

Kingdom People, Big Questions: Plan

Objective

The key question facing us today is: *How can we make the world a better place?*

Our objective is to provide one part of the answer, a place where we can:

- *explore* questions and issues;
- *articulate* policies and values; and
- *propose* solutions and strategies.

Our vision is to change the character of the Christian community and our wider society by building a grassroots movement through a place which offers people three related facilities:

- *a community*, where you can belong, be safe and be accepted;
- *a forum*, where you can discuss questions and concerns; and
- *a platform*, where you can express the things that are important to you.

Steps

A possible set of steps to achieve this objective are as follows.

- January 2021:
 - describe the initial vision; and
 - circulate to a few potentially interested people.
- February:
 - identify an initial steering group (target 6 people); and
 - hold an initial meeting.
- By the second steering group meeting:
 - commit / clarify and commit to the initial vision;
 - agree a draft implementation plan?
 - agree a name and purchase a domain name;
 - identify who else is needed in (what skills and experience are missing from) the steering group at this stage;
 - seek to recruit them; and
 - agree the technical objectives (how the technical details will be assessed).
- March:
 - agree current draft of initial core documents;
 - explore relationship with Together4Bristol (potential partnership);
 - agree on a technical implementation;
 - sketch out initial content;
 - initial conversation about design, logo, look and feel, navigation;
 - look for someone to implement the design;
 - start to recruit an initial membership (target 20 people in all).

- April:
 - implement a first cut website with minimum viable product functionality;
 - create initial conversations and articles, providing content and fleshing out community culture and expectations; and
 - members feed back ideas and questions to steering group (ongoing).
- Steering group:
 - respond to ideas and questions from members (ongoing);
 - agree a design brief; and
 - engage someone to deliver it.
- May:
 - continue creating initial conversations and articles;
 - start to flesh out initial ideas about solutions and strategies;
 - agree design proposal;
 - gather feedback from members.
- June:
 - implement second cut website with agreed design and close to target functionality;
 - recruit volunteer forum moderators;
 - recruit another 20 members who are not familiar with website 1.0;
 - gather feedback from members on the update, including initial Zoom meeting; and
 - possible review of design and implementation of website 2.1 with revised design but no changed functionality.
- July:
 - make website public; and
 - focus on content creation and moderation.
- August:
 - hopefully take some holidays; and
 - continue with essential site moderation and maintenance.
- September:
 - implement final target functionality;
 - gather feedback on community and website development;
 - steering group review activity and progress against plans, update plans; and
 - if at least 50 paying members, publish plans for membership engagement in community development (larger formal role for forum moderators?).
- By the time there are 100 paying members:
 - implement plans for extended membership engagement in community development.
- By the time there are 500 paying members:
 - publish draft plans for formal incorporation (possibly as a Community Interest Company?)
- By the time there are 1,000 paying members:
 - establish a formal structure to ensure the community and website continues to work towards the published vision.

Money – Principles

Most of the input from people will be voluntary, but where people are asked to provide a service (such as graphic design or website building), that service will be paid for at a normal commercial rate unless the person concerned offers their time and skills for free or a reduced rate.

The basic financial principle: this project needs to pay its own way, so it needs to generate income. This is partly because I can't afford to start another activity which takes time but generates no income, partly because people tend to value things more if they pay for them, and partly to protect the future growth.

We could start off on a small basis with free software, but if this does grow, it will require more resources, and it is very hard to introduce money into a successful activity which has always been free. Many successful 'hobby' projects have failed in the end because they became too successful, the creator could not afford to continue to pay for the resources the larger group needed, and you never get enough people responding to requests for voluntary contributions when they had joined a free service.

My current thought is to ask the members for a monthly donation, with £1 a month as the minimum, £5 a month as the request, and invite people to give more if they can afford it. If anyone cannot afford £1 a month, we will operate a 'bursary' and give a free membership to anyone who asks, trusting people not to abuse this. But all members get the same service, whatever they pay or don't pay.

We need to provide a website which is essentially a combination of articles, blogs and discussion forum, with some way for people to pay their membership fee and donate electronically, although none of that needs to be available on day one for the initial steering group. The plan is to get a large enough group of people who are committed to this vision to finance the investment which will be needed to develop the website and associate facilities.

The website needs to be fully accessible to the public – nothing is hidden – but only members, people who are committed to the vision and values, are allowed to participate. We cannot provide a safe space if anonymous people can freely insult, criticise and undermine the people who are seeking to explore difficult questions.

In keeping with the core vision, I see the finances being operated on an open book basis: one of the key needs to be addressed is how we integrate our spirituality and our handling of money, and we need to model financial integrity, just as we need to model our values in every other area of life.

By 'open book', I mean that all transactions will go through the accounts and the amount, date and party name will be made public for every transaction, except that the name of donors (members or not) will not be made public.

This should be sufficient if all the funding comes from many small donations. If we ever attract a sponsor who offers to make one or more substantial donations, we may have to review this policy to ensure adequate transparency and assure the members that that no influence has been obtained through the donation.

Money – Practicalities

After the first or second meeting of the steering group, we will have a name. This will enable us to open a bank account, assuming one other person is prepared to be a signatory alongside me. There is a good range of possible banks offering free banking to non-profit organisations with a turnover under £50k or £100k pa, and after that we probably won't mind paying some bank charges.

I intend for all money to go through the bank account, so we need to set up the account and pay money in before we can spend anything.

A guess: roughly 1 in 5 people will ask for a free membership and 1 in 5 will opt for the £1 rather than £5 membership. And I assume very few people will choose to pay more than the suggested £5. So we might expect 5 members to generate £16 per month, 10 members £32 and 100 members £320. It will be interesting to see how close that is. But we need to make some assumptions when looking at the finances, so let's start there.

If we get £16 in March, that will enable us to buy the domain.

In subsequent months, we may need around £20 for the website. If we get 20 people in March, that means around £64 income in June, so we can hope to be saving maybe £44 a month in April, May and June. £132 is not enough to pay a designer: they are more likely to be around £500, so perhaps we can arrange to pay then £100 a month for 5 months?

If we get another 20 people in June, that brings the income after website fees to around £100 a month from July, which would enable us to pay the designer each month and finish paying for that work around October – sooner if the numbers build after going public in July. After that, I hope to start being paid for maybe half a day a week, as the money allows; I anticipate needing to spend at least that amount of time on the project.

It probably goes without saying that until we are big enough to justify formal incorporation, all paid work will be done by self-employed contractors who will deliver a service for a set fee.