

APPENDIX B
AGENDA ITEM NO. 5

**UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE AYLESBURY TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP AND
MANAGEMENT OF MARKETS**

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To summarise the work of the Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership over the last 12 months and provide an overview of the improvement plan for the AVDC managed markets.

1.2 Recommendation

Members note the report and feedback any other actions/comments they would like to be considered by the Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership and Market's Manager.

2 Supporting information - Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership (ATCP)

- 2.1 The work of the ATCP is funded via a number of sources – AVDC, membership, lettings income, and contributions in kind. The total working budget of the Partnership is £173,000 which is offset by £42800 income. AVDC pays the remaining balance.
- 2.2 The Partnership's annual business plan has five key headings:
- i Partnership and Communications
 - ii A clean and attractive town
 - iii A safe place
 - iv Marketing and promoting the town
 - v Support for independent businesses
- 2.3 The Partnership business plan is closely aligned to (but not replaced by) the recently published Draft Improvement Plan for Aylesbury Town Centre and will be reviewed again once the feedback on the Improvement Plan has been considered. This will ensure that maximum impact is gained from the limited resources available.
- 2.4 The Town Centre Team has three part time staff – Diana Fawcett, Town Centre Manager, an Events Officer, Amy Moon and a Markets' Officer, Paul Kirkham. All three are employed by AVDC. The Partnership is currently Chaired by the manager of the Hale Leys Shopping Centre. Cllr Brian Roberts is the AVDC member representative on the Partnership.
- i Partnership and Communications**
- 2.5 Appendix 1 shows the wide range of local groups which the Partnership interacts with. This reflects the size and breadth of its expanding membership which now stands at over 80. All town centre businesses/stakeholders are encouraged to join the Partnership and many have done so including residential and commercial estate agents, the Aylesbury Old Town Residents' Group and Arriva.

- 2.6 Members can chose from three levels of membership (£3,000, £300 and £30).
- 2.7 One of the most valued benefits of being a member of the Partnership is the regular flow of communication the Town Centre Manager provides on town centre issues. A copy of one of the Town Centre updates is attached as Appendix 2.
- 2.8 All members are welcome to attend the bi-annual Partnership meeting where time is set aside at the start of the meeting for networking and for non-Board members to ask questions/raise issues. All members can attend and take part in the quarterly meetings.
- 2.9 One of the aims of the Partnership is to facilitate (and sometimes broker) discussions with different council services eg planning, licensing, waste disposal, parking, transport.
- 2.10 In 2013, restaurant members of the Partnership have continued to benefit from targeted updates about theatre shows and bookings so that they can plan and maximise their opportunity to attract pre and post theatre diners.

ii A clean and attractive town

- 2.11 As the use of town centres change and socialising becomes a more important requirement, the cleanliness and attractiveness of the town has become an increasingly significant part of the business plan. Improvements to these aspects require ownership by everyone so work is very much a partnership and on-going effort with the Town Centre Manager liaising closely with others to coordinated a range of improvements including:
- improvements to the High Street, George Street and Market Square
 - cleaning of the war memorial and seating
 - identifying and arranging the removal of rubbish from grot spots
 - removal of posters, illegal notices
 - repainting street furniture
 - encouraging outside street trading
 - organising window wraps to improve the appearance of vacant units
 - managing and regulating buskers and charity collectors
 - working with AVDC on extending Christmas lights to new locations eg Cambridge Street
 - removing unpopular, excess street furniture
 - coordinating the snow clearance

iii A safe place

- 2.12 In 2011, Aylesbury secured the much coveted Purple Flag signalling that it was judged through a rigorous, independent assessment to be a safe and welcoming place in the evening. The Purple Flag was re-awarded in 2012. In 2013 the Night Time Moves Group was formed. The purpose of the Group is to:
- Produce and distribute Night Moves guide
 - Co-ordinate and identify ways of partnership working
 - Promote the night time economy
 - Identify issues and develop strategies to assist with issues
 - Focus on Purple Flag renewal

