

Response from Maureen Thomas Re: Reg16 Uppingham NP consultation – Note attached to the memory stick which held a recording of a Full Council Meeting Uppingham Town Council

Item 528/23 To discuss the invitation and relationship between the Town Council, Uppingham First and Vanguard.

<https://www.uppinghamtowncouncil.gov.uk/council-meetings?month=08&year=2023&submit=Go>



REPRESENTATION ON THE UPPINGHAM DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This Representation on the Uppingham Draft Neighbourhood Plan (UNP) is submitted to: Mr R Ranson, Planning Policy Manager, Rutland County Council, Council Offices, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland. LE15 6HP. It is submitted in the expectation that it will be passed to the Independent Examiner who will carry out the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan.

I acknowledge that the plan has been approved by both the town and county councils. For their different reasons both are keen to have the UNP in place. Last year, from the public gallery of the Uppingham Council and by letter to each councillor, I put the case for a pause, in light of the Sec of State's draft revisions. That moment has passed, the government backtracked ! This representation relates to process and procedure, not to suggestions or argument. It is about the failure of the group charged with drafting the UNP to comply with the Government's guidance on Neighbourhood Planning. Although I have needed to name the offices of Mayor and Clerk, because of their additional entitlements and status, this representation is NOT about apportioning blame to any individual. If appropriate and desirable, that is for others to do.

I believe independent examination of the Basic Conditions is vital to the process set out by the Government. I know you will give serious consideration to this representation and take appropriate action.

My representation, following much encouragement from others, who understandably prefer to remain anonymous, puts forward a series of reasons to support the case that the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan does not meet the first of the Basic Conditions i.e.

The plan should have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

In particular I address:

- (i) inadequate communication with the **wider** public and
- (ii) the lack of transparency between any group and the formal functions of the Town Council.
(in the context of preparing a neighbourhood plan)

Essential Background Information / Context - for both (i) and (ii)

1. The Town Hall is at the far end of the High Street, away from the shops. Only a small percentage of the town's residents go into the Town Hall or even walk past it. Notices posted in the Town Hall are only seen by a very small percentage of the community. There is no council notice board in the centre of town.
2. The Uppingham Town Council's website has improved recently but remains difficult to navigate, for the young as well as for the old, and especially so for those with disabilities. Uppingham has an elderly population and more than a few do not use a computer or own a smartphone. It has to be acknowledged that very few residents look at the agendas or minutes of council meetings.
3. The Council's Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan (UNP) has improved. It is still difficult to manoeuvre around a mixture of out of date, and up to date information. The minutes reveal that in recent times most Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Committee/Group (NPAG) meetings are poorly attended by the community and that a core of 3 long standing councillor NPAG members (the core group) sustain the group.
4. Only superficial progress reports on the UNP are published in the minutes of the Council. This is because their briefings from one of the core group is in turn superficial. NPAG does not have delegated powers although its specific brief is wide ranging.
5. The Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum (UNF) posts news on NPAG and progress with the UNP. Some people believe the Neighbourhood Forum is the Council. Likewise, Uppingham First (UF) provides up to date information on the UNP. Currently it is showing a photograph of the Chair of NPAG, a town councillor and executive director of UF and other groups - see point 10. Some people believe Uppingham First is the Council.
6. I am not aware of any use of social media, local radio or TV by the NPAG or the Full Council
7. One of the core group has an occasional column in the local newspaper. He usually discusses or promotes other groups to which he is aligned. He does not write on behalf of the Council and has no authority to do so.
8. There is an historic issue relating to past and present leadership of the Neighbourhood Plan. The result is a poor working relationship between some councillors and certain long standing councillor members of the Neighbourhood Planning Group (the core group), who publicly acknowledge, but seem to resent, Full Council being the Qualifying Body. Uncomfortable though it is to say that, it needs to be said without prejudice, because it impacts on both communication methodology and on transparency between groups. New councillors, aware that they have

joined the Qualifying Body, are puzzled as to why their core group members report more fulsomely to other groups.

9. It is not unusual for there to be factions within a Town or Parish Council. It can cause robust debate and be productive. However here in Uppingham we have the strange situation where (ref 4 above) **ALL town councillors i.e. the Qualifying Body, have not been fully informed on progress of the Neighbourhood Plan by the Neighbourhood Planning Advisory Group (NPAG)**. As can be seen from the draft submission, the latter has now transformed itself into a Group from having been set up as a Committee. This has been done in an effort to disengage itself from the Council, other than for obtaining legally necessary ratification. Over the years this has produced angry exchanges, especially when Full Council has been pressed by the core group to quickly ratify, or sign off, matters relating to the Neighbourhood Plan, when some members of Full Council know little or nothing about what they are agreeing to. (memory stick of this happening at the Aug. 2023 Full Council meeting is enclosed).

10. There are many groups, organisations, clubs and associations in Uppingham. All of them are praiseworthy in one way or another. Those mentioned below are relevant in the context of setting boundaries on communication, and/or in regard to transparency between the Council and other groups.

An "umbrella" organisation of groups is **Uppingham First** . It is a registered private company with a board of directors and refers to itself as "The all sector community partnership for Uppingham." (see full definition at end of Uppingham First Minutes of Board Meeting, July 6th) It is adept at raising money through grants and donations which it uses to support other groups or activities. To use a colloquial phrase it is often described as being good at "bigging itself up," however it has initiated useful projects and developed worthy causes. Uppingham First acts as an Executive of the **Uppingham Business Forum**, an unincorporated association acting as a forum for local businesses trading for profit. UF also incorporates **Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum** which sees itself as acting as the voice of civil society in the town. It also incorporates the **Uppingham Vanguard Board** which brings together members of its Board, the Town Clerk, the Mayor, usually two county councillors and a few invited community reps to meet with Developers, Landowners and invited guests. **Most residents have no idea of the existence of Vanguard**. Until very recently, when questions have been asked from the public gallery, it has been an almost completely unknown entity. Those present cover other topics but primarily they discuss the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. None of the town councillors including the Mayor have Full Council authority to be present on behalf of the council nor does the clerk. The position of the county councillors is unknown.

11. **There is overlapping membership of these groups: members of the core group are Board members or Directors of EACH of the above groups.** These councillor core group members usually change roles each year, although one is consistently either the Chair or the Secretary. In addition they are also founders and officers of their local **Residents' Associations**. One notes that no names are given in the minutes when recording attendees from Residents Associations at Neighbourhood Forum meetings, presumably because in some

cases names would need to appear twice. It is at the Neighbourhood Forum that representatives are "elected" to the board of Uppingham First.

In addition, two of the core group are Director/Owners of **the Uppingham Community Land Trust** whose piece of land was initially amongst the sites to be chosen from in the 2021 consultation booklet.

A tangled web indeed!

Section (i) INADEQUATE CONSULTATION WITH THE WIDER PUBLIC

Early on, the National Guidance states that within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework and the requirement to support the delivery of the Local Plan's strategic policies, **the specific planning topics that a Neighbourhood Plan covers is for the local community to determine.**

It states that where a town council chooses to produce a NP it should work with other members of the community **who are interested in, or affected by**, the neighbourhood planning proposals to **allow them to play an active role** in preparing the NP.

