

AYLESBURY VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Democratic Services

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28 November, 2013

ECONOMY & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee will be held at **6.30 pm on 11 December, 2013**, in **The Olympic Room at The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury**, when your attendance is requested.

Membership: Councillor Miss P Lewis (Chairman); Councillors Mrs Bloom, Mrs Davies, Mrs Glover, Hawkett, Lambert, Monger, Poll, Richards, M Smith, Strachan, Stuchbury, Thompson and Tyndall. One Vacancy.

Contact Officer: Derek Willmer (01296) 585060

L White
Head of Administration

Members:

Ms Pam Bibby, Mr Derek Willmer, Committee Clerk (Generic Author), Web Master (IT), Cllr Avril Davies, Cllr Netta Glover, Cllr Mike Hawkett, Cllr Steven Lambert, Cllr Pearl Lewis, Cllr Howard Mordue, Cllr Llew Monger, Cllr Jackie Phipps, Cllr Chris Poll, Cllr Mike Smith, Cllr Robin Stuchbury, Cllr Brian Tyndall, Cllr Peter Strachan, Mr Bill Ashton, Mr Craig Saunders, Mr Douglas Gray (Audit), Mr David Lamb (Audit), Mr Les White, Miss Alice Fisher, Cllr Jenny Bloom, Cllr Chris Richards,

AGENDA

1 **APOLOGIES**

2 **TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP**


Any changes to be reported to the meeting.

3

MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings held on 28 October, 2013, copy attached as Appendix A.

Documents Attached:

 economy minutes 28 10 2013.pdf

4

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests.

5

UPDATE ON AYLESBURY TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE TOWN CENTRE

To consider the report attached as Appendix B coloured pink.

Contact Officers: Teresa Lane (01296) 585006 and Diana Fawcett (01296) 585880

Documents Attached:

 App B - Aylesbury Town Centre report.pdf

6


ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

To consider the programme attached as Appendix C coloured grey.

Members to consider items for the period to 17 March 2015

Contact Officer: Derek Willmer (01296) 585060

Documents Attached:

 App C - EBD SC work prog (11 12 2013 meeting).pdf

ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 October, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Miss P Lewis (Chairman), Councillors Beall (in place of Stuchbury), Mrs Bloom, Mrs Brandis (in place of Tyndall), Cooper (in place of Richards), Mrs Davies, Mrs Glover, Hawkett, Isham (in place of Mordue), Lambert, Monger, Mrs Phipps, Poll, M Smith and Strachan. Councillor N Blake attended also.

1. APOLOGY: Councillors Mordue, Richards, Stuchbury and Tyndall.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September, 2013, be approved as a correct record.

3. SKILLS – UPDATE ON THE WORKING GROUP

Members received a short report to update them on the progress made by the Task and Finish Group following the meeting on 23 September 2013.

The Group had met with Paula Buck, the Skills Lead on the BTVLEP, primarily to solicit interest from the BTVLEP on ensuring that the skills needs were reflected in the EU and SLGF plans being submitted by the LEP to draw down future funding to support the skills programme and work streams.

Mrs Buck had been appraised of the issues uncovered by the Working Group regarding the disconnect between what is happening in business and schools and that young people were not being encouraged to take alternative career paths or being made aware of the range of opportunities available to them and responded by outlining the 6 key strands which were to form the basis of the LEP's skills strategy going forward.

1. Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships – accountancies now offer such higher level apprenticeships and represent alternatives to going to University for degrees, allowing students to study whilst working
2. Information, Advice and Guidance – Matthew Hancock from BIS has recognised that the current system of careers advice had failed to Inspire; hence there is a new programme coming out from BIS to do with 'Inspiring Young People'. Certainly Bucks should play into this.

There will also be a framework introduced and monitored by Ofsted about how schools are delivering against this new framework, which will be built into the new

national careers service. There is a greater recognition that parental involve in choice of education is key. Parents will be given up-to-date information to better inform young people.

