



ANNUAL PLAN 2021/22

Purpose

1. Ripon Together was created to bring together the elements of Ripon's economy and society to support and improve the community, economic and environmental sustainability of the city.
2. In the past it has:
 - delivered the interpretation boards in Lavender Alley;
 - supported the city's celebration of the centenary of the end of World War I by coordinating and publicising the programme of events;
 - run the Cycle to the Moon initiative, including an event for schoolchildren in the market place, to encourage greater interest in the UCI World Championships and encourage people away from their cars; and
 - started a Healthy Journeying initiative to carry that work forward.
3. The common thread across all these initiatives is that Ripon Together's coordination has delivered a bigger or better final product. In some cases, notably the WW1 events, it has done so where there is already much happening; in others, it has instigated action and tried to align groups around a broad objective where they were previously operating entirely separately; in yet others, it has primarily acted alone but brought together the efforts and resources of its volunteers and members to deliver a visible and otherwise impossible result.
4. Ripon Together is increasingly seen as a body which is connected into much of the community and is used by external bodies to gather views, or separate inputs, from several groups across the city. Bodies that have used Ripon Together in this way include Harrogate Borough Council and Homes England. We can expect such requests for help or involvement in such exercises to continue in future, for example to support the Ripon Renewal project being let by Harrogate Borough Council.

External environment

Local Government structure

5. The main unknown, currently, is the future structure of local government across the county. Any structure is likely to be put in place from May 2022 and involve unitary councils larger than the current district/borough councils. Local authority services are generally to be delivered from organisations that are based more remotely from Ripon than is currently the case.
6. It would be a logical response for any unitary authority covering Ripon to devolve functions locally. Ripon Together will wish to support this move and may be called upon to foster or take part in local debate or consultation.
7. Devolution of powers would logically be to parish councils like Ripon City Council as they have precepting powers, governance arrangements and staff. However, it is also possible that other functions might be

devolved to other bodies or groups. It is unlikely, but at least possible, that Ripon Together might need to consider whether it can take on any formal functions at some point in the future.

8. It is also possible that Ripon City Council might wish to engage with Ripon Together differently if it was looking at ways of discharging a wider set of functions. There is no way of knowing how that might pan out; it could range from being asked to take on some regular functions to having funding withdrawn. Either way, it is possible that Ripon Together would need to review its own role, policies and resourcing to ensure its own effective and accountable delivery and governance.

Planning and development

9. The Clothierholme development will come back to Harrogate Borough Council for planning permission at some point in the coming months. It is unclear what further consultation may occur around that, either from the developers, Ripon City Council or Harrogate Borough Council, but there is some possibility that we may be involved further.
10. There are other proposed developments across the city where a similar role might emerge – e.g. perhaps particularly on West Lane now Homes England are involved.

Ripon Business Improvement District (BID)

11. Ripon Together is very much in favour of the BID, but it has not been asked to do anything practical to support it. Ripon Together will wish to play any part necessary to help the BID come to fruition and to work effectively with it once it is in place.

Ripon Renewal

12. The York and North Yorkshire LEP identified several Yorkshire towns which were “failing”; Ripon was one of those. This has led Harrogate Borough Council to let a Ripon Renewal consultancy to assess what actions can be taken to improve the City. In part, this will be a further development of the Ripon City Plan. Harrogate Borough Council have already made contact with Ripon Together; the contractors will seek either our views and may want our help in getting views from across the community.

Covid-19

13. Part of the reason for the consultancy is the lack of employment in the City and the number of vacant retail premises. Covid is likely to have further damaged employment and has certainly closed more shops. The final economic effects of the pandemic are some way off, but their nature is already obvious and significant.
14. The social effects are and will be more difficult to discern but the loss of schooling, the stress on parents having to keep down jobs as well as home-educate, fears over or lost jobs and so on are all present in Ripon. All strands of our community will need to address these issues.
15. One of the emerging issues is the lack of community assets to entertain the community and support social interaction. The cinema has closed and may not reopen. It appears that the old swimming baths may be sold off commercially; this would prevent any alternative use, such as an extension of the Spa Gardens, a bowling alley, an arts space, or a youth club, to name a few.
16. Ripon Together will consider what it can do to support the community, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, in the coming year. In particular, it will publicise and operate its community event calendar on its website. There has been a gap here for a while but the City Council confirmed that they would like Ripon Together to fill it and the function was developed shortly before the covid outbreak hit. This is a concrete way in which Ripon Together can provide support right across the community.

Activities for 2021/22

Healthy Journeying

17. The Healthy Journeying initiative was adopted as a follow up to the work on cycling in 2019. Its aim is to encourage more people to cycle or walk in and around the city. In the last year, we have set up a website; one of its major uses to date has been to collate and make publicly available a wide selection of walks and cycle routes.
18. The initiative has several strands:
 - Providing support where we can to the greenways project led by Ian Kendall;
 - Seeking volunteers from Ripon Together and elsewhere to help the Ramblers' Association discover and map lost routes (i.e. routes which due to past use should be classified as footpaths, bridle paths and other public rights of way);
 - Ensuring where possible that the needs of cyclists and walkers are taken into account in the planning framework and decisions for major developments;
 - Working with Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council to (a) develop a walking and cycling strategy for Ripon and (b) ensure that it is consistent with the Ripon Renewal project;
 - Staging a pilgrimage to Fountains at a date in the summer, with entertainments, to replace the cancelled Boxing Day pilgrimage.
19. It is likely that Ripon Together will be used to facilitate consultation on the local strategy for walking and cycling. Once that has been concluded, Ripon Together will need to assess what it can do to support its implementation.

