

Chair: Edward Baines Vice Chair: Mark Shaw Secretary/Treasurer/Coordinator: Ron Simpson BEM
Neighbourhood Forum Chair: Janet Thompson BEM Business Forum Chair: Chris Merricks

www.uppinghamfirst.co.uk

Annual Report 2023

1. Introduction

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the principal achievements and activities of the Uppingham First Community Partnership (UF), its constituent Business Forum (UBF) in 2022/2023 and Uppingham Vanguard Board 2022/23. The activities of the Partnership's Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum (UNF) are, for convenience, also captured in this report and will be presented to the UNF AGM on August 24th 2023.

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

This year's AGM, held on August 17th 2023, confirmed the partnership's board membership for 2023/24 as:-

Chair: Edward Baines (Business Director) **Vice Chair:** Mark Shaw (Community Director)

Business Directors: Trevor Ellis, Damon Le Geyt, Kath Gilbert, Ron Simpson BEM, James Torbell, Nick Townsend

Community Directors: Janet Thompson BEM and Trevor Colbourne

Statutory Sector Directors: John Leslie (Health and Wellbeing) Lucy Stephenson (Local Government), Geoff Thompson (Education)

Community Liaison: Christine Edwards



Edward Baines

2. One Voice

Uppingham Business Forum (UBF) 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
- Seek to foster 'business to business' and 'business to town' relationships in the interests of the wider community

The Forum is able to nominate up to seven local business representatives to be the 'business directors' of 'Uppingham First'. This group then acts as an Executive of the Business Forum and reports back to it as required.

Elected Chair of the Forum this year is local businessman and artist Chris Merricks

Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum (UNF) is a fully constituted, neighbourhood infrastructure network and a member of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) 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 2022/23 by a strong Executive Committee with representatives of the following organisations and areas being recognised:-

- The Elms Residents Association
- Beeches Residents Association
- Leicester Road Residents
- Limes, Firs and Spurs Residents Association
- Uppingham and Methodist Churches
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Rotary Club of Uppingham
- Uppingham in Bloom
- Uppingham Women's Institute



Janet Thompson BEM

Executive committee members met formally twice during the year in addition to participating in a wide range of other events. Chair of the Forum is Janet Thompson BEM. Public meetings of the Forum are well attended and usually preceded by a volunteer distributed newsletter to every household as well as notification via social media.

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) and has a positive working relationship with the town's member of parliament Alicia Kearns MP. 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, the Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation and the National Lottery.



Uppingham Vanguard Board (UVB) is an unincorporated round table grouping which was created at the suggestion of a government advisor who was impressed by the town's forward looking agenda. Its purpose is to share information with, and encourage collective debate between, organisations involved in the operation and forward development of Uppingham as an exemplar market town. Regular invitees include local schools, local landowners and developers, CPRE, the UNF Executive, local authorities, the UNF, the Business Forum, Resident Groups, Uppingham Surgery via the PPG and Healthwatch. The Board is administered by Uppingham First.

The board's main task during the past year has been to support dialogue with those involved in, or impacted by, the updating of the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan. The board's next meeting will be looking at the town's infrastructure needs in the light of its updated Neighbourhood Plan and the additional housing it proposes. Highways, Transport, Education and Health will feature. The meeting will follow the publication this autumn of the new draft Rutland Local Plan being prepared by Rutland County Council.



VB Representatives at No 10

3. Significant Developments and Activity

Following the aftermath of Covid, Uppingham has demonstrated remarkable resilience and continues to enhance its reputation as Rutland's most loved market town. Being voted in a national newspaper some time ago as the most desirable place to live in the Midlands continues to add to the town's now significant regional and national profile.

Matters of note in the statutory sector included:

- The commercial and social development opportunities presented by the boundary commission's decision to incorporate Stamford into a revised Rutland and Stamford constituency
- The service of Uppingham resident Geoff Thompson as High Sheriff of Rutland for 2022/23 and the repeat nomination of Uppingham resident Richard Cole as High Sheriff for 2024/25
- The strengthening of the Town Hall team led by Town Clerk, Sharon Coe with the appointment of the universally liked administrative assistant Cynthia Ondeng which has been very well received in the community
- The retirement of longstanding county councillor Marc Oxley with the subsequent election of a further proactive ward councillor as part of a new Liberal Democrat county council leadership team at Rutland County Council
- The disappointing outcome of an 'insufficient candidates' town council election in May 2023 meaning that for the first time in many years, the community has been unable to select 'via the ballot box' those who now serve on the town council
- The success of the town council's Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Group (NPAG) in completing the Regulation 16 consultation draft of an updated Neighbourhood Plan potentially worth up to £4M in Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the community
- The continued modernisation and development of premises, staff and website at Uppingham Surgery
- Further developments at the town's education establishments, particularly at UCC
- Further progress in the county's Health and Wellbeing establishments and a new 'blue light' police office for Uppingham in the Town Hall