3. Market Intelligence – more information will be gathered about the skills which employers need. The LEP have acquired some software which allows it to scan jobs advertised and examines the specific skills employers are looking for. This information can be cut and sliced and analysed by sector or technical skills. The LEP will use this to let schools know what is currently being advertised and out there.
4. Supply side planning - £11m-£15m is spent on skills in Bucks. Ways in which the supply side can improve to meet existing and future skills needs will continue.
5. Educated in Bucks – although there are good educational skills, there is a lack of work readiness; the LEP will work to improve the 'educated in Bucks' brand by focusing also on improving work readiness skills.
6. Future skills – this will be scenario testing what the jobs of the future might look like and how the system needs to adapt.

The Group had agreed activities to take forward and identified opportunities for AVDC Members to be involved in.

Members were conscious of the limitations to their remit and issues beyond the control of Aylesbury Vale District Council. With this in mind it was decided to prioritise a skills and employment conference targeted at young people with strategic input from some of Aylesbury Vale District Council's prominent partners as a first step towards promoting the opportunities available.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee notes the progress made by the Task and Finish Group and endorses the taking forward of a Skills and Employment conference aimed at improving the links between education, business and training providers together with an advertising campaign to highlight alternative career paths and opportunities.

4. RURAL ECONOMY UPDATE

A report was received that provided Members with an update on economic development activity appertaining to the rural economy, the significant issues facing rural businesses that recent independent research had identified and to enable Members to identify issues they may wish to explore in more detail.

The Buckinghamshire economy was reported as being worth over £11.8bn with the rural economy employing 58,400 people in 11,705 businesses, 91.5% of these being micro businesses.

80% of the county was considered rural and contained over 40% of all VAT registered businesses in the county. The majority of these businesses were micro businesses with 82% employing less than 5 people and 41% of all those employed in rural Bucks being self employed.

The businesses fell into certain sectors. The land based sector was, surprisingly, a relatively small sector of 10/11%, construction being nearer 20% and telecommunications being 14%. Retail, hotel/catering, property and production amounted to about 8%.

Significant facts relating to rural Buckinghamshire were reported as:-

- There were 26,871 registered businesses in Bucks
- 90% had under 10 employees
- Buckinghamshire had the highest rate of business start ups in the country.
- 10,965 businesses were formed in the last 5 years.
- 11,630 people worked from home in Rural Bucks
- 34% of those employed in Bucks were employed in rural areas
- 42% of self employed people in Bucks lived and worked in rural locations
- 12% employment in rural Bucks related to manufacturing
- 15% in retail and 19% in property related activities
- Hotel and catering amounted to 3.4%

Businesses based in rural areas faced many of the same issues to those faced in urban locations yet they were also exposed to other challenges that had a significantly greater impact on rural businesses to urban.

The rural business, in general, had a greater challenge to access public transport, did not benefit from associated attractions and integrated business support from working closely with similar businesses as recognised in the DEFRA report 2010. Rural businesses might also feel a greater impact of reliance on local services and organisations which made them very susceptible to collateral damage of large industry downturn or closure.

The key pressures facing most rural businesses in Buckinghamshire were probably the same as those in the urban environment, that of access to finance, increasing running costs, rates and heat light, raw materials and management time but there were some pressures that were of a greater significance:-

- Access to super fast broadband
- Cost of employment
- Marketing costs
- Lack of developed business networks

- Transport for distribution of goods and access to employment
- Lack of location intensity of sectors
- Reduced opportunity for economies of scale
- Lack of robust communications

Agricultural businesses specifically suffered from a variety of factors that did not impact on many urban businesses; the vagaries of weather could impact production, cost of fuels, cost of fertilizer, international market conditions, EU agreements, grants, subsidies, environmental influences, law and access all had a business changing impact and all were outside the control of the individual farming business.

