

ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

GUILDHALL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 12TH NOVEMBER 2020

Agenda item 7: Committee Actions and Forward Plan

Report of the Town Clerk

The Council's Strategic Plan

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

“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

3. The Plan now needs mechanism to deliver. A paper outlining the process was approved by the Town Council at its meeting on 4th November 2020.
4. The Forward Plan will be five-year rolling plan with the scope to add plans beyond that period. Each Committee is now being asked to consider the council's key objectives and how these are delivered by the committee in relation to its terms of reference. 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.

5. Based on the above the Committee is requested to outline its action plan for the next five years, accepting that plans and timescale will be subject to change. This process is taking place at the same time as the budget making process.

Agreed/ Potential projects and areas of development

6. Projects and areas of development which have been highlighted to date include:
 - (i) Audit of energy use in the Guildhall Complex and identification and prioritisation of improvements to reduce the carbon footprint;
 - (ii) Longer-term use and arrangements in relation to the Abbey Hall;
 - (iii) Arrangements in relation to the management and operation of the Guildhall;
 - (iv) Longer-term use and arrangements in relation to the Old Magistrates Court;
 - (v) Maintenance and improvement programme for the Guildhall Complex;
7. The Committee is requested to consider the council's objectives and how it can address these by reference to the items detailed in item 6 together with any others coming forward. Depending on proposals coming forward, there may be additional work for members and officers to undertake regarding realistic timescale and resources.
8. There is an issue regarding the level of materiality as to whether a specific action qualifies to be added to this document, which we need to resolve as the process rolls out. For now we are aware that the plans will encompass a wide variety of actions.

Methodology

9. 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. Previously the Green Advisory and Scrutiny Committee (GASC) has assessed ideas and proposals in relation to SMART objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound (see appendix to [minutes](#) of GASC, September 2019) and this should be considered. To evaluate proposals against each other, members may wish to consider 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 available.

Consideration of committee plans

10. All Committee plans will then be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. I am suggesting that this will take place at the 8th December 2020 meeting in order to enable further work to take place after the committees have met. The Committee may then make further recommendations to the process going forward and deciding on priorities, noting that the council must set its precept/ council tax by the end of January 2021. It may be necessary to have some additional meetings either at group or council level.
11. 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 agreed Plan

12. Once agreed the action plan would then form the basis of each Committee's work over the next five years.
13. 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 and job plans.

Continuous review

14. At each meeting the committees will 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.
15. Once the action plan is agreed then any future proposals, which are as yet unknown, 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

the resources allocated by the plan and if not, how this is addressed in terms of priorities, potential reallocation of resources and the timetable.

Tracking previous committee resolutions

16. Working alongside this and for report at each meeting will be a report on action on each committee's resolutions since May 2019. This is produced as a separate document headed "Schedule of Committee resolutions." This lists all the committee resolutions and actions taken. It will 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.
17. Those resolutions where no further action was required or are completed, are colour coded green and would if approved, be removed from the next report. Where actions are pending, outstanding or need to be kept under review, then these are yellow highlighted and will be brought forward to each meeting until removed.

Recommendations requested

- 18.1 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.
- 20.2 The Committee is requested to consider the schedule of resolutions and in particular the yellow highlighted items and any further action or instructions to be given in relation to those items.

Nigel Warner
Town Clerk
7th November 2020.