Matters of note in the commercial sector included:

- The opening of several new businesses in the high street
- The significant refurbishment of a number of town centre business and residential premises
- The approaching retirement of the town's well regarded Postmaster and the potential sale of the post office building
- The town's continued offer of core trades and services for those who live here
- The continued growth of the town's cultural offer
- The current staffing challenges confronting local businesses
- The risk factors associated with the current level of inflation and rising costs
- The further development of café society and the visitor offer in the town including a programme of Social Sundays with live music and additional lunch time and afternoon seating in the market place
- The continued link between the economic success of the town and Uppingham School
- The continued investment in the town's commercial and manufacturing zones at Station Road, Uppingham Gate and Welland Vale
- The ongoing effort to support the building of Rutland's very first crematorium at the edge of Uppingham
- The almost completed expansion of the town's Gigaclear symmetrical '1Gb fibre to the premise' broadband network
- An emerging dialogue with relevant parties to explore the possibility of improved infrastructure in and around the town
- The continuing concern about the poor mobile phone signal and lack of 5G in Uppingham



Matters of note in the community and voluntary sector included:

- Publication by CPRE Rutland, the countryside charity of a possible renewable energy strategy for the town and county. See it at www.cprerutland.uk
- The success of the county council's levelling up bid and the possibility of an electric community bus for Uppingham
- The continued improvement of Tod's Piece by UTC and the facilitation of associations supporting the allotments
- The continued support of the National Lottery Community Fund for the Uppingham Hopper and the possibility of a bid for a new bus
- The reinvigoration of the town's Uppingham Feast and Christmas Late Night Shopping events with new and existing volunteers and support from the partnership
- The continued achievements of the town's resident and community associations
- The valuable work of the town's 'end of life' support volunteers
- The success of the youth group initiative led by Rutland First
- The community support given by The Falcon Hotel as a meeting venue
- The continuation of Neighbourhood Watch in the town following its collapse at county level
- The outstanding and sustained success of Uppingham in Bloom
- The significant successes of voluntary and sporting clubs and societies operating in the town
- The ongoing efforts to support our Ukrainian guests in the county
- The continued hard work and commitment of voluntary sector leaders to the uniformed and non-uniformed youth of the town
- The significant progress being made on communication with Uppingham Surgery with the help of the Patient Participation Group and medical leads
- The ongoing support offered to local residents (including medical and social transport) by the UppWatch good neighbour scheme led by Margaret Simpson BEM
- The significant achievements of the Hopper volunteers in maintaining a regular bus service and extending it this year to Bisbrooke
- The community benefit secured by the crime prevention and detection capabilities of the Uppingham Webcam



Hopper service to Bisbrooke

4. The Work of the Partnership and its Forums

A series of activities and actions during the year have supported the community and its service providers, as well as increasing the profile of the town around the UK. 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 and forums' work is specifically directed toward addressing social isolation, deprivation and community sustainability. Their activities have included:-

The updating and operation of the Uppingham Community Emergency Plan including participation in this year's LLRF led Flood Warden's Programme.

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



The Stilton Cheese Run

Further support for the town's 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

An update this year of the Uppingham Antiques, Arts, Books and Creative Crafts Trail web pages including the downloadable map

Continued support for, and delivery of, a Vanguard Board for Uppingham to enable collaboration on its future development between the Uppingham community, public service providers, landowners and developers

Support for the final stages and publication of the town's updated Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan

The continued operation and licensing of the Rutland Lottery

Extensive collaboration with the Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum and its good neighbour/neighbourhood watch scheme 'UppWatch'

Joint project work with CPRE Rutland, the Community Heartbeat Charity and Rotary in Uppingham

Acting as a judge and sponsor of the annual East and West Midlands Women's Awards

Upgraded support for the volunteers leading a number of the town's major events including the Uppingham Feast, two major classic car events and Christmas Late Night Shopping

Support for the development and operation of Social Sundays in 2022 and 2023

The promotion of community health and wellbeing and liaison with the Uppingham Surgery and its Patient Participation Group (PPG)

Support for, and collaboration with, the blue light services

Public presentations about the town and its activities

Support for the County Council in its levelling up bid and Rutland Vision publication