Rural businesses in Buckinghamshire reported that they also faced increasing challenges in other areas;-

- Skills and training for young workers (apprentices)
- Regulation (H&S and movement restrictions to prevent the spreading of infection)
- Planning
- Weather (rural tourism businesses suffer downturn in poor weather)
- HS2 and mitigation
- Planning restrictions (although more positive changes were now being seen)
- Low interest rates were beneficial
- Access to high superfast broadband.
- Cost of employment/transport
- The cost of market town business rates for retail businesses.
- Parking in market towns

Growth potential existed in the rural economy as it did in the urban economy. However, the rural economy was considered by Government to be “hard to reach”, not only for geographical reasons, but also through a lack of superfast broadband, a reducing public transport network and the ever increasing cost of fuel.

Many sectors in the rural economy could be considered “ripe” for growth given specific circumstances and recognition of growing demand. The rural retail offer as previously explored appeared to show growth when linked to a leisure activity such as coffee shops and unique gift shopping. This was despite the challenges of high business rates. Further, the retail environment was showing significant enthusiasm for farm retail offers where food was offered with genuine provenance and if coupled with a leisure experience such as contact with animals or a coffee shop, demand was high. The retail offer in villages and market towns was also changing as more community shops were being introduced and thriving. These enterprises more usually required state intervention as capital start up was high. LEADER could point to many

that out perform commercial retail units for reasons of community relations and strong management structures.

In Buckinghamshire, rural tourism was indicated to be a growing and thriving sector with substantial demand still not being met allowing for future growth potential. This had been confirmed by every tourism business supported by LEADER. Demand for accommodation was high, occupancy rates are in some places running at 90% and the family and low cost rural offer was showing greatest demand.

Rural tourism was, therefore, considered a priority for support under future RDPE funding streams and, although the future strategy for LEADER had yet to be written, it would certainly include a strong focus on rural tourism in Bucks as a potential growth area.

Members were generally supportive of the direction of the work being carried. However, there were a number of issues concerning which Members expressed a view on or commented generally, including the following:-

- Members asked that the reported percentages of each activity be substantiated.
- Members commented that the report title, and therefore the focus of work, should be rephrased to read "Economy in the Rural Areas"
- One of the greatest issues to running a business in a rural area was that of access, transport and connectivity.
- Members commented that the forthcoming East West rail links would be beneficial to the rural economy but could be further enhanced through better infrastructure, cycle paths and bus services.
- The statistics appertaining to the number of businesses, combined with the numbers of people working from home ought to be more widely publicised as a success story.
- Members commented that fuel costs, being higher in Buckinghamshire than some surrounding districts, were an unacceptable burden to the economy.
- Broadband coverage would help many of the community but greater benefit would be gained by business if the introduction of high speed broadband (4G) was accelerated.
- The content of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP) was in the process of being scrutinised by the Environment and Living Scrutiny Committee and that Committee should be asked to examine the constraints currently enforced on the conversion of buildings for Bed and Breakfast/Guest Houses/Self Catering and

encourage a more creative approach to planning and flexibility over changes of use.

- The Portas review for the regeneration of High Streets could also apply to Villages and this should be considered as part of the report coming to this Committee on 11 December 2013 entitled “Update on Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership and Management of the Town Centre plus update on usage and plans for the Markets”
- The LEADER funded case studies in the report were well received by Members that commented on the benefits of continuously tracking some of them and reporting regular updates on their progress.
- Members commented that the criteria for the giving of grants should be revisited with more emphasis placed on future economic benefits. The success of Winslow Farmers Market, set up with a modest grant, was cited as an example of investment that had unlocked considerable economic benefits to the wider Town economy.

Following further discussion it was –

RESOLVED –

1. That the Committee notes the report
2. That the comments and observations of Members be taken into account and acted upon as work on this topic develops.
3. That a further report on the whole economy of the Vale be brought to the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee in twelve months time.

5. LOCAL ECONOMY PARTNERSHIPS (LEPS) UPDATE

A report was presented that provided Members with an update on the progress and future of Local Enterprise Partnerships which also highlighted some of the issues and uncertainties that existed through the increasing powers and changing nature of the LEPs.

The Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the progress and achievements of LEPs so far, from which AVDC has and continues to benefit and to understand and comment on some of the issues highlighted in the report which may need closer examination and review in the future.

