

Chair: Edward Baines Vice Chair: David Ainslie BEM Secretary/Treasurer: Ron Simpson BEM

Uppingham Webcam  Uppingham Hopper
www.uppinghamfirst.co.uk

Annual Report 2020

1. Introduction

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the principal achievements and activities of the Uppingham First Community Partnership (UF) and its constituent Business Forum (UBF) in 2019/2020. The activities of the Partnership's constituent Neighbourhood Forum (UNF) are featured in a separate report to be presented to the UNF AGM in August 2020.

This report will be distributed to local businesses and social and economic partners, as well as being published online at www.uppinghamonline.co.uk with a link from www.uppinghamfirst.co.uk. The report will also be used to support presentations around the UK intended to promote Uppingham as a sustainable next generation community with a progressive business/community relationship.

The death of Uppingham First director and BIZ Club Chair Geoffrey Pointon toward the end of the reporting year overshadowed what has been a very productive year for the partnership. This, coupled with the Covid 19 lockdown delayed the 2020 board elections until the UF AGM in June.

This year's AGM, held on June 16th 2020, confirmed the partnership's board membership for 2020/21 as:-

Chair: Edward Baines (Business Director) **Vice Chair:** Former Town Mayor David Ainslie BEM (Community Director).

Business Directors: Trevor Ellis, Kath Gilbert, Ron Simpson BEM, James Torbell.

Community Directors: Mark Shaw, Janet Thompson

Statutory Sector Directors: Lucy Stephenson (Local Government), Geoff Thompson (Education)

Due to the death of Geoffrey Pointon the board has a business sector vacancy and would welcome an expression of interest from a volunteer with an accountancy background.

2. One Voice

Uppingham Business Forum is an unincorporated association whose purpose is to provide a non-contributory, voluntary forum for all businesses trading for profit in and around the town of Uppingham. The objectives of the Forum are to:-

- Increase the profitability of businesses through the attraction of more visitors to the town and by increasing the public's awareness of the town
- be the recognised joint voice of Uppingham business where opinion is sought, or collective action is thought necessary, by the business members of Uppingham Business First
- seek to foster 'business to business' and 'business to town' relationships in the interests of the wider community

Uppingham Business First is the group of seven local business proprietors elected to be the 'business directors' of 'Uppingham First'. The group acts as an Executive of the Business Forum and reports back to it as required.

Uppingham First (UF) is the 'all sector' elected Community Partnership for Uppingham which brings together the voices of community, business and statutory sector forums. It incorporated as a limited company in January 2009. The registered company objects are:-

"To protect and promote the interests of Uppingham town helping to sustain its vitality and economic viability ensuring it remains an attractive place to live work and play."

The Partnership comprises a board of directors made up from the three sectors recognised by central government, these being business, the state sector and the third/voluntary/civil society/community sector.

UF is recognised by Rutland County Council (RCC) and Uppingham Town Council (UTC). The partnership is a member of Revive and Thrive, Locality and the Community Transport Association (CTA). The company is financially sound with grants and donations having been received from a wide range of sources including residents, businesses, community groups, national and local government, Locality and the National Lottery.

3. Strategic Activity

A series of key actions during 2019/20 have engaged the community and its service providers, as well as increasing the profile of the town around the UK, Europe and the world. Such actions have sought to not only influence policy thinking on market town matters, but also to promote Uppingham as a high quality manufacturing centre and service provider as well as a quality visitor, shopping and gallery experience. Some of the partnership's work is specifically directed toward addressing social isolation, deprivation and community sustainability. Its activities have included:-

- The continued operation and development of the Uppingham Hopper bus
- The further development of the partnership's website at www.uppinghamfirst.co.uk sponsored by local company ClockedIn
- Further support for the town's new community benefit society (Uppingham Homes CLT) intended to build and manage community led affordable homes for local people
- Acting as a government appointed Neighbourhood Planning Champion providing consultancy as required
- A scheduled updating of the design and distribution of the Uppingham Antiques, Arts, Books and Creative Crafts Trail website, leaflet and downloadable map (delayed by Covid 19)
- Continued support and delivery of a Vanguard Board for Uppingham to enable collaboration on its future development between the Uppingham community, its landowners and its developers
- Supporting the leadership and further development of an updated Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan
- Operation and licensing of the Rutland Lottery
- Extensive collaboration with the Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum and its good neighbour/neighbourhood watch scheme 'UppWatch'
- Support for the Rotary in Uppingham cashless society project entitled 'UppShop'
- Acting as a judge and sponsor of the annual East Midlands Women's Awards
- The acquisition and extensive redesign of the annual Stilton Cheese Run Classic Vehicle event
- The promotion of community health and wellbeing
- Support for, and collaboration with, the blue light services
- Presentations about the town and its activities around the UK
- Public and private meetings on a range of economic and social issues including banking, transport, health and wellbeing and local policing
- Supporting the maintenance and further development of the town's defibrillator network
- Sponsorship and support for a wide range of community activity and projects
- Participation in a variety of national groups and events including those on economic development, planning, housing and transport
- Responding to national, regional, local business and community consultations on a range of subjects including new standards for community transport and the updating of the Rutland Local and Transport Plans
- Ensuring Uppingham and Rutland have a high profile in the use of electric vehicles
- Promoting Uppingham via the partnership's website, social media pages and on TV
- The operation and further development of the Uppingham Webcam to promote local business and enhance community safety.
- Support for Uppingham in Bloom
- Support for new business start-ups in town
- Sustaining a free online facility to advertise job vacancies within the town
- The funding, authoring and distribution of business and community newsletters
- Providing free online advertising for local businesses
- Participation in the activities of the Biz Club
- Acting as a community partner for the Gigaclear Uppingham Fibre Broadband Network
- Acting as local business and community partner for the Digital Uppingham project including the arrival of 5G and the installation of public wifi
- Support for a range of community events and activities