- 2.13 The Group is Chaired by the Town Centre Manager and membership of the Group includes the Aylesbury Town Council, the Taxi Association, TVP, the Aylesbury Chaplaincy, restaurants/pubs, nightclubs, pool bar and AVDC services such as licensing and community safety. The work of the Group is gaining momentum and played an important contribution to the 2013 Purple Flag assessment which has just taken place. An official decision is still awaited but initial feedback from the Panel was encouraging and there is no reason to believe Aylesbury will not retain its Purple Flag status.
- 2.14 The Town Centre Manager is also a Board member and Treasurer of Aylesbury Business Against Crime scheme. This scheme manages crime reduction in the shops through a radio system and exclusion album of key offenders. It plays a vital role in reducing crime in the town.
- 2.15 The Town Centre Manager has played a key role in improving the upper High Street through the enforcement of the pedestrianisation scheme.

iv Marketing and Promoting the town

- 2.16 The marketing and promotion of Aylesbury works on a number of levels. Overall responsibility for the strategic marketing and positioning of the town is led by AVDC, but the Town Centre Manager is helping to deliver a dynamic marketing and promotional plan locally.
- 2.17 The 450 free events held in the town centre are planned and coordinated through one of the Partnership sub-groups Chaired by the Town Centre Manager. Any town centre organisation that hosts events is invited to join the group. The group comprises of AVDC leisure, Bucks CC, Town Council, library, museum, Queens Park Arts Centre, St Marys Church, Mix 96, Bucks TV, and Waterside theatre. The programme grows year on year thanks to the efforts of many contributing partners who fund a number of the events in cash or in kind. The breadth of the events programme ranges from new activities such as the Artisan Village, Aylesbury Alive festival and Come Dine with me (a four course 'safari style' dinner at four different restaurants for paying guests) to popular regulars such as the Thursday afternoon children activities in school holidays. The programme provides essential credibility and support for the town's Vision to develop its unique selling point as a town of performance and the arts.
- 2.18 In 2013, 54 of the 450 events were organised by the Town Centre Team. Research is carried out with event visitors to help understand their value and how they can be improved. In summary, the research has shown that
- 85% of the people questioned were attracted to the town because of the event
 - 80-85% of the same people went on to spend money in the town ie adding value into the local economy
- 2.19 Around 9000 people attend the annual Christmas light switch-on and as part of the promotion campaign, in 2013, 20,000 event guides, 47,000 Festive Fun leaflets and 27,000 Aylesbury Alive leaflets were produced and distributed across the town and to Vale villages.
- 2.20 A significant element of the AVDC funding contributes towards the events programme and one of the challenges for 2014 will be considering the ways

in which the programme can be maintained balanced with savings which may have to be made.

- 2.21 AVDC's corporate communications and marketing service will also be developing a more coordinated and marketing plan for the town (an action in the draft improvement plan for the town centre). The marketing plan will include promoting the tourism offer particularly working closer with the Canal and River Trust who are keen to make more of the canal basin now that the public realm is taking shape and will be expanded post the planned of the Aylesbury Centre in 2015.
- 2.22 As the town redevelops, and the accumulative work of the different partners including the private sector such as the owners of the Friars Square Shopping Centre, the positive profile of the town is increasing both nationally and locally.
- 2.23 The Town Centre Manager has also developed relationships with local landlords and letting agents to attract the right tenant mix. Understanding the investment which has taken place or is planned is vital to influencing perceptions of Aylesbury particularly when the landlord is not local, which is very often the case. Plans are in place through the Improvement Plan to increase this area of work and build relationships with 'remote' landlords.

v Support for independent businesses

- 2.24 The importance of retaining and attracting independent town centre businesses is appreciated by all stakeholders including the multiple retailers.
- 2.25 In the last 12 months or so, the town centre team has increased its efforts in this area and many more have now joined the Partnership and can now enjoy a range of membership benefits for just £30 a year including:
- the opportunity to attend over 54 free annual events
 - quarterly network meetings
 - the monthly update about town centre information
 - personal visits to traders affected by development /works outside their premises
 - one stop shop advice and assistance when applying for street trading licences etc
 - free advertising
- 2.26 The Town Centre Manager has also worked closely with the Federation of Small Businesses (also Partnership members) and taken part in the 'Keep it local' campaign by distributing promotional bags and flyers.
- 2.27 The culmination of the support for independent businesses in 2013, has been the launch of the Retail Lift-off - an innovative project which gained momentum after Aylesbury was unsuccessful in its bid to become a Portas town. Appendix 3 is the brochure produced to explain the project which has been made possible (by a collaboration of the private and public sector) to give five local entrepreneurs the opportunity to start their own retail business in the town. Retail Lift-off has attracted national and regional publicity and plans are underway to extend the scheme in 2014 using the 2013 experience to make adjustments/improvements.