Members’ heard that, following the abolition of the RDAs (Regional Development Agencies), the coalition Government were keen to have some form of economic body which operated at the sub-national level between central government and local authorities, in line with the ‘localism’ agenda.

In June 2010, areas were invited to bid to form Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), whose broad aims were set out in the Local Growth White Paper in October 2010.

It was intended that LEPs should demonstrate clear leadership in local areas, setting out local economic priorities and needs which reflected the 'functional economic areas' to stimulate private sector growth and job creation. In essence, the LEPs were tasked with identifying and dealing with real, on the ground practical issues, causing large scale frustration to businesses.

It had been widely recognised that economic development could only sensibly be done on a scale greater than most individual local authorities, namely across a 'functional economic area', defined in part by 'travel to work area', where there was a reciprocal flow of people crossing boundaries on their way to work, and where housing, infrastructure, skills and jobs markets were interconnected.

Essentially, at the outset, the role of the LEPs was to enable Local Authorities and business representatives collectively to:

- Shape, inform and be informed by the real needs of business;
- Develop private-sector led commercial business cases in response to national funding opportunities;
- Provide a mechanism for businesses and local authorities to lobby for an appropriate share of national resources;
- To harness the collective experience and insight of business and local authorities to focus priorities;
- To provide sustained and joined-up lobbying for business critical infrastructure (e.g. East/West Rail)
- To bring together views on how best to use funding proposals to support jobs, employment growth, skills and training

In March 2011, AVDC joined the South East Midlands LEP, as Aylesbury Vale was part of the natural 'functional economic area' of SEMLEP. SEMLEP itself, was an evolution and extension of an existing close working partnership with Local Authorities, which had previously been known as Milton Keynes South Midlands (MKSM), and had also co-operated in working towards a concept of the 'Oxford to Cambridge' arc.

After the first wave of LEPs had been approved, it was clear that certain parts of the country were not represented by a LEP, which included Wycombe, the Chilterns and South Buckinghamshire, who had been having discussions with the Thames Valley LEPs. AVDC was approached by the remainder of the County to agree to its involvement in the establishment of another Buckinghamshire wide LEP. As a result, BTVLEP was formalised and approved in January 2012, accompanied by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) setting out how the overlapping arrangement would need to work.

AVDC is one of a number of local authorities that had an overlapping LEP arrangement, as its natural economic geography fits with both SEMLEP and BTVLEP, where it shares common 'travel to work areas' and shared workforce, housing, skills and infrastructure issues.

AVDC has had a seat on both of the LEP Boards, which has been helpful in being in a strong position to influence and ensure there is LEP impact in the Vale and its economic growth, benefitting AVDC's communities.

A transformation in how LEPs were perceived occurred in October 2012, following the publication by Lord Heseltine of *"No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth - a new partnership for growth"*. This report consisted represented a comprehensive economic plan to improve the UK's ability to create wealth and consisted of a series of 89 recommendations to Government.

The main thrust of these recommendations revolved around the potential for greater devolution of powers and funding to local areas (LEPs) by arguing for a major rebalancing of responsibilities for economic development between central and local government and between government and the private sector.

It represented a series of measures to unleash the potential of local Leaders, businesses and the economy at the local level.

The Government's initial response was positive and began to set the direction for the devolution of central departmental government spend to local areas. In short, the remit and importance of the LEPs now began to take on greater significance. The key recommendations adopted were as follows:

- empowering LEPs to assume responsibility for the devolution of some central government departmental spending into a LEP controlled single funding pot, called the Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF), with effect from April 2015
- allocating capacity funding of £250k to each LEP for 2012-2014 to enable them to develop the strategic economic growth plan for the area to bid for devolved funding
- agreeing to devolve a greater proportion of cross departmental growth-related funding from 2015, with a commitment to maintain similar levels each year until 2020
- aligning the EU common strategic framework plan priorities 2014-2020 and funding with LEP growth plans
- giving LEPs a new role in setting skills strategies, especially around employer led demand
- providing an additional £350m for Regional Growth Funding (RGF) bids
- enabling Local Authorities to come together in different ways to form Combined Authorities or other different governance models to allow for greater co-operation across LEP areas

The scale of intent and funding proved to be a disappointment when the Government responded in the March budget 2013, in announcing only a £2bn single pot of growth funding for 2015, much smaller than the £59bn Heseltine had wanted over 5 years. The pot into which LEPs could bid for 2015 was £2bn and included a proposal to top slice the New Homes Bonus (NHB) nationally by £400m.