It states that a Qualifying Body should be inclusive and open in the preparation of its NP and ensure that **the wider community**:

- . is kept informed of what is being proposed
- . is able to make their views known throughout the process
- . has opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging NP
- . is made aware of how their views have informed the draft NP.

IN SUPPORT OF MY ASSERTION THAT CONSULTATION WITH THE WIDER PUBLIC HAS BEEN INADEQUATE I OFFER THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

A. By 2017 the key Neighbourhood Planning Committee members, (now NPAG) already knew that the changes they wanted to make to refresh the existing Plan would be substantial. This meant that the existing Plan would be treated as a new plan and have to go to referendum.

Nevertheless there was no investigation or identification of the community's support for refreshing the plan. Communities change over the years. People come and people go, but there was **no publicity or preliminary consultation with the wider community** to LISTEN to their

aspirations as to what revisions they would like to see in the plan. **There was no opportunity for them to determine what specific planning topics they wanted in the redraft.** This was an opportunity missed to raise awareness and engage the community's interest. A missed opportunity to publicise and organise social gatherings, workshops or similar to genuinely welcome and **widen opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging plan.** Initially (2016-17) the lack of publicity combined with a system of formal invitations meant that there was even a low level of take up for places on NPAG. However, from what I can trace as the beginning of the refreshment process the core group always emphasised the need for speed in developing the plan. So very many people were not being given the chance to take part and our society was missing out on their talents.

At this stage I and others met several people who would have loved to know more and to participate, but they already felt shut out and that people like themselves wouldn't be suitable. Throughout my investigations this has been my main concern. People are put off participating in the process because they think the same people, year in and year out, are "running the show and there is no role for them.

B. It wasn't until 2021, following the Call For Sites that a small booklet was circulated to all houses. It provided maps of sites submitted by developers with their thoughts on how they might be developed. Residents' views were sought on the plans and locations as well as views on the possibility of a bypass. Essentially they were being asked to choose between predetermined sites. At that time one of the sites was the Badley Orchard owned by directors of **the Uppingham Homes Land Trust** some of whom are core group members. This was removed from the later document as it had failed to get planning permission in spite of approximately £80,000 of public money being spent on preliminary investigations.

C. It is noted that the Vanguard Board was set up in June 2017. At that time it may or may not have been a subsidiary of Uppingham First. It is mentioned as a consultation vehicle. Indeed it is the place to meet Developers and Landowners. However its meetings have been held in private and it remains an unknown entity to almost all the people in Uppingham. Questions in council meetings from fellow councillors and the public as to its role have been met with silence although the core group are present. Unanswered questions have been asked from the public gallery. The Mayor and the Clerk have tried to deflect questions. No councillor has been given the authority to represent the council at Vanguard meetings but their attendances have been recorded as Councillors, Mayor and Clerk. As the recording on the memory stick illustrates, developers, landowners and other guests have assumed they had been meeting with the representatives of Council especially with the Mayor and Clerk being present ! Rumour and the grapevine provided what little information people could find about the dealings of Vanguard. This is not what the government guidelines would call transparent or inclusive.

D. The core group Vanguard Board members appear not to recognise the Full Council as both members and representatives of the community. As the Qualifying Body they have a right to be consulted. Most importantly they should know of this group's existence so that formal

representatives can attend. The risk of the public perceiving this private activity as conflict of interest is great. One councillor who has now resigned, made it clear that, as a councillor and a member of NPAG, he would have liked to participate in meetings with the developers and asked it to be minuted that consultation with them "could have been better". (He was persuaded not to have it recorded as flawed.) One can only assume that all this is about key figures in NPAG, the core group, wanting to be seen to be in control but it has been very unhelpful to the consultation process. NB All things known about Vanguard are retrospective. Notes of meetings were eventually found on the Uppingham First website.

E. As indicated earlier Uppingham First and its constituent Neighbourhood Forum are valuable voluntary organisations, but not everyone in Uppingham is interested in their particular brand of activities. Nor are they interested in residential associations. In order to reach the wider public - people at all levels of society including young, disadvantaged and of every ethnicity - it is disappointing that NPAG and the Council have not worked together. As the main forum for consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) the NF is extremely limited. The majority of attendees are "comfortably well off", retired folk.

F. Following a rather unsavoury battle to wrestle the chairmanship of NPAG away from the council the core group was again struggling to maintain a reasonable level of membership. NPAG was advised by the planning consultant to do more to involve the local community. A rather late Launch Event was agreed but I cannot trace a launch event taking place.

G. Later on 7 December 2019 a briefing and consultation meeting was held for the general public to meet developers. In spite of poor publicity it achieved a good turnout with a decent level of written comment. Unfortunately **there was no feedback on how any of the comments had contributed to the plan.** Another missed opportunity for publicity to increase interest in the wider community.

H. During 2020, 21 and 23 briefings on progress were given by NPAG personnel to the Neighbourhood Forum, Vanguard and maybe to Resident Groups via their representatives. At the N.F. consultation essentially comprised presentations. The Town Council received limited information on NPAG decisions in what appeared to be a determined effort from the core group to keep the Council at arm's length. and use them only for ratification and authorisation.

I. Following the Call for Sites the consultant proposed an approach to external consultation and advised the use of criteria or a scoring system for choosing sites. (Important re. transparency and conflict of interest).

J. Updates are given by a member of the core group to the Neighbourhood Forum and Vanguard in 2021. There was discussion about a booklet going to every house for people to give their view on sites together with a questionnaire on a potential bypass. The document was circulated but, as far as the public are concerned, it seems to have been lost in a fog. It appears not to have been followed up by any feedback to the community although the comments feature in the submission.

K. In 2021 The "Allotment Revolution" occurred, revealing **assumptions being made with no consultation with those most affected**. It highlighted the fact that the wider community was not being reached. The Todspiece allotments were under consideration for being built on, and being placed in the Neighbourhood Plan. It was only through the grapevine, via rumour and the grapevine, that the allotment holders heard of it. The allotment holders met and crowded into the Council's public gallery. A petition quickly gained signatures. Roughly at the same time the grapevine told us that the possibility of building a crematorium and supermarket in Uppingham was being discussed at Vanguard. Again the public gallery filled up. It was at this time when several of us came to realise the fault did not lie with the Full Council, a number of whose members knew nothing of this. It lay with the core group of councillors who "controlled" NPAG and the secretive Vanguard that people didn't know existed. Some of us began to research what exactly was happening. We slowly uncovered that the core group of NPAG councillors share, and have shared, the management of almost all the groups involved in developing, or receiving information about, the Neighbourhood Plan. In addition they were trying to get an Uppingham Community Land Trust off the ground. Only then did we understand that our consultation procedures should not be regarded as fit for purpose.

