

UPPINGHAM FIRST

Community Partnership

**Chair: Edward Baines Vice Chair David Ainslie BEM Secretary/Treasurer/Business Forum Chair: Ron Simpson BEM
Neighbourhood Forum Chair: Janet Thompson**

Uppingham Webcam  www.uppinghamfirst.co.uk
Annual Report 2021

1. Introduction

This report details the principal achievements and activities of Uppingham First and its constituent Forums in 2020/2021. It aims to provide an overview of the collaborative work undertaken with the statutory, civil society and business sectors of Uppingham and other external partners. The report was presented to, and approved by, the 2021 Annual General Meeting of Uppingham First in the presence of the town's member of parliament, Alicia Kearns MP, and the Rutland High Sheriff, David Wood, before distribution to social and economic partners and central government. It will also be used to support presentations around the UK intended to promote Uppingham as a sustainable next generation community with a progressive statutory/business/community relationship.

2. One Voice

2.1 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 Forum met three times during 2020/21 with meetings notified by newsletter, e-mail, website and social media. Forum Chair is Ron Simpson BEM. 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
- Seek to foster business to business and business to town relationships in the interests of the wider community

Governance arrangements for the Forum are the responsibility of the 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.

2.2 Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum is a fully constituted, non-political, neighbourhood infrastructure network which brings together residents and a number of town councillors, charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups. In addition to acting as the voice of Civil Society for Uppingham, the Forum is the vehicle by which community sector directors are nominated for the Board of Uppingham First. The Neighbourhood Forum has been led in 2020/21 by its Chair Janet Thompson and a strong Executive Committee with representatives of the following organisations and areas being recognised: -

- Beeches Residents Association
- E J Toon Trust
- Elms Residents Association
- Leicester Road Residents
- Limes, Firs and Spurs Residents Association
- Methodist Church
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Rotary Club of Uppingham
- Community Emergency Plan Coordinator and Defibrillator Team
- Uppingham in Bloom
- Uppingham Homes Community Land Trust
- Uppingham Hopper Team
- Uppingham Women's Institute
- UppWatch Good Neighbour and Covid 19 Support Scheme

Due to the Covid -19 pandemic recent meetings of the Forum and its groups have been held on Zoom supplemented by online events such as a Valentines Night Musical Soiree. All public meetings of the Forum are preceded by a volunteer distributed newsletter to every household. The first live meeting of 2021 will be held on Thursday August 26th in The Falcon Hotel.

The Forum is a member of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), One East Midlands and the Rutland Neighbourhood Watch Association. In recent times it has hosted constituency, council and PCC election hustings.

2.3 Uppingham First is the 'all sector' Community Partnership for Uppingham which brings together the voices of community, business and local government forums. It incorporated as a limited company in January 2009. The objects for which the company was established 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 up to fifteen directors made up from the three sectors recognised by central government, these being business, local government and the third/voluntary/civil society sector. Uppingham First is recognised by Rutland County Council and central government and is active within a wide range of county activities.

The Uppingham First Community Partnership board met three times in 2020 and is chaired by local businessman and county councillor Edward Baines. During the year board membership and skill set was strengthened with the appointment of Nick Townsend who has a legal and housing development background.

Uppingham First is a member of Live & Local, the national charity Locality, and the Community Transport Association (CTA).

The partnership provides administrative support to a wide range of community groups and projects including Uppingham Homes CLT, the Rutland Lottery, the Uppingham Defibrillator Network, the Uppingham Hopper, UppWatch, Neighbourhood Watch and the Community Emergency Plan Team. It also supports the innovative Uppingham Vanguard Board which brings together developers, landowners, town and county councillors, schools and other agencies pertinent to the future development of Uppingham.

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

Despite the pandemic a series of key actions during 2020/21 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 not only to 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, transporting medicines and food as well as passengers (when permitted)
- 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
- 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 distributing profits in the form of grants to local groups (£3500 to date)
- 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' recently featured on ITV
- Acting as a judge, nominator (UNF) and sponsor of the annual East Midlands Women's Awards securing success with a number of category wins
- The redesign of the annual Stilton Cheese Run Classic Vehicle event (now April 2022) and the post lockdown creation of a new 'Round Rutland Run event' to be piloted in September 2021 with support from local company ClockedIn.
- The promotion of community health and wellbeing during the pandemic via UppWatch (UNF) and the administration of the town's Emergency Planning arrangements and the town's defibrillator network (now 8 devices)
- Support for, and collaboration with, the blue light services providing, when appropriate, data from the Uppingham Webcam
- Support for the town's relationship with the Lord Lieutenancy and the current High Sheriff

- Sponsorship and support for a wide range of community activity and projects including The Big Picnic (lead is Laura Totten of The Crown Hotel), Social Sundays (May to September in collaboration with St Peter and St Paul Church - Lead persons are Lucy Stephenson; James Torbell and team; David Ainslie BEM; Mark Shaw; Margaret Simpson BEM and the Jervis family)
- 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)
- 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 the Rutland Local and Transport Plans
- Hosting round table meetings to facilitate new employers and jobs coming into Uppingham (Uppingham Gate)
- 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 the 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 (due to recommence this autumn)
- 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
- Supporting the re-opening of local businesses following the Covid-19 closures