4. Priorities for 2020/21

These include:-

- Supporting the re-opening of local businesses following the Covid 19 closures
- Achievement of more of the goals identified in the Uppingham Town Centre and Business Zones Plan
- Clearing the outstanding balance on the Uppingham Hopper loan
- Supporting an update of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan
- Delivery of the next stage of the Digital Uppingham initiative
- Further development of the Uppingham Vanguard and Uppingham First Boards
- Continued support for the Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum
- Further developing the Uppingham Hopper project to integrate it with UppWatch to provide home deliveries from high street shops to the housebound and the infirm

- Updating the Uppingham Arts, Antiques Books and Creative Crafts Trail
- Further high street initiatives to support local retailers and strengthen community engagement
- Helping to secure further national and international recognition for Uppingham as a visitor destination
- Further development of the working relationship with central and local government
- Further support for the Women in the High Street network
- The broadcasting of a number of events with sound via the Uppingham Webcam
- Supporting the further development of Uppingham Homes CLT to become a Registered Housing Provider
- Supporting the development of the Badley Orchard Project to build affordable homes for local younger people on donated land
- Pursuing an increase in the town's parking capacity and the attraction of new businesses to the town centre and business zones including a care home, second supermarket, industrial workshops and a cinema
- Encouragement of more environmentally beneficial forms of local transport
- Furtherance of the town's health and wellbeing strategy
- Further strengthening of collaboration with the blue light services
- Greater engagement with the youth of the town

5. Summary

Uppingham First and its Forums have had a productive and rewarding year encouraged by the recognition of Vice Chair David Ainslie BEM in the honours list and the leadership of new Chair Edward Baines. It was, however, tinged with sadness at its end with the death of director Geoffrey Pointon.

The support of the Wills family and James Torbell with his team in providing venues for meetings, and some sponsorship of activity, has been much appreciated. Similarly the huge support given by so many to the Uppingham Hopper! The town's profile with central government is excellent and the Uppingham community is much envied around the UK. The appointment of a new RCC Director of Places and the collaborative approach of our new Town Clerk Debbie Bettles have provided fresh opportunities for increased joint working in the town. The county has also elected a new hardworking MP.

Relationships between town and gown have remained good although recently quiet because of Covid 19. Collaboration between local business and the community continues to flourish. Public and Business Forums (physical and on Zoom) have been well attended. Rutland County Council and Uppingham Town Council have introduced a range of initiatives to support local business and those in need. The recent cancellation of parking charges during the lockdown and beyond has been particularly welcome.

Everyone is working hard to ensure mutual support during this difficult time as the high street re-opens. The town's Emergency Committee and its partners and volunteers have established a community support framework that has received much praise from elsewhere. Together we have made a difference. Local business owners have played a critical role in providing for the community's needs. Furloughed staff have swelled the ranks of the volunteers and added valuable support to the efforts of hard working health service professionals. Our churches have excelled recently in engaging the community online.

An important role for the partnership is to strengthen community sustainability while contributing toward business profitability and social justice. Of equal significance is the fostering of positive working relationships both inside and outside the town.

The partnership is now regularly invited to participate in national and regional events. Recent TV, radio and printed media publicity has helped raise the profile of Uppingham. The common thread in media coverage is recognition of what working together can achieve. In this the Uppingham community excels. Tributes to the town's achievements and forward plans have come from many quarters including the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff. Uppingham First is proud of the community it serves. There has never been a more important time for collaborative venture.

There is obvious concern about future footfall in the high street, hence the priority to be given to attracting and supporting businesses. Building homes affordable by our young families will be partly tackled by the town's new Housing Trust with the support of the town council. The need to continue modernising our infrastructure and install 5G capability and fibre to the premise broadband as it becomes available will be vital to attracting continued investment in the town.

Preserving the quality of our town centre environment and conservation area must be a priority if the town is to sustain its heritage. The final content and character of the updated Rutland Local Plan and Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan will be important to the town's future. Let's make sure we continue to work together to ensure Uppingham's future economic and social prosperity. By doing so we will ensure the town remains a fantastic place to live, work, study and visit.

Ron Simpson

Secretary Uppingham First
16.6.2020

Copies to: social and economic partners; local and national government; media

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