L. As the CPRE response to the Regulation 14 consultation states:

" Given the obvious conflict of interest held by the Chair as a member of NPAG the following notes have been prepared by the CPRE Rutland research team"

This is referring to one member of the core group who holds management positions in several of the groups used for consultation, as pointed out in number 11 on page 3. (He is chair of CPRE as well). It is not only highly probable that he has conflicts of interest in regard to these groups, but also that he is not adhering to the Nolan Principles. What matters here however is that the consultation system founded and developed by this small group of councillors has meant that the wider community has lost out on hearing about the Plan and on being listened to. Instead some in the community have attended presentations at forum meetings that the majority of people would not dream of attending, with little time allowed for questions. Residents associations have met infrequently to consult others or, it has been suggested to me, not at all. **Our Neighbourhood Plan consultation process is understood by hardly anyone, and is viewed by people wanting to participate and by others as a closed shop or verbose window dressing to disguise its limitations.**

M. Although the core group persisted in arguing that speed was of the essence, in 2022 Full Council managed to insist on having two extraordinary meetings to scrutinise the draft Regulation 14 version of the NP. They made several amendments and asked for better quality maps and annotations. Some councillors and, I believe, the consultant did not think it was a good idea to deliver the entire draft to every household but the NPAG group won the day. Speed was of the essence.

N. At the Neighbourhood Forum, on 19 Jan 2023 one of the NPAG core group "led the meeting through an analysis of key policies and aspirations of the Reg. 14 edition." This illustrated NPAG's approach to consultation. It was the last agenda item of a full programme and the maps that nobody could see were put on the screen and talked about at length. We were encouraged to complete the questionnaire in the Reg.14 Consultation booklet- one felt positively! Questions were invited but he explained that there was very little time left. A challenging question was cut short. There were five questions in total with many more people with questions ready ..but .. the meeting closed.

O. On the streets of Uppingham one heard just how little the forum consultations had touched the wider community .When the Regulation 14 Consultation booklet came through the letterbox in January 2023, there were comments like: "What is this about?" Also "I put it straight in the bin, I couldn't make head or tail of it." and "It's full of jargon and maps you can't see, and I can't work out where these places are anyway." It was judged to be vague, confusing and difficult to decipher. Some people felt that the questionnaire was biased. Some struggled to match the pages to the questions. The number of returned questionnaires show that most people gave up. The remarks above reflect some of the comments made in responses to the questionnaire . This wasn't about content, it was about inaccessibility. Some people decided, "They'll do what they like anyway." It demonstrated, in some instances, that individuals didn't know what the Neighbourhood Plan was. In other instances the lack of anyone reaching out to talk to them about the plan resulted in a lack of interest.

The document was dense, written in a jargon suitable for planning professionals, poorly edited with page references not matching maps with tiny print that couldn't be read. In short it was not user friendly and unsuitable for its purpose. Only those with perseverance and a determination to respond would do so. Worst of all it was not even delivered to some homes until the day before the final date for responses to be in. Finally on this matter, although responses to the questionnaire have been seen by NPAG and forwarded with the submission there has been no feedback to the community who the guidelines state **"should be made aware of how their views have informed the draft Neighbourhood Plan"**

SECTION (ii) LACK OF TRANSPARENCY BETWEEN GROUPS AND THE FORMAL FUNCTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

The guidance clearly states that the **relationship between any group and the formal functions of the town council should be transparent to the wider public.** A parish council may choose to establish a committee or sub-committee and appoint local people (who need not be councillors) to those bodies. Members of such committees or sub-committees would have voting rights. **The terms of reference for a steering group or other body** should be published and the minutes of meetings made available to the public.

CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION, AND SUPPORT FOR MY ASSERTION THAT THE ABOVE GUIDANCE HAS NOT BEEN OBSERVED

1. Section (i) has demonstrated already that there has been a lack of transparency in the relationship between the council and the several groups involved in producing or disseminating the Uppingham Neighbourhood Plan. It is in fact utterly confusing and to most people - opaque ! **I will not unnecessarily repeat the many related points already made.**

2. The term "Partnership" is bandied about a lot but there is no clarity as to its meaning. The relationship between involved groups and the formal functions of the Town Council are not transparent to the wider public. The information I have given in this representation demonstrates, the garden is not all roses and sunshine as presented in the draft submission. With ill feeling abounding it is urgent that this is urgently addressed.

3. Had I not become interested in supporting the Allotment Holders determination to prevent houses being built on Todspiece allotments, I would not have started to attend council meetings and learn that something was amiss. Amiss to such a degree that a group of us decided to research just which group does what, and how it relates to the council. Through this exploration, digging deep, we have learned what most members of the community could not possibly know.

4. The town has a complicated set-up of forums and companies born of a few town councillors who appear to have little respect or belief in the Town Council. They seem to have chosen to use their energy and skills which are plentiful, to promote and lead other groups. The contradiction is ... they remain town councillors! This, one can only assume, relates to the ongoing "battle" to lead the Neighbourhood Plan. Ongoing because some newly appointed councillors are now trying to tackle Standing Orders to make relationships clearer.

Whilst acknowledging that the Council is the Qualifying Body, this core group of NPAG councillors continue to see themselves as leading the Plan. This impression is passed on to some interested members of the public by e.g. one of the group describing himself as "Neighbourhood Champion and NPAG Lead Councillor So & So." Others are confused. What should be taken as read ie the Town Council leads the plan, seems to be frequently undermined and challenged. **The wider community is unclear as to the relationship between these two bodies.** The Town Council has to put this right which is difficult when it means adjusting the Standing Orders and votes are split. Perhaps the County Council or the Inspector can offer advice. It is wrong to try to limit the role of Full Council to simply ratifying NPAG's

recommendations without giving them sufficient background information and without debate.
This continues to happen now.

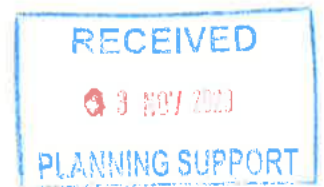
Any group can be set up in a town or parish and councillors must be free to start or join them. Uppingham First and other groups have altruistic objectives and councillors are involved in managing them. The problem is that the more groups they accept management roles in, the more they risk conflicts of interest or being perceived to have conflicts of interest. **A really damaging problem is when members of one of the other groups relating directly to the NP, as in the case of the Vanguard Board, have assumed the councillors are there as representatives of the Council when they do not have that authority - not even the Mayor.**

5. Very few members of the public have become aware of the Vanguard Board's existence, **and not all meetings have been noted/minuted.** Those who have become aware are very concerned about its opacity. Over a period of several monthly council meetings, questions have been asked from the public gallery and have been unanswered. The clerk has regularly attended the Vanguard meetings and the Mayor has spoken about the NP at one of them. One set of minutes actually states that they attended as representatives of the Council but as per Standing Orders they had no such authorisation. No reports were made of Vanguard meetings to the Council.