In return for this funding, LEPs would have to clearly demonstrate how they would make their area the best place to do business and show the clear difference they would make, as well as demonstrate how they could work across boundaries on areas such as transport, inward investment and EU programmes etc.

In addition, EU funding allocated for the period 2014- 2020 had been announced as:

- SEMLEP circa £88m
- BTVLEP circa £17m

AVDC's current position is that it would continue to work with partners with whom it had a proven track record of collaboration in a naturally occurring 'functional economic area' and with whom it had and continued to benefit. Many of the 39 LEPs had Local Authorities that were in two or more LEP areas, precisely because they recognised that their long term interests were served by what happens in both LEPs and that they are able to influence what happened at the 'top table'.

Members were further advised that some were suggesting that 39 LEPs was still too many and there may be a need for further slimming down and re-configuration of LEPs under a new Government. There was no immediate pressure or need for AVDC to decide at this point as to whether it should ultimately be in one LEP or two.

The new Leader of the Council, Councillor Neil Blake, addressed the Committee to confirm AVDC's position and the steps that he was taking to bring himself and AVDC up to speed with all background and relevant new information so that the Council would be in possession of all the facts should a decision relating to leaving one of the LEPs ultimately need to be made.

Members were generally supportive of the direction of the work being carried. However, there were a number of issues concerning which Members expressed a view on or commented generally, including the following:-

- Members expressed their dismay regarding the £2bn total funding available to the LEPs when the Government had previously indicated that £59bn would be allocated and that this also included a proposal to "top slice" the New Homes Bonus nationally by £400m and Local Authority Transport by £819m.
- The issue of whether AVDC should continue with two LEPs should only be debated by Full Council, once all the facts were known, and only when AVDC was either forced to make a decision or wanted to make a decision that was in the best interests of the Vale.
- Members expressed their disappointment regarding funding that had been missed due to schemes not meeting the strict criteria.
- Questions were asked whether Silverstone and the surrounding economy could survive if the F1 race happened to be moved to another circuit.

Following further discussion it was –

RESOLVED –

1. That the Committee notes the report
2. That the comments and observations of Members be taken into account and acted upon as work on this topic developed.

6. ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2013 - 2014

A Work Programme for the period to end March 2015 was presented for Members approval and for Members to suggest new topics for inclusion. Following a short discussion it was

RESOLVED –

That the Work Programme as presented be approved with the following additions:-

1. The Update report on Aylesbury Town Centre for 11 December 2013 to include reference to the Mary Portas review and how its findings might be linked to Aylesbury Vale's villages.
2. A Broadband Update report to be inserted for the 17 March 2014 meeting.
3. Insert a report on "Inward Investment in the Vale – Steps Being Taken To Deliver Employment on Sites Already Planned" for a meeting date to be agreed.

