

## **ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**

### **FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020**

#### **Agenda item 10 - Update Report of the Town Clerk**

##### **Covid-19 – recognition of individuals and groups**

Members have asked that the Council consider how we may be able to recognise individuals and groups in the community who have been involved in the local response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members are requested to consider how this may be done.

##### **Neighbourhood Development Plan**

It was reported at the previous meeting that due to the restrictions on travel and social gatherings as a result of the Covid-19 public health crisis, the methodology for this project had been changed. The Working Group had met with Feria Urbanism; the option of delaying matters until the current restrictions are eased was considered but accepting that there would be compromises with an alternative strategy, it was decided not to delay with the work. An alternative strategy has been agreed and instead of face-to-face meetings and “real world” design workshops, Feria Urbanism proposed an alternative strategy, now based on website materials and a series of phone or video interviews. This was agreed as the basis to proceed.

A package of online materials has been prepared by the Feria Urbanism team and these are on the [website](#). These include the following:

- a. A slideshow, to explain what a neighbourhood plan is and how the process works. This is available as a PDF download and as a narrated video.
- b. A number of PDF downloads about “PLACE” – Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Culture and Engineering. These invite people to take a walk around Abingdon and annotate a map in response to specific questions. This will help inform the baseline audit of the town.
- c. A “skills audit” the aim of which is to help establish the steering group membership. It allows people to focus on what they can bring to the planning process, define how much time they would like to commit and consider what they will enjoy and value most about the process. The purpose of this skills audit to get people to think about what they would like to contribute.
- d. Finally, a “cereal box challenge” for young designers. It aims to get children thinking about the place where they live, how towns are designed and how to look at and think about architecture. Getting them to design their own buildings might help them think about design in their local area.

We have now received (15<sup>th</sup> June 2020) the following update from Feria Urbanism:

1. We have begun the online interview process. We have spoken to The Atom Society, The Atom Festival, The Civic Society, Carbon Cutters, Dan Sancisi at Abingdon Museum, and the cycling campaign groups. We have also made contact, but not yet heard back from Abingdon Bridge and Abingdon Carousel. We have a meeting with Jill Carver from the Chamber of Commerce scheduled for later this week.
2. We have been sent a helpful link to a number of WhatsApp groups that were established by different Abingdon neighbourhoods during the Covid-19 lockdown. Our plan is to try and contact a broader network of people by communicating via these groups.
3. Following this, we want to set up several online zoom sessions in order to engage people with our “PLACE” exercise and to work through the skills needed to set up the steering group. These will use the online resources already on your website.
4. We only had one response from the 17 people who put their names forward at the town meeting in March to become members of the steering group. So we are thinking again about how we widen this offer out – the WhatsApp neighbourhood groups could be a great way to do this. From the Zoom sessions and the interviews, we can help establish the steering committee.
5. We then aim to do an “in-person” session in July (all being well) when we meet groups of people to evaluate what they have discovered. It would be great to do this as a live session in the streets of Abingdon, however depending on how people feel and the situation we could also do this remotely.
6. By the end of these sessions we will hope to have established the main themes and areas that people want to work with on the neighbourhood plan and enable the steering group to set up and begin to work on specific tasks.
7. With the lockdown restrictions easing all the time, our team plans to visit Abingdon soon for an all-day site visit, to better understand the context, take photos and so on. What we always planned to do pre-lockdown! This will be a chance for us to meet face-to-face with some of the groups (with 2m gap, obvs) that until now we have only seen via video or heard on the phone. Date/time to be confirmed.

A meeting of the Working Group is due to be arranged shortly.

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
15<sup>th</sup> June 2020