Supporting the maintenance and further development of the town's defibrillator network

Sponsorship and support for a wide range of community activity and projects including the Lord Lieutenant's Statue Fund

Collaboration with Citizens Advice Bureau on research into the county's voluntary sector

Helping to ensure 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 radio and TV

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 and its new award scheme

Acting as a community partner for the Gigaclear Uppingham Fibre Broadband Network

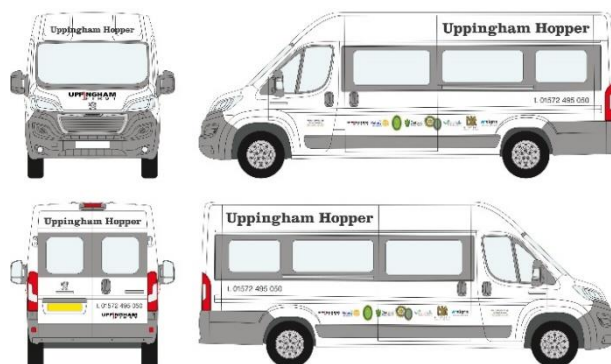


Defibrillator donation to Care Home

5. Partnership and Forum Priorities for 2023/24

These include:-

- Further research on, and the further development of, the proposed Station Road Skills and Economic Development Zone
- Supporting the towns major events where required
- Supporting the Regulation 16 public consultation and final referendum on the updated Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan, hosting public meetings as required
- Further research and exploration of the town's future infrastructure needs
- Delivery of the next stage of the Digital Uppingham initiative



An electric Hopper next?

- Sponsorship of, and support for, the new Biz Club Entrepreneurs Awards
- Expansion of the UF CCTV network
- Further developing the Uppingham Hopper project to engage with local transport needs and the emergence of low carbon vehicle options
- 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 and the East/West Midlands Women's Awards (EWMWA)
- Encouragement of the more environmentally beneficial forms of local transport
- Further collaboration with appropriate agencies on environmental matters, including with CPRE Rutland, the Countryside Charity
- Support for all aspects of the town's health and wellbeing requirements
- Further collaboration with the blue light services
- Greater engagement with, and support for, the youth of the town



Uppingham Webcam



Sandra Pollock OBE Founder EWMWA

6. Summary

Uppingham First and its Forums have had another productive and rewarding year.

The town's community and business profile with local and central government is excellent and much envied around the UK. Collaboration between local business and the community continues to flourish. Public and business forums have been well attended and have addressed a number of important issues during the year. A new challenge for all is the regrettable failure of the community to bring forward sufficient candidates to ensure a town council elected via the ballot box for the period May 2023 onward. However, many other communities now face a similar challenge. The partnership will pursue some further research on this issue and has extended an invitation to the local government sector to shared discussion on the way forward.

Everyone is working hard to ensure mutual support during this difficult time of high inflation, rising costs, lower footfall and staffing shortages. The town's 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 continue to play a critical role in the prospects of the town with our churches, charities, community groups and statutory sector professionals collaborating to care for the sick, the elderly and the disadvantaged.

An important role for the partnership and its forums 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 support of the Wills family, James Torbell and 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 and the work of UpWatch.

The partnership is regularly invited to represent or promote the town. During the past 12 months TV, radio, printed and social media publicity has again 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 past High Sheriffs'. Uppingham First is proud of the community it serves.

There is obvious concern about the economic and social climate we face as we move towards another, no doubt difficult, winter. The retirement of our excellent Postmaster and the end of his lease on the post office building dictates that securing a new post office post holder is a community and business priority. Affordable housing for the young and more suitable accommodation for the elderly remain a priority. These goals figure significantly in the decision to support an updated Neighbourhood Plan controlling the quantity, location and character of housing development over the next 20 years. The partnership will now move on to explore the action required on infrastructure as a consequence of the plan.

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 the latest Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan will be important to the town's future. If we are to build up to 500 more dwellings over the next 20 years, it will be vital to do so in a sensitive and thoughtful manner to protect the heritage and character of Uppingham.

Let's make sure we all continue to work together to ensure Uppingham's future economic and social prosperity. By doing so we can be confident the town will remain a fantastic place to live, work, study and visit.

Ron Simpson

Secretary Uppingham First/UBF
Coordinator UNF

26.8.2023



Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum being addressed by the County Council



Supporting people and
sustaining communities
Call: 07710 328469

UppWatch



Uppingham Hopper supporting local charities



Uppingham Feast



Please direct all enquiries and correspondence to The Secretary, 7 Hawthorn Drive, Uppingham, Rutland LE15 9TA

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