town centre.

We know that many will be wondering about the results of the survey. We are in the process of preparing a detailed report but in the meantime want you to know that there was a gratifyingly large response, so large in fact that it has generated 40 pages of comments and some great suggestions. It is also clear what the majority would prefer (see over the page) but we will nevertheless keep the minority opinions in mind when making our decisions.

It is important to remember that the West End closure and the other proposed closures are a response from the Town Council to the government requirement to open town centres and other public spaces safely whilst we are learning to live with the Covid 19 pandemic. Permanent pedestrianisation is a separate issue, although clearly the situation we are in now gives the opportunity to see how this would work and what impacts it has.

In line with GDPR (data protection) we have to strip out names and personal details on the comments but will publish them as soon as we can. In the meantime, here is a summary of the results...

SURVEY RESULTS >>>>



SURVEY RESULTS



For all the **823** Respondents...

All data presented excludes the "don't knows" and "didn't answer" and is also shown to two significant figures.

On the western end:
On balance do you think
these changes achieve their
objective?

Yes 62% vs No 38%

On balance are you in favour
of the temporary scheme for
further pedestrianisation and
move of the taxi rank and
buses for the area to the south
of the market?

Yes 58% vs No 42%

Are you generally in
favour of the temporary
pedestrianisation of the north
end of Newbury Street?

Yes 57% vs No 43%



**Should the Council
consult by means of a
survey like this one to
monitor any implemented
schemes?**

– in approximately
3 months' time. **Yes 61%**

**Thinking about all of the proposals and current
implemented scheme which items are closer to your
personal view? (selecting all that apply)**

The area at the western end
of the Market Place should
remain pedestrianised
on a temporary basis for
the duration of the COVID
pandemic.

63%

vs

Pedestrianisation of the
town centre in any form
does not make safer spaces
for social distancing during
the COVID pandemic.

37%

The area to the south of
the Market should be
pedestrianised, including
proposed changes to the
taxi rank and bus stops,
on a temporary basis for
the duration of the COVID
pandemic.

60%

vs

Pedestrianisation of the
town centre in any form
does not make safer spaces
for social distancing during
the COVID pandemic.

40%

The north end of
Newbury Street should
be pedestrianised on a
temporary basis for the
duration of the COVID
pandemic.

57%

vs

Pedestrianisation of the
town centre in any form
does not make safer spaces
for social distancing during
the COVID pandemic.

40%



Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) is the decriminalisation of most on-street parking offences such as parking on a double yellow line meaning they are no longer considered a criminal offence.

By introducing Civil Parking Enforcement, the enforcement of these offences transfers from the Police to local authorities who employ Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to patrol and issue fixed penalty notices.

In the South & Vale parking offences are still a police matter. Currently Thames Valley Police's resources are understandably prioritised on matters other than parking enforcement. Such parking violations however are of significant frustration to local residents and businesses alike.

The County Council, Cherwell, Vale, and South Oxfordshire District Councils have therefore been working in partnership to explore the business case for implementing CPE within these areas. There has been a long-term desire to create a common approach across Oxfordshire with regards to parking in order to enhance our ability to better manage traffic flows in our towns and villages.

What has been done so far? A cross-authority officer-led working group commissioned an initial feasibility study to consider different operating options available to the councils along with what initial and ongoing investment would be required. The results of this work will be reviewed by the working group upon its imminent completion.

To enable CPE to be enforced across the county it is essential that signage is correct and road markings are of a sufficient standard. Oxfordshire County Council officers are currently carrying out condition survey samples in order to provide indicative costs to bring the markings up to an enforceable standard.

Whilst there is 'light at the end of the tunnel', the target date for the County Council isn't until November 2021. Until then on-street parking enforcement remains the responsibility of the police.



NEWS FROM

WANTAGE HEALTH CENTRE



Face masks, Zoom pub quizzes, Home schooling. 2020 has been a year none of us will forget as the pandemic has radically changed the way we live, laugh and learn. The teams at Newbury Street Practice and Church Street Practice have embraced many of these changes, although some have taken a little adjustment to the usual working practices. They have worked with national and local guidance to continue to provide routine and urgent care to the community throughout the last 10 months.

One of the most significant changes to general practice is how digital technology has made seeking healthcare more accessible. Now

both practices offer several alternative options to the traditional model of 'visiting the GP'. These include submitting an online consultation form via the Econsult platform, arranging a video consultation via a mobile phone, and exchanging text messages and even a photo or two. Details of these communications are then recorded in a patient's personal medical records.

The increased options in the way patients can communicate with their GP practice have been welcomed by much of the practice population. However, these tools do not replace the need for a face-to-face consultation and the community should be reassured to know both practices have been open throughout the pandemic and staff have been able to see people when clinically appropriate. The practice teams also recognise there are those who do not have access to the internet or to a mobile phone and are pleased to be able to support these patients with the more conventional methods of accessing health care.

