

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

Report to	Community Committee
Meeting date	17th November 2025
Report author	Lizzie Martin
Agenda item	9

Business Engagement Proposal

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present and approve the business engagement proposal and objectives from the Business and Community Engagement officer.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Outlined is a business proposal that links the two economy sectors in Abingdon to the Town Council. The aim is to engage with small, medium and large businesses in Abingdon and create a feedback loop to support businesses within the scope of the council's ability.

3. Action required

- 3.1 To approve the business proposal.

4. Link to strategic plan and objectives

- 4.1 KO4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.

5. Key information and options

- 5.1 The Abingdon business engagement will take two approaches.

The first will involve Senior executives and/or partnership managers from large businesses. This forum, now referred to as 'Abingdon Connected,' has been initiated by Mayor Rawda Jehanli and Town Councillor Elio Astone, with the clear intention that it will be independent, and business led. The focus is on larger enterprises in Abingdon, providing a platform for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and structured feedback to town, district, and county councils. The forum will serve as a mechanism for businesses to raise priorities and opportunities that may require engagement or support from the town,

Agenda item 9

district, and county councils. Cllrs Jehanli and Astone report that early discussions have been positive, with strong interest expressed, and that the planned launch is targeted for early Q1 2026. Strategic connections, such as those with the business and science parks, will be critical to ensuring the forum's success. Support from the district and county councils will be sought so that issues and opportunities identified through this business-driven initiative can be addressed. It is expected to meet every 10-12 weeks and eventually be hosted by its members with meetings being held in the various boardrooms around Abingdon. The objective would be to tackle and discuss matters of mutual interest, involve speakers that would inform the businesses of items of interest and for business to business networking. The business forum will not facilitate pitches from companies canvassing for business, nor from charities seeking sponsorship or funding. The Town Council will respect that senior executive time is valuable and do not allow the forum to be treated as a captive audience.

In the second approach, the Abingdon Small Business Forum will connect Town Centre businesses and independent small businesses local to Abingdon to meet quarterly at a Business Breakfast networking event between 7am-9am in the Roysse Room. This will be predominantly managed by the Town Council to begin with, if small businesses would like to offer their own resources to host then this can be considered.

Both Forums will offer the opportunity for businesses to link directly with the Town Council through a mailing list, this list will be managed internally and will aim to offer reminders for upcoming networking events, pass on relevant information from the district and county council support networks and be a central point of contact.

6. **Financial/budget implications**

6.1 None

7. **HR implications**

7.1 Business and Community engagement officer will oversee the delivery of the forums, once set up the objective would be for the members to take the lead of both forums.

8. **Supporting papers and appendices**

8.1 Thame Business Forum