

Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee

5 DECEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Councillor P Strachan (Chairman); Councillors B Adams, C Branston (Vice-Chairman), A Christensen, M Hawke, T Hunter-Watts, C Poll, J Ward, M Collins (In place of P Irwin), K Hewson (In place of A Southam) and D Town (In place of W Whyte)

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors C Adams

APOLOGIES: Councillors P Irwin, A Southam, W Whyte

1. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

Cllr M Collins substituted for Cllr P Irwin
Cllr K Hewson substituted for Cllr A Southam
Cllr D Town substituted for Cllr W Whyte

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED –

That Cllr C Branston be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Council year.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2016 be approved as a correct record.

4. AYLESBURY TOWN CENTRE PLAN

Members were provided with a report to inform them of the progress on the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan published in April 2014, and explain how the plan was being updated.

The 2014 Aylesbury Town Centre Plan was developed between Aylesbury Vale District Council, Aylesbury Town Council and Bucks County Council supported by a range of partners from the public and private sector. It showed the shared vision and commitment of the partners whose aim was to continue improving the town centre, the vision was that Aylesbury:

- Was a high profile, sub-regional centre for entertainment and the arts.
- Was a distinctive, attractive modern market town.
- Provided a quality, day and evening environment that brought together people of all ages and communities.

Although the Town Centre Plan was not a binding document in terms of planning policy, it had been used as a reference point on both planning applications and helped to promote the town centre with new investors and operators. Opportunity was taken to make certain that policies in the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) reflected the ethos of the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan ensuring that the main principles and visions had been included in the VALP.

AVDC proposed to publish an update on the progress of the Town Centre Plan in January 2017 with a programme of communication both printed and online. The town centre steering group had met and developed several guiding principles and thirteen additional items were to be included in the updated plan.

A number of large and small successes had been made in a number of areas as outlined in agenda item 6, section 3.14. Members were particularly interested in whether the public space protection order (PSPO) in Kingsbury was helping curb the parking situation and how effective it had been. Members were informed that it appeared to be successful but had no definitive answer at this stage; however the Members would be updated in the near future.

Members also enquired as to when more restaurants would be moving into the Waterside North area. They were notified that the hoardings would be erected in the middle of January and were confident that four possibly five new restaurants would be taking up residence, one in particular would be an independent restaurateur.

The plan update also included some actions suggested by town centre stakeholders which were considered by the Aylesbury Town Centre Steering Group. These actions were found to support the guiding principles as outlined in Agenda Item 6, section 3.15. Members asked about the use of flags on lampposts as an effective way of advertising town centre events. Members were informed that it had been looked into but was a partnership with BCC and a very expensive thing to do, however they would revisit it again.

Members were concerned about how temporary the change of lease was for the area underneath the University. The Members were reassured that the owners, UCAV did have someone interested in letting the space and it would not compromise its future use as a restaurant area.

Members asked about the use of the passageway at the side of the Green Man public house in Market Square, and the raising of money for the David Bowie statue. They were worried that the Passageway was a small dead end that would easily be missed by people. Members were assured that a feasibility study would be carried out regarding the passageway and other music based ideas. No funding was to be issued for this venture and restrictions and conditions were to be put in place for those ideas to happen.

Members asked about using benchmarking to articulate the town centre vision, the Members were told that this could be taken to the steering group to be looked at.

It was reinforced that although AVDC remained the lead for the Town Centre Plan it was a partnership and so could not be exclusively approved by Aylesbury Vale District Council. Hence the recommendation was to note the progress and proposals for the plan.

Varying sources of finance had been used to progress some of the actions, those that could not be met needed to be identified with a business plan so that further funding could be obtained.

Resolved –

That the progress be noted on the actions included in the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan and carry forward the prioritised actions into the updated plan to be published in January 2017.

5. AVE BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18

Members were asked to consider the confidential draft Business Plan prepared by Aylesbury Vale Estates LLP (AVE) for the financial year 2017/2018 and pass their comments to Cabinet.

AVDC and the Akeman Partnership LLP (Akeman) set up AVE as a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP) in October 2009. This was created to manage, improve and develop AVDC's commercial property portfolio. It was governed by a formal Members' Agreement and managed by a Partnership Board which held meetings regularly to review the Business Plan.

AVE was required to prepare a new Business Plan before the end of their accounting year to be circulated to AVDC and Akeman for the approval to be agreed within 90 working days. The Business Plan needed to determine AVE's objectives both annually and in the long term as presented in Agenda Item 7 section 3.4.

Some of the key issues of the Business Plan were outlined as in Agenda Item 7 section 3.9.

Members spent considerable time questioning the representatives of AVE over the content of the Business Plan and its performance to date. They were specifically concerned that reinvestment seemed to be slow and came up year after year; they were also worried over sales not being realised, given their importance within the Business Plan presented to the Scrutiny Committee. Concerns were also expressed over the loss on rental income.

In response to a specific question the AVE representatives indicated that the relation between the asset management fee and valuation was linked.

Concerns were put forward that the business plan was perhaps too reliant on a specific future development.

AVE confirmed that they had enough funds, but it depended on what happened as to how much could be reinvested, they stated that if one of the transactions did not occur it would not have an immediate effect.

Members noted the responses, but given the importance of the AVE's financial performance to the Council, they asked for a quarterly financial projection update to be provided for inclusion in the Council's Quarterly Digest so that they had visibility on actual performance.

Resolved –

That the committee wished to put forward their comments on the draft Business plans for consideration by Cabinet.

6. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Paragraph indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

7. AVE BUSINESS PLAN 2017/18