4. Priorities for 2021/22

These include: -

- Sustain the partnership as an exemplar company establishing an appropriate forward budget for 2022
- Evaluation of the 2021 Social Sundays events
- Engagement with the young artisans of Rutland to create a pop up hub/outlet in the High Street
- Supporting Uppingham Home CLT in its dialogue with housing developers to build more affordable homes and its efforts to become a Registered Housing Provider
- Expansion of the Community CCTV Network
- Supporting an update of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan to include acceptable environmental policies
- Undertake a research study on the business case for an expanded Station Road Skills and Employment Zone while pressing the interim case for highway improvements
- Delivery of the next stage of the Digital Uppingham initiative
- Continued support for the Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum, UppWatch and the Rutland Lottery
- Further developing the Uppingham Hopper project in collaboration with Rutland County Council
- 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
- Piloting of the new Round Rutland Run Classic Vehicle event
- Encouragement of more environmentally beneficial forms of local transport
- Further support for the town's health & wellbeing strategy and incremental updating of the defibrillator network
- Further strengthening of the partnership's collaboration with the blue light services.

5. Summary

Uppingham First and its Forums have had a challenging but productive year with its volunteers continuing to work throughout the Covid crisis. It is very encouraging that the outstanding efforts of a further two members of the Neighbourhood Forum Executive, Margaret Simpson and UNF Chair and UF director Janet Thompson, were recognised during the year in the Queen's Honours lists with the award of a British Empire Medal. This makes a total of four Executive Members recognised in this way to date.

The past year also saw success for the town in the East Midlands Women's Awards. The partnership's (UNF) three nominations secured two category winners. Deputy RCC Leader and Uppingham Ward Councillor Lucy Stephenson as the region's outstanding market town leader, and Deputy Town Mayor Liz Clarke as the best female senior business executive in the region.

UF Director Geoff Thompson will leave the board this autumn to serve as the next High Sheriff of Rutland. His voluntary achievements in Education, community health, housing, his church and other community groups make him truly deserving of the appointment.

The partnership's profile with some government departments is excellent and the Uppingham community is much envied around the UK. The collaborative approach of temporary Town Clerk Peter Leppard has provided fresh opportunities for increased joint working in the town. The recent election of Lucy Stephenson as Deputy Leader of the County Council and the appointment of Partnership Secretary Ron Simpson BEM as Chair of CPRE Rutland can only enhance the public profile of Uppingham.

The support of the Wills family and director James Torbell with his team in providing venues for our live meetings, and some sponsorship of activity, has been much appreciated. Similarly, the huge support given by so many to the Uppingham Hopper has delighted its founder and champion David Ainslie BEM.

The town's Community Emergency Plan and its team of supporting volunteers received much praise during lockdown with its volunteer support structure being circulated nationally by Locality. The Leicestershire and Rutland Resilience Forum recently sought authority to promote the plan to prospective emergency teams in other parishes as an exemplar.

Relationships between town and gown have remained good throughout the year, although recently tested by an outbreak of Covid-19 at Uppingham School. Collaboration between local businesses 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 government support for businesses both during and after lockdown lock down has been well received.

Everyone is working hard to ensure mutual support during this difficult time as the high street recovers and our community re-emerges. Volunteers and employees 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, with studies revealing a strengthening of the 'shop local' mindset. Furloughed staff swelled the ranks of the volunteers during lockdown and added valuable support to the efforts of hard working health service professionals. Our churches excelled during lockdown 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 often 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 the future of our high street and business zones, hence the priority given to attracting and supporting businesses. Building homes affordable to 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. The possibility of a new skills and enterprise zone founded on an extended Station Road Industrial Estate will require significant research and evidence building in the coming year.

It is fundamental to the partnership's raison d'être that director Mark Shaw, proprietor of a high tech company himself, was recently able to help host a quality round table discussion to facilitate the future expansion of a Rutland electronic engineering company wishing to build a new facility at Uppingham Gate and bring high quality employment opportunities to the town. Let's work hard to make sure we do more of the same.

Director Trevor Ellis has been very supportive of the Hopper and the partnership. Kath Gilbert has added her substantial trader experience to our deliberations as well as being a cashless society project champion. New Director Nick Townsend, who has significant partnership experience, has prepared the legal documentation to update the company's

articles and better equip it for the future. Community Liaison UNF Executive member Christine Edwards has helped evaluate the community's wishes. Our Chair Edward Baines and Vice Chair David Ainslie BEM have been instrumental in sustaining positive dialogue with county and town councils.

Every director of the partnership and lead member of our forums is a volunteer, perhaps exemplified in the unpaid environmental teamwork undertaken by Uppingham in Bloom and the volunteer Hopper team. The partnership is pleased that Alicia Kearns MP and David Wood High Sheriff of Rutland were able to join its 2021 AGM and engage with the debate on the way forward for Uppingham and Rutland.

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. Suitable forward looking housing, economic and environmental targets need to be agreed. 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
30.7.2021

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

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