

**ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

**Agenda item 7: Report of the Town Clerk**

**Adopted strategic plan**

1. Previously the Council agreed its [Strategic Plan](#) for the period 2019 to 2023. The Vision of the Council is set out as :

“to develop an inclusive community so that Abingdon is the place where everyone wants to live and where the wellbeing of residents is prioritised. In developing this community the town will be one which is environmentally sustainable, vibrant, resilient and safe.” The document goes on to detail the Council's values and then the key objectives as:

- (1) To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.
- (2) To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.
- (3) To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.
- (4) To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.”

2. The Council's vision, values and key objectives are stated on all the Council's committee agendas and should now be key factors in our decision-making regarding priorities and resourcing.

**Delivering the Plan through actions**

3. The Plan now needs to move to progress. A paper is being submitted to the Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> November, the day after this evening's meeting. A draft of that report was sent to all Members on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 outlining a way forward. I have had no adverse comments on this and so this report assumes that the way forward proposed to Council will be the way in which we proceed. This report is an amended and shorter version of the report going to council.
4. I will be suggesting that the Forward Plan should now take the form of a five-year rolling forward plan. The Council is a body in perpetuity. Previous councils have been reticent about planning beyond their fixed term but this already happens in many aspects of the council's work and it is important for effective planning and continuity that this is part of the Forward Plan. Members may well wish to look the period beyond 5 years.

5. It will be suggested that during the November 2020 cycle of meetings each Committee should consider the agreed key objectives and how these are to be delivered. In the context that most services are discretionary, consideration should be given to existing services, how they meet the council's key objectives, why those services are being delivered and whether they are adequately or under resourced. Consideration should also be given to how services are to be developed, and this would incorporate plans which have already been agreed and have yet to be delivered.
6. Based on the above each Committee will then be asked to outline their action plan for the next five years, accepting that plans and timescale will be subject to change. The Committee will wish to consider existing initiatives and projects within its terms of reference.

### **Potential projects and areas of development**

7. Projects and areas of development which have been highlighted include:
  - (i) Youth strategy including potential for a youth council;
  - (ii) Review of flag policy (this is probably a simple case of scheduling a meeting);
  - (iii) Completion and implementation of introducing environmentally friendly measures to address the climate emergency in relation to Market Place events.
  - (iv) Completion of communications review including new website.
  - (v) Planning for Platinum Jubilee scheduled for 2022
8. This process will be happening at the same time as the budget making process.
9. The Committee is requested to consider the council's objectives and how it can address these by reference to the items detailed in item 7 together with any others coming forward.

### **Methodology**

10. The Council has not as yet a methodology to assess how it decides between proposals from the committees in terms of the priorities and so Committees will need to be realistic in terms of their plans and the timetable to deliver these. However to evaluate proposals against each other, members will wish to consider a mechanism for doing this, perhaps scoring how each proposal meets key objectives and assessing impact and benefit against cost. It will be important to assess each project in terms of spending requirements and the capacity to deliver in terms of councillor and staff time and expertise.

## **Consideration of committee plans through the cycle of meetings**

11. All these plans will then be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, I have suggested at its 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 meeting. I am seeking from Members direction on whether they may consider that more time should be given to the process to do this and this initial work on the action plan would then extend in to January 2021 noting that this may require some additional meetings either at group or council level and that the Council's precept has to be set by the end of January 2021. It is acknowledged that coming from this evening's meeting, depending on proposals, there may be additional work for members and officers to undertake regarding realistic timescale and resources.
12. From this process I would anticipate a five-year Master Action Plan, detailing the high-level actions agreed by the Council. An example of how the Plan may look has been placed on the SharePoint accessed via Microsoft Teams. In this action plan we have listed some known and possible priorities, with dates which range from firm to indicative. As the status of the projects is so varied it is premature to circulate this as a public document as each item has a different status and without it going through the council's democratic process it is incomplete.

## **The Plan agreed**

13. Once agreed the action plan would then form the basis of each Committee's work over the next five years.
14. From the action plan will then flow the objectives and priorities set for your officers, which will then roll out to all staff. Detail will layer on from the Master Action Plan, plans becoming progressively more detailed through the system and being an important part of employee objective setting.
15. Once agreed then future proposals will need to be assessed and considered, together with the existing plan. Whilst seeking to remain responsive the Council will need to carefully consider when new proposals emerge whether these can be accommodated without adversely affecting the agreed Forward Plan and if not, how this is addressed.

## **Continuous review**

16. At each meeting the committees would need to review their plans to monitor progress and amend as circumstances and priorities change. As with the budget I envisage the oversight of the process as being part of the work of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and for the Master Action Plan being a Council document for the full Council to agree. A working document will be part of the Council's SharePoint so that all members can view the latest version.

### **Previous committee decisions**

17. Working alongside this and for report at each meeting of each committee in the next cycle of meetings (commencing with Guildhall Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> November) will be a report on action on each committee's resolutions since May 2019. In the first instance this will highlight what actions have taken place and provide a mechanism for review of progress in future. As part of this and ongoing work it will be necessary to make sure that realistic timescales are provided for all proposed projects and initiatives, with your officers to advise on resourcing so that these timescales can be achieved. The new system will also flag up where matters are delayed, the reasons why and how this may be addressed.

### **Recommendations requested**

18. I am aware that there is much detail and work to do in order to develop this system for the Council. However the Committee is requested to consider the council's key objectives and its Forward Plan for the next five years. The Committee is requested to prioritise its plan, propose timetable for key stages, financial budget bids and member/ staffing resource. As stated depending on proposals, there may be additional work for members and officers to undertake regarding realistic timescale and resources.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
29<sup>th</sup> October 2020.