6. As the core group have claimed, I am sure a government minister will have suggested a group to meet with developers and landowners to consider their thoughts and inputs to the Neighbourhood Plan. I am equally sure he will not have said to do this without the knowledge and agreement of the Full Council. **Not only is the relationship between this group and the formal functions of the Council not transparent to the wider public, it is not transparent to the Full Council.** You will hear on the memory stick (recording the August 2023 Town Council meeting) one councillor's disappointment at the Clerk and Mayor's attendances. You will also hear that the invited parties believed they were meeting the Council Representatives.

7. A personal experience that cannot help but cause doubt about the transparency of the Neighbourhood Planning experience is when I turned up at a NPAG meeting on 21st March 2023. It was scheduled on the calendar as a Meeting and open to the public. A Councillor had checked with the Clerk that morning, the meeting would take place as scheduled. I wanted to go because I thought it would be interesting to hear the group go through the Reg 14 responses, and what criteria they might use to categorise or use them. I had no intention of speaking. I entered the room and the Chair (one of the core group) told me I couldn't come in. I asked him to confirm that I could not come in. He replied that the meeting was now a working party and members of the public were not admitted. He told me to check with the Clerk at the far end of the room. I walked the length of the room and in a very embarrassed way she whispered, "it is a working party." I left. There was absolutely no reason why that meeting should be a private meeting. A disheartening experience.

As I read through the Draft Submission I could not help thinking how lovely it must be to write up every set of minutes or notes with rose tinted glasses!



I rest my case and look forward to hearing from you.

Maureen J Thomas



NB Page letters and numbers are for reference only

Encs: some papers that may be helpful. I apologise for not cross referencing them but the time available to me has run out.

Cc : to be decided

Random Questions
and representations asked
or made by me
relating to Consultation
or Transparency.

I'm afraid I don't have
copies of questions asked
by others. Nothing raised
by the public is dealt
with unless it is a Public
Info request.

RE. ROLES & TRANSPARENCY

simon from 1st
Gallery April '23
Ignored!

A belated thank you to those of you who responded to my letter about the Gvt's revision of the National Planning Policy.

One of you referenced the need to declare pecuniary and non pecuniary interests. Another was worried that Cllrs who are also trustees of the Community Land Trust might try to get their affordable housing project into the Neighbourhood Plan. The fear was that if the project fails, the Council might feel obliged to help the Trustees with their debts - as it did voluntarily with the Seaton Rd failure. (Almost 50% of CLTs fail during the 1st 3 years, and the directors of some existing CLTs are currently in serious financial trouble)

I note that the Trustees of the CLT have "a LEGAL obligation to act in the best interests of the Society." So I ask What happens when the Trustees who are also Cllrs find that those best interests clash with those of the Council? Likewise when the Upp 1st's Vanguard is bartering with Developers and Landowners we need to know whether those same councillors are working on behalf of the CLT or the Council.

Standing Orders state that when "a Cllr holds management positions in one or several outside groups he/she could be perceived by a reasonable person as having at least one Conflict of Interest likely to influence a transaction or a decision when acting as a Cllr.

In setting itself up, during the transfer of Mr Badley's gift of land from the Town Council to the CLT, the CLT made a point of completely separating itself from the Council. So we can be forgiven for asking why it now wants to collaborate with the council, if not to assist Developers gain entry into the Neighbourhood Plan, in exchange for the comparatively penniless CLT directly receiving land and housing rather than the Council benefiting from ALL developer contributions, as is the norm?

*****On the wider issue of Neighbourhood Planning** We hope you will also give serious thought to Future generations being unlikely to thank, in particular the elderly Cllrs for playing a part in despoiling an historic, beautiful, rural setting by continuing to spread a more than necessary number of, mainly middle class houses, across farmland and green fields.



RE TRANSPARENCY



I had asked about Vanguard and had said we hear second hand that that is where bartering with Developers happened.

Bartering

3 messages

Maureen Pike <

Had I not written this no answers would be forthcoming. Were not anyway!

Thu, 6 Apr 2023 at 21:53

Dear Liz

Last night, at the Full Council meeting, during the Democratic Fifteen Minutes, I was puzzled and surprised by your public and rather fierce reprimand concerning my use of the word "bartering." To my mind and I think to most people it is not a derogatory word. Bartering is a perfectly innocent and legal way of negotiating or bargaining.

As I understand it, it is now expected that Councils will negotiate or barter with Developers to get the very best value when seeking Developer Contributions and Planning Obligations to provide social/community infrastructure. They will negotiate for land and funding eg for a school or school expansion. I also understand that some larger authorities are supporting councillors with bartering/negotiating skills.

The problem here in Uppingham, and it raises its head again and again, is that such dealings are opaque. There is a lack of transparency as to where and how such decisions are made. Residents are reliant on a development employee or a landowner letting slip or offering some information, to find out what is happening. Increasingly one hears mention of commercial sensitivity being a reason for a lack of transparency. I don't have sufficient evidence to generalise, but I know that a courtroom precedent has been set by determining that public interest outweighs commercial sensitivity in financial information.

The public perception in Uppingham is that negotiations with developers and landowners are taking place at Vanguard meetings. They get snippets of information and they don't see it taking place elsewhere. They/we are bound to wonder why it isn't the council doing the negotiating directly, and why a third, private and independent party seems to be doing it without Full Council asking it to do so.

I started by reflecting the concerns of one councillor. This led me to research the background of the CLT and to wonder why it has recently been reported that CLT's negotiations with developers are almost finalised. Again the public has to rely on backdoor information rather than openness or even rumour.

Concerning the Conflict of Interest issue, I do need to say that this is not the same as declaring interest. Where an interest has quite properly been declared there may well still be a conflict of interest to be resolved if public perception considers there to be one. I did hit hard on this issue, as having legal obligations to act in the best interests of two groups with potential to go in different directions does not auger well.

I know it isn't of your making, but despite it being raised many times, people are increasingly frustrated by the lack of action by the council to counter this perceived lack of transparency, and to provide clarity on its overarching Statutory Authority. Even yesterday someone asked me if Uppingham First had taken over the council!

Finally, a councillor came up to me as we were exiting and told me she had been on the council etc for 45 years and this was the first time she had been accused of corruption. Please reassure her that I made no accusations of corruption. I wondered how I might have offended her and decided that it might have been my mention of elderly councillors which could have been taken the wrong way. I was simply trying to reflect my own disinclination (being an elderly person) to take far reaching decisions on what could potentially be harmful to this beautiful environment and its future inhabitants..

Sorry Liz I have been trying to avoid bothering you, but as an ordinary resident speaking in the democratic 15 mins, I had the right to be listened to without an aggressive response. I expect you to be in the chair next year and I REALLY hope you will take some of my points on board.

Thanks for your time and I am hopeful of a response.

Maureen (J Thomas)

RECEIVED

03 NOV 2023

PLANNING SUPPORT

Re early consultation

THE 2 DROP IN
SESSIONS CAME
OUT OF THIS.

M question:

“My question relates to Item 11 on the agenda

As a member of the “Allotment Uprising” I honestly feel that conflict could have been avoided had local people not felt, rightly or wrongly, that they were being presented with a predetermined outcome.