**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.

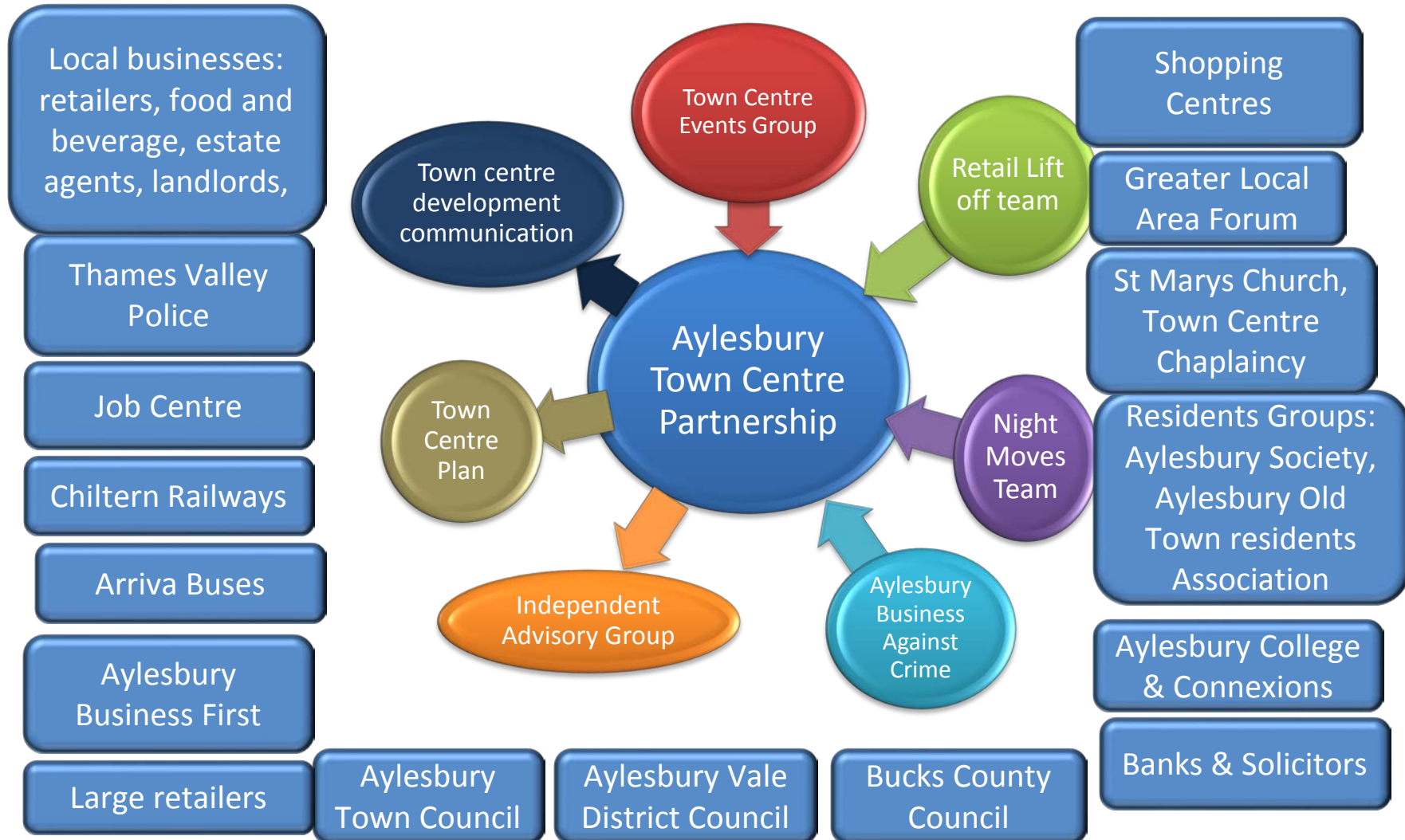
4 Resource implications

- 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 Academy winner and founder of Raw Talent

“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”.



ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME 2013 - 2014

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
4/2/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Economic Development Strategy refresh and progress update including information on grants and business start-up help	22/1/2013	Committee	To allow scrutiny to comment on the strategy refresh and Action Plan (Mark Wathen)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
4/2/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Skills provision – scoping report	22/1/2013	Committee	To set the scene leading to a review of skills provision at the meeting of 25/3/2013 (Mark Wathen)	For recommendations to be made regarding specific skills provision that satisfy the needs of the Vale	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
25/3/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Skills provision – Aylesbury Business Needs - update on latest findings and to hear from skills providers and users.	12/3/2013	Committee	To review the skill set requirements of Aylesbury Vale and how these skills would be provided (Mark Wathen)	For recommendations to be made regarding specific skills provision that satisfy the needs of the Vale	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
25/3/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Broadband delivery. Include input from BRAG	12/3/2013	Committee	To review an update of Broadband delivery. (Mark Wathen)	To make suggestions on any further action to be pursued.	Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
4/6/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Aylesbury Vale Estates update	21/5/2013	Committee	To monitor the performance of the joint commercial property partnership (Jon McGinty)	1. Monitor performance 2. To make recommendation to the Cabinet Member, as appropriate	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
4/6/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Refresh and update of Olympic legacy programme	21/5/2013	Committee	To update and allow scrutiny to comment on the programme (Ian Barham)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Leisure
4/6/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Skills Provision – round up following the meeting of 25/3/2013	21/5/2013	Committee	To update and allow scrutiny to comment (Mark Wathen)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
26/6/2013 Lead Officer Teresa Lane	To review the draft Improvement Plan for Aylesbury Town Centre	12/6/2013	Committee	To allow scrutiny to comment (Teresa Lane)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	The Leader of the Council

