

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY MEETING – THURSDAY 17TH DECEMBER 2015

The meeting was held at the Watlington Club and although poorly attended, raised a number of interesting discussion points. There were 13 attendees with a number of apologies

Two guest speakers made valuable contributions:

Suzanne Malcolm – Economic Development Officer from South Oxfordshire District Council
Mike Jennings – from Jennings and the Monument Business Park at Chalgrove Airfield

Peter Richardson introduced the meeting on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Co-ordination Group and referred the situation regarding the Post Office and its significance to the High Street. He pointed out that there will be a Post Office in Watlington and the change should be regarded as a transformation not a closure

Attendees were given a copy of a diagrammatic representation of Watlington as a service centre and a list of facilities we have in Watlington

Suzanne stated that 99% of business in South Oxfordshire consist of less than 5 persons and that SODC have seen a resurgence of interest in both convenience shopping and speciality shops. She confirmed the importance of attracting support from all sectors and loyalty schemes and the encouragement needed to set up new business ventures

Mike talked about the way many businesses start from an idea and a spare room or a garage and then develop and South Oxfordshire offers a great platform for this pattern. At Chalgrove they dealt directly with business owners offering a variety of packages to suit growing businesses

Simon Haynes spoke about the growth of Tutu Delicious and stated that the business was nearing the point of VAT registration – he also stated that in growing the business he was not able to refer to a local organisation for growth assistance

Thane from the Garage spoke at length about the parking problems in the vicinity of his premises and the problems he has with this and mobile internet connectivity from people who call on him to direct them when their mobile sat navs fail

There were a number of comments about the importance of adequate parking and the other comments included the question of shop hours and the importance of retaining the character of Watlington as a small market town