As yet many residents feel there has not been any preliminary engagement with the local community on the new plan. They want the chance to influence it but don't know how.

We hear of talks with developers and other stakeholders and people lose trust when they are not included.

So when you get to item 11 can I ask the group to consider some of the strategies other councils have ? Of promoting discussion and of listening directly to the opinions of all kinds of residents .. for example small workshops.. and displays in the Town Hall with Councillors and NPAG members on hand to chat and listen. In other words... consultation devices other than the restricted vehicles of existing umbrella or partner organisations.”



QUESTIONS NOT
ANSWERED,

NB At an earlier meeting (date) in response to a question from a member of the public the council made clear that in Uppingham, where there is a town council, ONLY THE TOWN COUNCIL CAN PREPARE AND PUT FORWARD A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.

NOT
DONE

In the interest of transparency and clarity will the Council now publish this fact to the wider public along with the consultative status of other freestanding groups and organisations in the town. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about some of these groups, with many people believing that they have the authority of the Council because high profile councillors are involved in running them.

Will the Council therefore publish the freestanding status of the groups that are seen in this way. In particular we are referring to: the Uppingham First company with its various sub groups including the Business Forum and Uppingham Neighbourhood Forum; also the Uppingham Vanguard Board and the Uppingham Homes Community Land Trust.

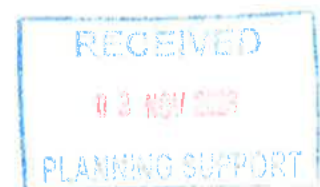
I quote from the Government directive on preparing a Neighbourhood Plan:

"The relationship between any group and the formal functions of the town council should be transparent to the wider public. Such groups ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNCIL, should have published terms of reference, and minutes of meetings should be made available to the public"

So following on from this directive

written by a councillor

1. Would the residents of the town be correct in understanding that these freestanding bodies putting forward their views on the Neighbourhood Plan and seeking to influence it, are consultative



REPRESENTATION & QUESTION
ASKED AT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING 9 AUG 23, As spoken 9th Aug
re. TRANSPARENCY '23

I am relieved to see item 16 on the agenda, so that Council will at last address resident's concerns about how the private co's. Upp' 1st and Vanguard relate to the Council. The points I make concern cllr behaviour and transparency in regard to the Neigh Plan, not the business of these two companies. We also welcome our representations being recorded.

A growing number of us are concerned that the Council is being damaged by the lack of transparency, even secrecy surrounding a small group of Councillors who appear to have met with landowners and developers **without the knowledge of all Council Members**. We now know that Vanguard has hosted the meetings. The Cllrs concerned are Board members and Directors of Uppingham 1st and Vanguard, as well as members of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee - the committee charged with doing the preparatory work for the draft Refreshed Plan. They appear to use information gained at these meetings to inform the work of the NPAC. **So why are they meeting these people without the knowledge of Full Council, the Neigh Plan Qualifying Body?** I'm afraid Commercial Sensitivity wouldn't excuse this.

The lines of communication in developing the Neigh. Plan are opaque, but it seems the preferred stopping place has been NPAC, a committee without delegated powers. Somewhat illogically, communication with FULL COUNCIL, to which NPAC is responsible, has been kept to a minimum. However.. Over the last year we have been heartened to watch other Cllrs challenge this, and **insist** on perusing the documents as a body, speaking to the consultant, meeting developers themselves and asking questions rather than accepting brief retrospective summaries.

We want our Councillors to be above suspicion of unethical behaviour (**non pecuniary** or pecuniary); and not risk possible accusations of Conflict of Interest through putting the public image of, and loyalty to, their companies before their duties as Councillors. **Above all we know the Gvt gives us the right to expect transparency at every stage of developing the Neighbourhood Plan.** We hope the councillors concerned will review their positions and that the Council will consider drawing up a Protocol and Transparency Process for all dealings with external bodies, commercial, community or otherwise. Models are available from other councils.

Thankyou for listening to our concerns

Maudie Thomas



5/22, 2:40 PM

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groups - - and that they have not been ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNCIL as working parties?

2. Does the Council currently have any FORMALLY ESTABLISHED working parties? If so, what are the terms of reference of each one? And at what point is a working party disbanded in recognition of its task being completed either successfully, unsuccessfully or indeed for any other reason?





UPPINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk: Sharon W Cole Telephone: 01572 822681. Website: uppinghamtowncouncil.co.uk
Twitter: @uppinghamTC Address: Town Hall, High Street East Uppingham. Rutland LE15 9PY

The Secretary.

Uppingham First / Vanguard Board

23rd May 2023

Dear Sir

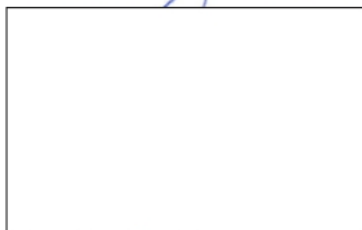
I am requested by resolution to extend an invitation to both Uppingham First and Vanguard for a meeting with Uppingham Town Council to discuss better working relationships. We believe that having open and transparent communication is key to building relationships that can flourish and prosper.

We really want to explore our mutual interests in the community and see how we can work more proactively as we share the same goal in wanting the best for our community. We understand that communication is the vital link between us.

We see this as an excellent opportunity for our respective organisations to discuss ways we can explore mutual collaborations and work in closer partnership for the benefit of all. We very much look forward to this discussion as we think it will be both productive and informative for everyone.

We would therefore like to request that a representative attends the Council meeting on the 7th June where we can both ask and discuss any questions that may be raised.

We would like to thank you in advance for your time and openness as we move forward towards establishing a sound and productive relationship.



Clerk to the Council.

Minutes of Uppingham Town Council Full Council meeting,
held at Uppingham Town Hall on Wednesday 9th August 2023 at 7.00pm.

Present, Cllrs Liz Clarke, David Ainslie, Trevor Colbourne, Pat Dalby, Sam Findlay, Mike Fish, Barry Hobbs, Tom Johnson, Godfrey Jennings, Peter Rees, Mark Shaw, Ron Simpson, Ray Sutton.

The Town Clerk Sharon Coe, Cynthia Ondeng Administration Assistant.

14 members of the public and RC Cllr Christine Wise

512/23 **Mayor's opening remarks**

The Mayor (Cllr Clarke) welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded everyone that this meeting was being audio recorded and placed on the website, therefore if members of public wished to speak at item 4 then it was possible that they may be identified. The Mayor was pleased to see Cllr Jennings back after a period of illness and hoped he was recovered. The Mayor confirmed that the RCC officer had cancelled earlier in the day so item 10 could not now take place and would be rearranged.

513/23 To receive apologies for absence.

It was proposed by Cllr Rees and seconded by Cllr Shaw that the apologies from Cllrs Edwards and Cooper were accepted. Resolved unanimously.

514/23 **Declarations of members' interests and applications for dispensations**

Cllr Shaw – dispensation for council term – Uppingham First, Uppingham Homes CLT and Beeches Resident Association.