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
3/9/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Skills Provision – to report on the findings of the Task and Finish Group following the meeting of 4/6/2013	20/8/2013	Committee	To discuss the presentation by BCC (Cllr Miss Lewis)	To make suggestions on further action that could be recommended to BCC	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
3/9/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Aylesbury Vale Estates Business Plan update	20/8/2013	Committee	To monitor the performance of the joint commercial property partnership (Jon McGinty or Maria Memoli)	3. Monitor performance 4. To make recommendation to the Cabinet Member, as appropriate	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
					5.	

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
28/10/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Skills update report following working group meeting on 23/9/13	15/10/2013	Committee		To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member/Officers	Cabinet Members for Economic Development and Strategic Planning
28/10/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Rural Economy, look at implications of planning rules, impact on the economy, diversification uses and needs	15/10/2013	Committee	To review whether AVDC is doing all it can to promote and give help to expansion of the rural economy. (Mark Wathen/John Byrne)	To make suggestions on any further action to be pursued.	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
28/10/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Update on LEPs	15/10/2013	Committee		To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
<p>11/12/2013 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth</p>	<p>Update on Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership and Management of the Town Centre. Update on usage and plans for the Markets. How the findings of the Mary Portas review might be linked to Aylesbury Vale's villages.</p>	<p>26/11/2013</p>	<p>Committee</p>	<p>To look at how Aylesbury Town Centre is performing (Diana Fawcett & Teresa Lane)</p>	<p>To make suggestions on any further action that they would like to see pursued.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities</p>

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
29/1/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Review of previous 12 month's scrutiny items	14/1/2014	Officers	To revisit the previous 12 month's items and assess whether the expected outcomes have materialised (Derek Willmer)	To further develop the effectiveness of Scrutiny	All Cabinet
29/1/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Major Employment Sites, including an update on Silverstone growth	14/1/2014	Committee	To look at designated sites and how to get them up and running and the planned growth of Silverstone (John Byrne)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member/Officers	Cabinet Members for Economic Development and Strategic Planning
29/1/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Aylesbury Vale Visitor Economy Action Plan	14/1/2014	Committee	To allow scrutiny to comment on the strategy refresh and Action Plan (Phil Black)	To make recommendations to the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
17/3/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Update on Broadband provision for Aylesbury Vale	4/3/2014	Committee	To update and allow scrutiny to comment (Mark Wathen)	To make suggestions on any further action to be pursued.	Cabinet Member for Economic Development
17/3/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Inward Investment in the Vale – Steps being taken to deliver employment on sites already planned.	4/3/2014	Committee	To update and allow scrutiny to comment (Mark Wathen)	To make suggestions on any further action to be pursued.	Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
3/6/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth		20/5/2014				

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
3/9/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	No items at present	19/8/2014				

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
21/10/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	No items at present	7/10/2014				

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
8/12/2014 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	Budget review	25/11/2014	Committee	To look at 2015/16 budget proposals within the Committee's remit (Andrew Small)	To make recommendations to Cabinet	Cabinet Member for Resources

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
21/1/2015 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	No items at present	6/1/2015				

Date of meeting	Item	Reports due	Requested by	Purpose of Review (Responsible Officer / Member)	Expected Outcome	Relevant Cabinet Member
17/3/2015 Lead Officer Tracey Aldworth	No items at present	3/3/2015				