3 Supporting information – markets

- 3.1 The management of the Aylesbury markets and the Winslow general market is now undertaken by the Town Centre Manager with the support of a part-time Markets' Officer. The key tasks focus around managing the trader relationship, improving the customer experience and generating income from the markets to at least break even.
- 3.2 Nationally, markets are facing tough challenges and many continue to be subsidised, or are experiencing falling numbers or closure. Even much esteemed markets such as the covered market at Oxford are facing difficulties and are under threat. Aylesbury in particular has its own challenges which will take time to address so the work in progress is with a view to the long term sustainability of the markets rather than short-term quick fixes.
- 3.3 Given this approach, during the last 12 months, much of the work programme has concentrated on reviewing and improving the basic operation of the markets both in Aylesbury and Winslow. New terms and conditions are being developed, new processes put in place and the communication between traders and AVDC market staff enhanced and improved. Draft business plans have been developed with input from both traders and in Winslow, the Winslow Town Council.
- 3.4 In Aylesbury, where the stalls are provided, one of the priorities is the replacement of the stalls and a number of new designs are currently being trialled. The challenge is to find replacement stalls which look attractive in the historic location of the market, are practical from a trading viewpoint and can also withstand the very high degree of erecting and dismantling required ie four days a week.
- 3.5 Work has also begun on improving the Tuesday market which has moved some way from its original antiques and collectibles format. New terms and conditions will limit the type of good which can be sold and how they can be displayed with the intention of uplifting the attractiveness and appeal of the market.
- 3.6 The promotion of the markets continue to be an important part of the business plans for both markets. Love your market is celebrated and market dates promoted in publications. A new banner has been purchased for Winslow market and regular discussions are now taking place with the Town Council about future plans.
- 3.7 A priority in the New Year will be to end rent cash collections by the Market's Officer. This is not best practice for a number of reasons.
- 3.8 Whilst there is undoubtedly a long way to go, the work so far is paying off and for the first time in a many years, the Aylesbury general market is full to capacity and the number of traders in Winslow has doubled to six. The Market team hope to build on the award they won from the NAMBA – the national voice of markets for the local launch of the Love your market fortnight.