Non-pecuniary interests were declared by Cllr Johnson item 7a. (late night shopping) Councillor Ainslie item 7b (Limes, Firs and Spurs) Councillor Hobbs item 7c, 11b and item 18 (Uppingham Bowls Club)Councillor Simpson item 7a 16 and 17F.

515/23 An opportunity for the public to speak, in accordance with Standing Orders 2.3.4 – 2.3.9

RCClr Wise reported that the Fix My Street application was currently not working. She suggested that, if UTC agreed, that enquiries regarding the green spaces (cutting and maintenance) could be collated under the Amenities Committee remit and forwarded to RCC for action.

UIB – Results would be in next month from the judging that had recently taken place. The committee had decided that the 2024 competition would not be entered due to rebranding and celebrating the outstanding work done over the years. The committee was looking for a new Chairperson and committee members so please get involved. Two major difficulties on the judging morning were dog poo and Biffa not clearing certain areas.

Mrs Thomas "I am relieved to see item 16 on the agenda, so that Council will at last address residents' concerns about how the private companies Uppingham 1st and Vanguard relate to the Council. The points I make concern councillor behaviour and transparency IN REGARD TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, not the business of these two companies. We also welcome our representations being recorded.

A growing number of us are concerned that the Council is being damaged by the lack of transparency, even secrecy surrounding a small group of councillors who appear to have met with landowners and developers WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF ALL COUNCIL

MEMBERS. We now know that Vanguard has hosted the meetings. The councillors concerned are Board Members and Directors of Uppingham 1st and Vanguard, as well as members of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee - the committee charged with doing the preparatory work for the Draft Refreshed Plan. They appear to use information gained at these meetings to inform the work of the NPAC. SO WHY ARE THEY MEETING THESE PEOPLE WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF FULL COUNCIL, THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN QUALIFYING BODY? I'm afraid Commercial Sensitivity wouldn't excuse this. The lines of communication in developing the Neighbourhood Plan are opaque, but it seems the preferred stopping place has been NPAC, A COMMITTEE WITHOUT DELEGATED POWERS. Somewhat illogically, communication with FULL COUNCIL, to which NPAC is responsible, has been kept to a minimum. However... over the last year we have been heartened to watch other councillors challenge this, and INSIST on perusing the documents as a body, speaking to the consultant, meeting developers themselves and asking questions rather than accepting brief retrospective summaries. We want our Councillors to be above suspicion of unethical behaviour (NON PECUNIARY as well as pecuniary); and not risk possible accusations of Conflict of Interest through putting the public image of, and loyalty to, their companies before their duties as Councillors. ABOVE ALL WE KNOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT GIVES US THE RIGHT TO EXPECT TRANSPARENCY AT EVERY STAGE OF DEVELOPING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN. We hope the councillors concerned will review their positions and that the Council will consider drawing up a Protocol and Transparency Process for all dealings with external bodies, commercial, community or otherwise. Models are available from other councils. Thank you for listening to our concerns"

- 516/23 To confirm the minutes of the full council meeting held on Wednesday 5th July
It was proposed by Cllr Shaw, seconded by Cllr Findlay to confirm the minutes as circulated as a true and accurate record. (9 for, 3 abs)
- 517/23 To receive the finance report for the month of June including income and expenditure to budget including year to date and balance sheet and to sign the same.
Cllr Findlay overviewed the reports, commenting that there was a surplus in June of £9,000. The salaries invoice from RCC had not been received and relatively low expenditure on maintenance had been experienced.
Proposed by Cllr Findlay, seconded by Cllr Ainslie. Resolved unanimously. The Chair of F & G P, the Mayor and the Clerk signed all documents and reconciliation statements which will be filed with the minutes.
- 518/23 To receive the finance report for the month of July, including income and expenditure to budget including year to date and balance sheet and to sign the same.
Cllr Findlay overviewed the reports, comments included nothing was unusual. Year to date a £8,800 surplus was made. Payment's facility for authorisation of the accounts payable was still progressing.
Proposed by Cllr Findlay, seconded by Cllr Ainslie. Resolved unanimously. The Chair of F & G P, the Mayor and the Clerk signed all documents and reconciliation statements which will be filed with the minutes.
- 519/23 To consider the following grant applications.
A Uppingham Late Night Shopping. Cllrs Simpson & Johnson left the chamber.

The correct form had not been submitted, but the decision was made in principle to award £1,500 upon completion of the correct documents and insurances, health and safety, childcare policies etc were completed fully.
Proposed by Cllr Rees, seconded by Cllr Dalby. Resolved unanimously.

- B Limes Firs and Spurs Residents Association. Cllr Ainslie left the chamber.
The Mayor invited opinions on the grant, Cllr Rees stated that he had a problem with residents' associations saying that in his opinion they were divisive and created a community within a community. He thought they should be self-funding and there was a principle involved. Cllr Jennings added that residents' associations tended to be in reasonably affluent areas, and he suggested we shouldn't fund it. Cllrs Dalby and Fish declared an interest and wished a dispensation to speak as residents of Lime Tree Avenue. She referred to part 3 of the application, methodology of the evidence gathering evidence in her opinion as a resident was dubious. Cllr Simpson wished to support the grant and put the alternative view about Residents Associations and, in his opinion, they created community spirit and had been very well received in the new developments. A good example is the Neighbourhood Forum where all different groups, Churches, Residents Associations, communities come together. Cllr Fish declared in his opinion it just needed trimming back and wasn't a cohesive piece of work. The Mayor pointed out that the laurel hedges were of such a size that professional help was now needed hence the request. Cllr Colbourne as chair of a different Residents' Association commented that he felt there was a misunderstanding of what associations were there to do, he explained the aims of such organisations. In his view it was a group of people trying to improve the environment and area in which they lived and he would support the application.
Cllr Jennings asked if the laurel hedges/trees in the quadrant grew, who would cut them? The Clerk confirmed it would depend on the ownership. Cllr Simpson clarified that Residents' Associations are required to serve all members of the area, not just those who paid subscriptions to be a member of them. Cllr Dalby stated there was little interest in the Residents' Association and there was a licence to cultivate from RCC. The Mayor brought the motion back to the table, and the key issue, Cllr Rees made a proposal that half of the amount was awarded as a gesture of goodwill, this did not find a seconder and the motion fell. Cllr Shaw proposed that the full amount should be awarded, seconded Cllr Colbourne (5 for 7 against.) Not Resolved.
- c Uppingham Bowls Club. Cllr Hobbs left the chamber.
This was an application for CIL money to put solar panels on the roof. Cllr Rees suggested that we should go ahead as it served the community. Cllr Ainslie proposed a deferment so that it could be discussed at item 18 on this agenda. Seconded Cllr Shaw, Resolved Unanimously.

520/23

To consider the appointment of WORKNEST to be the Council's H & S consultant.