Both practices have worked to deliver a successful flu campaign in 2020 and, together with local pharmacies, are well on the way to achieving a record number of flu vaccinations. Talking

of vaccines, there is much interest, excitement and hope surrounding the upcoming COVID vaccine programme. Both practices are working closely together, and with the local Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and will share news on this very soon.

For information about surgery opening hours, appointments, online prescriptions, health information and much more please see the practice websites:

Newbury Street Practice –
www.newburystreetpractice.co.uk

Church Street Practice –
www.wantagechurchstreet.co.uk

The teams at Newbury Street Practice and Church Street Practice have been hugely inspired and motivated by the gratitude and support the community have shown them throughout the pandemic. They would like to thank all their patients for their support over the year during these challenging times and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Healthy New Year!

Dr Carrie Ladd, GP Partner at
Newbury Street Practice

Dr Joy Arthur, GP Partner at
Church Street Practice

Wantage Hospital Refurbishment

Expectant mothers can now give birth in Wantage again after a maternity ward that was shut for a lengthy refurbishment finally reopened.

The unit, run by Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, was closed to births in March.

It was previously described as "a set from the BBC show *Call The Midwife*. It had this 1950s appearance, but now it looks bright, shiny and new".

The ward was refurbished with new flooring, blinds and kitchen facilities for the

staff, including a number of electric appliances, and all walls were repainted.

The funds were collected by Wantage Hospital League of Friends with many other community groups contributing to the efforts.

The League of Friends say "When the plea went out in the beginning of the year that the midwives wanted to refurbish the hospital, we were there. We were delighted to help them out in refurbishing what was an extremely drab unit".

The beds at Wantage

Community Hospital were closed in 2016 over fears of a possible legionella bacteria outbreak in the outdated hot water system. Meanwhile other services at the hospital were allowed to continue.

There is still currently no date from the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust on opening the 12 inpatient beds. Within the past six months the water pipes that were the root of the bed closures have been totally replaced, removing any reason for the beds not to be reopened.





CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

Wantage Climate Emergency Committee is focussed on completing our Action Plan for Wantage and has funded several projects this year with Sustainable Wantage. Here is an update on those projects.

CARBON REDUCTION COMMUNITY SURVEY

Hundreds of responses to Sustainable Wantage survey were received – thank you! Your feedback will provide valuable information to help Sustainable Wantage and Wantage Town Council identify where we can reduce our carbon footprint and support the community to make changes.



IMPROVING LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

The Wild Wantage Project has been surveying the Wantage Parish and developing a map of proposed wildlife corridors that could link the good areas and increase connectivity and wildlife habitat.

Whilst we plan opportunities for community action, we've been encouraging people to take action for wildlife on their own patch. A survey will be conducted soon to find out what actions have already been taken or will be pledged for the future.

WANT TO REPAIR YOUR HOUSEHOLD ITEMS?

We've gathered information from many local businesses that provide re-use and repair services. An interactive map of these will be available on the Sustainable Wantage website soon: **www.sustainablewantage.org.uk**

Look out for updates on the Council website – please come and get involved.



Age Concern

Age UK Oxfordshire have come up with a whole raft of virtual activities so that people can touch base with each other online.

These virtual activities are a real opportunity to meet new people, maybe learn a new skill, and most importantly have some fun – from a Festive Christmas Countdown to Through the Keyhole, a nostalgic trip down memory lane.

For anyone feeling fed up and lonely you are not alone, give Age UK Oxfordshire a call on **01235 849434** or email **network@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk** so that we can help you to have something to look forward to.

We also have support, handy hints and simple help guides on how to join in, so everyone can access the groups via our new Tech Buddy service. To access the Tech Buddy service call our helpline on **07584 148 507** or email **techbuddy@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk**

Updated Draft Wantage Neighbourhood Plan

The Town Council has published an update to the draft Wantage Neighbourhood Plan. Regrettably the Plan was rejected by an inspector in 2016 relating to the proposed town centre and greenspaces policies.

The updated Plan has been modified to amend or remove the policies that were deemed unacceptable. All other policies remain unchanged from the document published in 2016 and no new policies have been added. More information on the role of the Plan in the planning processes, and a copy of the updated Plan, can be accessed on the Town Council's website **www.wantagecouncil.gov.uk**

The publication is also accompanied by a survey that can be accessed through the website. The Town Council would welcome your comments and views on the various proposed policies. The deadline for responding to the survey is Friday 15 January 2021. Paper copies of the Plan and the survey are also available from the Museum in Church Street.



**Published by
Wantage Town Council**

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**Views and
comments
welcome**

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