General coordination role

20. There will be several high profile developments and initiatives in 2021/22 with the £4.5m Skell Project from Fountains Abbey, the Ripon Renewal project, the Ripon Business Improvement District and the 2022 cathedral celebrations. There is no other body with the ability to keep the community involved and to try to ensure that these projects, and others, are aligned. It is a hugely important two years ahead for Ripon and Ripon Together must play its part.

Ripon Renewal

21. Ripon Together has been contacted by Harrogate Borough Council and can expect to be consulted during the course of the year-long consultancy during this year. We will help the contractors get the support they need. That would include identifying groups that ought to be consulted and may involve setting up meetings. It may also necessitate Ripon Together coming to a view itself; creating that would involve consultation across its membership and the bodies represented on its Board.

Summer of Play

22. As a result of the pandemic, there are concerns about both children's education and their social and mental well-being. The Government has highlighted the need to help children catch up academically; they have provided some limited funding and are looking at extending school hours/terms.
23. PlayFirstUK, which includes 15 child psychologists and education specialists, has highlighted unprecedented increases in children's mental health problems during the pandemic, as well as increased loneliness and reduced academic motivation. They suggest that "Social interaction, play, physical activity and good mental health needs to come first."
24. It has been suggested to Ripon Together that it should act on this thought locally, perhaps by running games or other events in the market place or at other venues over the Summer. Ripon Together is pursuing this by contacting schools, local authorities, sports clubs and other groups (e.g. dance, scouting movement). It could also tie in with the Alice initiative (see below).

Celebrating Alice

25. 27 December 2021 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Alice Through the Looking Glass. Lewis Carroll had close connections with Ripon and is believed to have drawn significant inspiration for his Alice books from Ripon, so it is appropriate to celebrate the anniversary here.
26. Initial meetings have been held to identify possible activities and events. It is hoped that an outline timetable and action plan can be agreed early in the financial year. Possibilities, amongst others, include:
- an Alice Treasure Hunt around the shops;
 - a poetry workshop at autumn half term in the library and other links to the poetry festival;
 - performances at the cathedral Christmas Fair, other fairs, or as a separate event at the Ripon Amateur Operatic Society; and
 - a puppet workshop and show at RAOS run by a troupe from Beverley.

St Wilfrid's anniversary 2022

27. Ripon Together will support the cathedral and the city in celebrating the 1350th anniversary of the founding of St Wilfrid's cathedral church in the city. As part of this, it will consider how it can support and work with the St Wilfrid's Procession Committee to ensure its work continues and the event it arranges continues and is enhanced.

The Queen's platinum jubilee 2022

28. It is likely that there will be celebrations planned for the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne next year. It may be that Ripon Together will be asked to support those in some way.

How will we take them forward?

Organisation

29. Ripon Together has no employees or standing secretariat. Board members take it in turns to support monthly Board meetings. It will review this arrangement to see how we can increase still further the effectiveness in our communications and administration.
30. Ripon Together pursues initiatives as separate streams of work, usually via community meetings to bring different groups and individuals across the city together to decide what to do and how to achieve it. Each workstream has a separate chair and secretary. We are currently working in this way on both the Alice initiative and Healthy Journeying.
31. Ripon Together will agree project briefs for these workstreams, especially where they are likely to involve expenditure. They will need to identify whether income will be produced or whether funds will need to come from Ripon Together's own resources, specific grants or sponsorship.
32. Ripon Together will continue to attend Ripon City Council's Events Committee to help support their programme and ensure the best possible coordination between that and Ripon Together activities. It will also administer the community's calendar of events, hosted on its website.

Finance

33. The only regular income comes from an annual grant from Ripon City Council. We hope this will continue for 2021/22. In the past, particular events have been financially supported by sponsorship or discounts from local businesses and by a grant from Ripon City Council. They have also been supported in kind by the voluntary efforts of community groups, Ripon Together volunteers and local businesses.
34. Ripon Together has a healthy bank balance as it has operated during 2020/21 without paid support. However, the policy is to retain enough funds to operate with paid support for a year. Possible calls on the remaining resources in 2021/22 include:
- Website costs;

- Events for the summer of play;
- Entertainments at Fountains at the end of the rearranged pilgrimage (though this is unlikely to be significant);
- Events associated with the Alice initiative (for example a puppet Troupe from Beverley);
- Arranging for further paid administrative support to Ripon Together activities, particularly the website and communications.

External relationships

35. Ripon Together has very good relationships with most sectors of the local community. It is also clear that national bodies, such as Homes England, and the county and borough councils recognise Ripon Together as a body which can help represent the community and which acts to deliver outcomes.
36. Both Ripon Together and Ripon City Council could be stronger with a closer working relationship. Individual councillors are involved in parts of Ripon Together's work, but it is unclear that the councillors more generally are aware of what we do and there has been no council representation at Ripon Together Board meetings throughout 2020/21. This plan has been drawn up with no knowledge of Ripon City Council's plans for the coming financial year and may have to be revised when they become known.
37. However, a recent meeting between the Dean and Councillor Williams agreed that the latter would attend Ripon Together meetings in the short term and that Ripon City Council would nominate someone to take up this position regularly.

Communications

38. Colour It In provides support to the website structure and programming. To date we have had support on its improvement and posting content from volunteer members. We will need to find a replacement on the latter for the current arrangement.
39. In general, communication of Ripon Together's role, aims and achievements is not as comprehensive or effective as it could be. In particular, communications to local councillors can be improved, as can the use of Ripon Together's social media accounts. Ripon Together has revised its communications strategy and will have to implement that strategy effectively and keep it under review.

Conclusion

40. Ripon Together has made a difference to the effectiveness of local input into decisions that effect the City and has pursued initiatives that have added to the life of the city, but it could do more of both. It will continue to work to achieve this, by ensuring it is effectively linked in to all parts of the community and administers itself as effectively as possible.

Ripon Together
April 2021