The Clerk had previously sent out the proposal. The Clerk highlighted that this is possibly the most important aspect of council procedures, by employing Worknest they would be our legal representative, it would protect UTC going forwards. The Clerk pointed out that a previous resolution had been that this council would not employ lots of staff but would buy in technical quality advice when this was needed.
Proposed, seconded and Resolved unanimously.
Cllr Shaw proposed that the Council should take the option of the 36-month contract. Seconded Cllr Rees. Resolved unanimously,

521/23

To consider entering into a formal contract with BIFFA for the groundworks already maintained and possible additions going forwards.

The Clerk overviewed the position that we do not have a formal agreement. The Clerk and her assistant had already had a meeting with Biffa where she had outlined her requirements, in addition to the grass cutting and hedge management. The Clerk wanted to add a twice weekly litter pick through the summer of Tod's Piece.

The Clerk explained that in our submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, we aspired to look after our Green Spaces, was this something that Council wanted to consider ? This would be at the cost of this Town Council.

There were some ownership issues and RCC were currently mowing. Cllr Ainslie pointed that this is to 31st March to get an official contract in place. The Amenities Committee could then look at alternative arrangements for the end of the contract in the meantime. RCClr Wise confirmed that if we were to take on responsibility for the green spaces, there was a money transfer for this, it was a pre-determined figure. The Clerk to check the dates as Cllr Wise thought any requests needed to be agreed prior to 1 December of the previous year to enable it to kick in.

Proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Shaw. Resolved unanimously.

522/23

To receive a presentation from Emma Obadas (RCC) transport issues

As the Mayor had indicated in her opening remarks, we had been notified earlier that the officer was unable to attend, and this would be the subject of a further meeting.

523/23

To receive reports and consider recommendations for full Council from UTC committees and working parties.

Staffing – 19th July 2023.

- A Cllr Simpson overviewed and confirmed that as we had a new council maybe we should reconsider the debate again of employee or contractor so all felt involved in the decision.

We were again approaching appraisal time, so the committee agreed to go with the system utilised last year which had worked well for employee and employer. The Chair and Vice Chair would appraise the Clerk after feedback from the whole council and the Clerk would appraise the administration assistant.

Training - would council like to invite LRALC to do private councillor training to take place at Uppingham? Cllr Simpson declared an interest as a director of LRALC. This was agreed as a good idea.

It was proposed by Cllr Simpson, seconded by Cllr Shaw to receive the minutes and to ask the Clerk to set up two training sessions. This was within Council budget. (11 for, 1 abs)

- B Overview of meeting between UTC and Uppingham Bowls Club (proposal in private session)

Cllr Findlay gave an overview that we could loan some money to help facilitate the purchase of the club over a period of years. The proposal received by the Bowls Club would be discussed in confidential session.

Cllr Ainslie proposed that we receive these minutes, seconded by Cllr Rees. Resolved unanimously.

- C Update on Standing orders working party.

Cllr Jennings overviewed the work done. These were made gender neutral, and inconsistencies corrected. There had been some disagreements, but these would be put to full council. There would be some further work on how the council was constituted. Cllr Rees proposed we receive these minutes, seconded by Cllr Dalby. Resolved unanimously.

524/23

To consider the Report of the CIL champion for the previously discussed works to the Town Hall to include proposals and estimates.

The Mayor explained for the new councillors, how the CIL areas and champions were decided following a great deal of work to decide corporately how to spend our CIL monies.

One of the areas was the Town Hall which needed a good deal of work. Cllr Shaw had taken the role of the TH champion.

Members had received all the various works suggested, with quotations prior to the meeting.

Cllr Shaw overviewed the quotes and the work done to this point on the kitchen, cellar, heating, flooring. Cllr Shaw declared that he would be able to use his discount, but any bills would be addressed to the town council.

Cllr Shaw further recommended three phase electrical supply as currently the Town Hall is run on a normal domestic supply of 100 amps. We are likely to push the limit of that usage in the future, and this would protect us going forward.

Total cost is £57,000 with a £10k contingency cost built in.

Cllr Rees asked if we had three quotes for each separate piece, there had been challenges getting quotes.

Council wished to get two more quotes for the kitchen before approving. The Clerk asked that the heating could be processed as her office had no heating and the winter was approaching.

To take these works forward provided we obtain two more kitchen quotes, all other elements can be processed prior to the kitchen.

Proposed by Cllr Rees, Seconded by Cllr Johnson, resolved unanimously.

525/23

To consider adding Cllr Mark Shaw to the staffing committee.

Due to an error at the annual meeting Cllr Shaw had not been added to the staffing committee as he wished. This agenda item is there to rectify this error.

Cllr Rees questioned why but when it was explained it was an error it was proposed that Cllr Shaw be a member of the staffing committee. Proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Johnson (11 for 1 abs)

526/23

To discuss the Vision, Aims document and any feedback received.

The Clerk reminded members that she had given out this document three meetings ago for members to fill in and return. She explained it was a really important document so that council could set the strategic direction and aims for this new council term. She asked that members give it consideration if they wanted to be a part of the strategic direction of this council and extended the time to Friday 11th August.

Cllr Ainslie proposed that the Clerk amalgamate the responses and that it could then be discussed at a future meeting.

Proposed Cllr Ainslie, seconded Cllr Shaw. Resolved unanimously.

527/23

To receive the Clerk's report and any recommendations within it.

The Clerk's report had been tabled; salient points were.

- Debris and Trees cleared at Tod's Piece Allotments
- Fire Alarm Panel had been ordered as the sensor keeps going off disturbing hall hirers.
- Dog bins for West Deyne and Tod's Piece and two new litter bins ordered for Tod's Piece. This had cost the council £1300 as RCC wouldn't replace them.
- Rewritten Eddie Dorman to progress the London Road empty cemetery spaces, no reply had been received.
- Reminded council that by signing up to Civility and Respect pledge this also included training.
- Two email addresses were still required !
- Freedom of information request received and would be actioned accordingly.
- Chased Solicitors to prepare a legal agreement for the Bloors land.
- Chased Solicitors for updated license to occupy police room.
- Cynthia has finished the allotments training.
- First Inspection visit had taken place at the LR Allotments. Very useful exchange of information and advice we will take forward any issues.
- VAT return completed and monies now received into the bank account.
- Barclays account – disputed closure of account – we had now received the money back into the Lloyds account.

The Police had requested blue lighting in the TP toilets as a deterrent to drug dealing, the Clerk asked if council were happy if she progressed this. The Clerk will write to the police asking if it complies with the Equalities Act

The Clerk updated council on the quotes obtained and still awaiting. The Clerk will be commissioning a report on the state of the Town Hall roof as one of the major items of work for future proofing. She is aware of the asbestos guttering and also the deterioration being experienced.

528/23

To discuss the invitation and relationship between the Town Council, Uppingham First and Vanguard.

Cllr Simpson announced that he would withdraw from this item, Cllr Jennings stated with him withdrawing it would be very difficult to ask question, the Mayor replied that she was unable to stop a councillor withdrawing if they felt it proper to do so. Cllr Simpson stated, due to allegations of impropriety of members, the lawyer's advice had been that he withdraw, and council have their discussion. The partnership had written a positive response to the council.