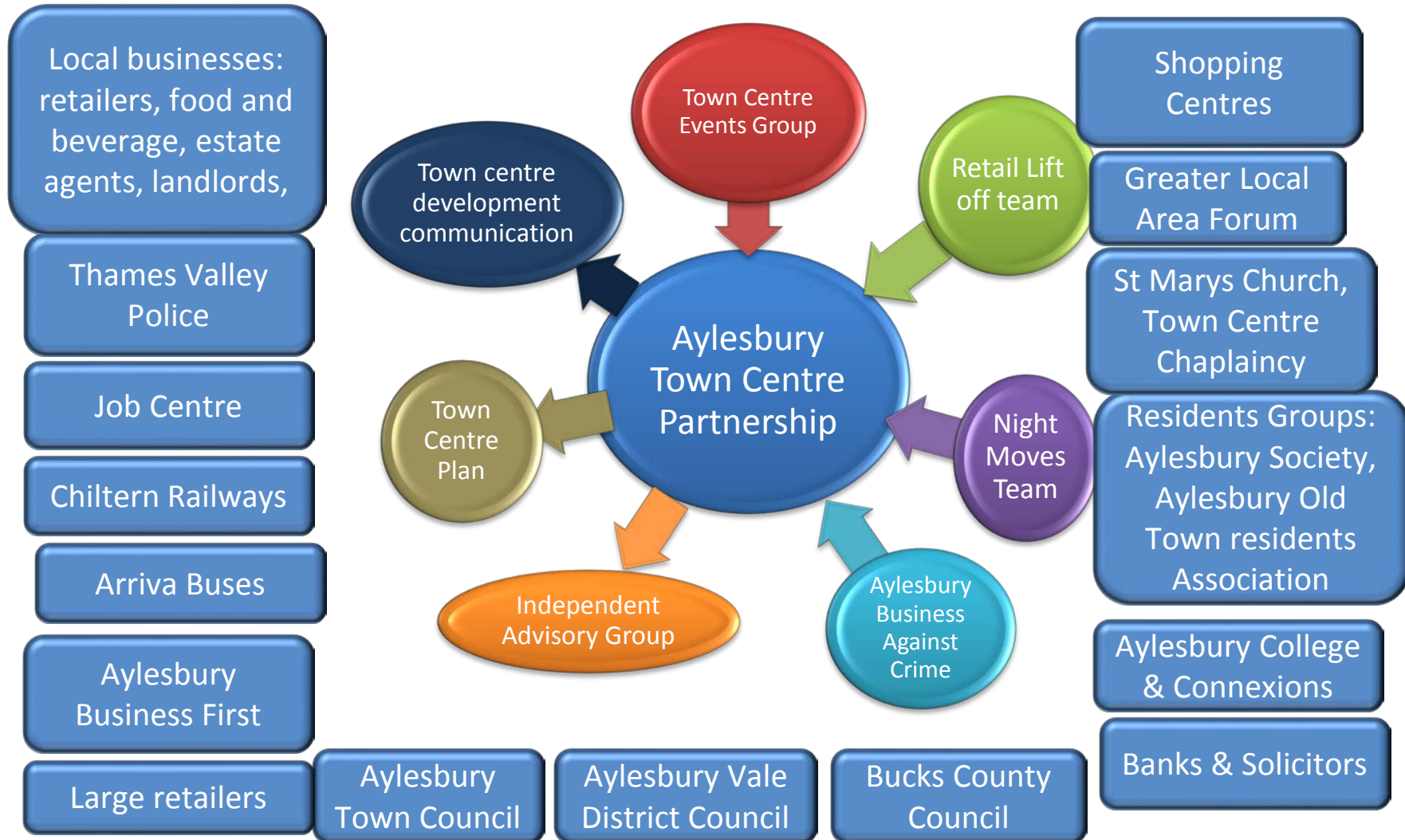
4 Resource implications

- 4.1 None.

5 Response to Key Aims and Objectives

- 5.1 The work of the Town Centre Partnership and management of the markets contributes to the key aims of Protecting and Improving the Living experience and Growing the Local Economy.

Contact Officer	Teresa Lane 01296 585006
Background Documents	Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership business plan.





Moben broken window...after



"Supporting local business"



Preparing for Lift Off

Retail Lift Off was an initiative launched by Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership to provide new, local independent traders and entrepreneurs an opportunity to trade and have **free business support** in the town centre. The initiative was not to install "pop up" businesses but to create **sustainable opportunities** for new businesses.

The initiative attracted 35 strong applications of interest from talented people and, after a rigorous selection process, **5 new local entrepreneurs** accepted the offer to kickstart their businesses in the town centre.

These successful entrepreneurs were given **6 weeks rent-free trading** either on a market stall, a bespoke retail barrow, shopping centre mall space or an empty shop unit. This was followed by **a further 6 weeks of subsidised rent**. They were also given the **flexibility** within this period to try different areas to see what worked for them.

Very importantly the initiative also provided **a network of free support** ranging from business and financial advice to marketing and retail advice.

In addition each successful business was provided with a "buddy" – an experienced business person who helped them through the selection process as a mentor and guide. The buddy continues to support them as a helping hand through their business venture.

- 38 local businesses pledged their support
- Every new business received 10 hours of free training
- One to one bespoke training opportunities were offered
- £75,000 in kind funding
- £25,000 in financial support
- 20 experienced local business people offered personal mentoring

What were we aiming for?

The aim of the initiative was to provide new businesses the opportunity to experience trading in a supported manner on days suitable for them, whilst increasing the range of independent businesses in the town and providing greater choice to shoppers.

We think that Retail Lift Off 2013 was a great success and we look forward to repeating it again next year.

Lee McQueen, former Apprentice winner and founder of Raw Talent Academy:

"It's great to see Aylesbury's Town Centre Partnership supporting budding entrepreneurs. This is exactly the sort of project we need to see more of. I look forward to hearing how things progress and all the best to everyone involved".