Cllr Jennings repeated that they had refused an invitation as Cllr Simpson was attempting to leave the chamber. Cllr Fish repeated that he was concerned that UF & UV had refused an invitation to come to the Town Council. He went on to express concern at what was said in the chamber and then misrepresented at the UF board. He confirmed that UTC had received an invitation from UF not Vanguard that UTC were invited to attend a Q & A session from UF and its constituent forums at the UNF.

Two questions...Why haven't they agreed to the UTC invitation ? he stated that UF and UF are closed to the public whereas the Town Council meetings were open.

Cllr Rees having discussed with colleagues as he wasn't at the original meeting, had formed the opinion that there was no ambiguity, council had instructed the clerk who had issued a clear invitation. Cllr Rees welcomed the coming together UTC and UF, but no mention had been made of UV. He stated that personally he was very disappointed with the chair and deputy chair of this council who were at the meeting, knew what was requested, read it in the minutes and stayed silent. The Chair reiterated that we invited UF/UV and they said no, we cannot insist on attendance.

Cllrs Findlay and Fish reiterated that we have members of UF and UV as members of this Town Council shouldn't they remove themselves too. Cllr Fish - is there were any members of Vanguard board here in the meeting? The Mayor asked for quiet in the public gallery. Cllr Fish reiterated concern that the Vanguard board minutes were not up to date. Cllr Dalby commented that the members in the meeting where the invite was suggested one member admitted that they had perhaps not been as transparent as they might have been in the past. It seemed to her that UF and UV had chosen to ignore the invitation that was uniquely as UTC were the qualifying board for the Neighbourhood Plan, instead they had issued an invitation to a wider group of people to talk about their activities in general, this was not an appropriate response to the invitation offered in good faith.

Cllr Jennings stated it was very disappointing and may sound disingenuous, we were trying to get some kind of measure of the perfectly legitimate body in essence, but it does operate as a de facto Town Council. It does and has been doing and admitted by the councillor that had left the room that it could do a better job than the Town Council. People within Uppingham don't realise that its not the Town council and UF was even more of a worry as it takes it upon itself to reach out to developers, when it should be UTC. Behaviour tonight demonstrates that many people hold UF in contempt and we will do our utmost to ensure that UTC flexes its muscle, and it should! He stated that UTC had let UF walk over it for far too long.

Cllr Findlay stated that there was quite a lot of work to do, nobody could deny that the Neighbourhood Plan was the property of UTC. He believed that UV was invalid due to no permission being given by the Town Council.

The mayor asked for an extension to the meeting as per standing orders to extend the meeting to at least 9.15. proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Dalby . RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY

Cllr Ainslie was invited by the Mayor to make a statement regarding UV as he thought it would be useful to explain how Vanguard came into being and what was the role of the council. The additional paper will be available on the Town Council website along with these minutes.

The Mayor asked what were the aims of the Vanguard board ? – when it was established it was a steering group for the final construct and delivery of the TC and BZ Plan.

Cllr Jennings – why does Vanguard still exist – because it morphed into a “talking shop to bring developers, health, schools, churches together”.

Cllr Rees stated that he saw not that UTC tacitly agreed that Vanguard could meet developers without the UTC knowledge. – A rejoinder was the Clerk had been invited. Cllr Rees stated an incident in the past where a developer thought he had presented to UTC when in fact they had presented to Vanguard. This was given as an example of mis information. He stated that there was no transparency, no openness.

The Mayor asked for another extension to 9.30 but it would be the last one.
Proposed Cllr Rees, seconded Cllr Findlay. Resolved Unanimously

Cllr Findlay asked should we consider taking legal proceedings before another Vanguard takes place.? - Cllr Ainslie referred to his proposal - we can't stop other groups having a meeting, what are we going to do going forward to put this on a proper footing that is comfortable for all parties.

Cllr Fish – regarding the minutes of UF and comments made in their minutes. – he stated he was not looking for middle ways.

Cllr Colbourne - impasse as a new council – facts and conjecture were mixed in, we have an opportunity to meet, which had been denied , do we want to work to get together. The Mayor again called for quiet in the public gallery. We as a professional body need to demonstrate some professionalism in accepting a complex situation. We don't have to work together to come together.

Cllr Fish stated that what he had said was not conjecture, and how UF misrepresent what we do as UTC by the Cllr standing outside the room.

Cllr Findlay – stated there was real history and they had been fighting the war for twelve years and he was fed up with it. The Mayor stated we had to find a way forward that might not exactly be our way – Cllr Findlay said we'd tried that.

Cllr Dalby – requested protocol for guidance for meetings with developers rather than secretive meetings with developers or other groups, rather than the perception of some on council and members of the public that this was being done.

Cllr Jennings – agree with Cllr Ainslie and that's why he put the motion down – there was a lot of disquiet, and the key reason for the motion was to try and work our way through. But very cleverly UF engineered this refusing to come to us we go to them in a very different kind of context where they have control. It wouldn't wash and he would definitely not be going, I'm sure other councillors won't be going. He stated it was contemptuous, utterly contemptuous!

Cllr Rees stating point was made UF had invited us to a meeting not UV which was the issue.

Cllr Ainslie suggested we write to Vanguard to ask that UTC have a seat on the board, Cllr Rees gave credit to Cllr Ainslie as UTC had learnt far more about UV tonight than had been previously known.

Cllr Fish - has anyone ever read the minutes of UF meeting? .

Cllr Findlay - write to them stating they had not given a civilised response to the invitation; members feel that it might be resolved by a counteroffer. The Mayor asked that Cllr Findlay withdraw the word civilised which was agreed.

Proposed Cllr Findlay, seconded Rees - 7 for 3 abs. 1 Against

1. A representative on the UV
2. To reinstate the observer's role on UF

Cllr Fish still wanted to reissue the invitation, the Mayor asked if these people had written to these organisations as they had been asked to do, he stated no, as there was no trust in these organisations.

The Mayor closed this item.

529/23

To note correspondence

- a) Letters to unsuccessful applicants regarding the Bloors land
- b) LRALC round robins
- c) LRALC Monthly training bulletins
- d) Root and Branch Impact Report
- e) Email correspondence regarding the land on Seaton Road
- f) Rutland Voluntary sector
- g) Civility and Respect Certificate and Newsletter

The Clerk would like everyone to look at item 17e.

Proposed that the correspondence be noted Cllr Ainslie, seconded Cllr Clarke Resolved unanimously.

530/23

To consider the following resolution "that, in view of the confidential nature of the following agenda item, the press and public be excluded from the meeting, in accordance with the public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, section 1

Cllr Hobbs Left the meeting.

CONFIDENTIAL TEXT HAS BEEN REMOVED

The application for the CIL funds £10K to install Solar panels to the building was discussed and agreed.

Proposed Cllr Clarke, seconded Cllr Findlay. Resolved unanimously.

The meeting finished at 9.40 pm.

Signed..... Chair of Council

Dated.....

