

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To give the committee, supported by a presentation, an overview of the work of the Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership over the last sixteen months and to highlight key elements for delivery for the next twelve months.
- 1.2 To give the committee an overview of the changing face of retail in the UK and its' impact on Aylesbury town centre.

**2 Recommendations**

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| 2.1 | Members note from the presentation the work of the Partnership and plans for the next twelve months including the impact on the town centre of the shrinking retail market. |
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**3 Supporting information****Role of the Town Centre Partnership**

- 3.1 The Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership (ATCP) is a thriving organisation which supports the town centre business community and helps improve and promote the town to encourage more footfall and investment.
- 3.2 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
- 3.3 The Partnership business plan is closely aligned to (but not replaced by) the Aylesbury Town Centre Improvement Plan. This is the overarching plan which sets out the:
  - The Vision for the town centre
  - The challenges the town is facing Guiding principles for future development
  - Actions for the different areas of the town centre and across the town centre
- 3.4 These elements of the Improvement Plan are included in the Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the Town Centre Manager is on the Board for the Garden Town to ensure that any appropriate emerging projects are fed in to both the Partnership business plan and the Aylesbury Town Centre Improvement Plan.
- 3.5 The Partnership is currently Chaired by the Managing Director of Mix 96. Cllr Julie Ward and Cllr Barbara Russel are the AVDC member representatives on the Partnership.
- 3.6 Below is an overview of the work of the Partnership under the five key headings of the business plan. These will be expanded on during the presentation at the meeting. (A separate report on the progress of delivering the other actions in Town Centre Improvement Plan will be provided to a

future committee - date to be agreed.

### **3.7 i Partnership and Communications**

- 3.8 The Partnership interacts with a wide range of local groups and organisations. The size and breadth of the membership continues to expand and now stands at over 110. Most towns of our size have membership around 20/30. 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' Society, local Churches and transport providers.
- 3.9 Members can chose from three levels of membership (£3,000, £300 and £30).
- 3.10 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, including weekly and monthly updates as well as quarterly meetings.
- 3.11 All members are welcome to attend the quarterly 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 and it is well attended.
- 3.12 One of the aims of the Partnership is to facilitate (and sometimes broker) discussions with different council services e.g. planning, licensing, waste disposal, parking, transport and other organisations e.g. letting agents.
- 3.13 In 2017, all members of the Partnership have continued to benefit from targeted updates about theatre shows, events and activity in the town. This is so that they can plan and maximise their opportunity to attract pre and post theatre diners and get involved in the town centre events.

### **ii A clean and attractive town**

- 3.14 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:
- cleaning of seating
  - identifying and arranging the removal of rubbish from grot spots
  - removal of posters, illegal notices
  - repainting street furniture
  - encouraging outside street trading
  - managing and regulating buskers and charity collectors
  - working with AVDC on Christmas lights look and location
  - coordinating the snow clearance

### **iii A safe place**

- 3.15 In 2011, Aylesbury was the first of only 25 places to secure 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. We have been

successful in renewing the Purple Flag each year and the current renewal is now in process. In 2017 the Night Time Moves Group was reformed. The purpose of the Group is to:

- produce and distribute Night Moves guide
- co-ordinate and identify ways of partnership working
- promote the evening economy
- identify issues and develop strategies to help address these
- focus on Purple Flag renewal

- 3.16 The Group is Chaired by the Town Centre Manager and membership of the Group includes the Aylesbury Town Council, the Taxi Association, Thames Valley Police, 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 makes an important contribution to the Purple Flag assessment which is just taking place.
- 3.17 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 supporting the work of the police and reducing crime in the town.
- 3.18 The Town Centre Manager plays a key role in improving the upper High Street through the enforcement of the pedestrianisation scheme and is currently working with Bucks CC to introduce bollards in to Market Square
- 3.19 Market Square and Kingsbury have suffered with illegal parking on the paving/cobbles and the Town Centre Manager has worked with Bucks CC to pass over parking enforcement for these areas with the legals being processed now.

#### **iv Marketing and Promoting the town**

- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 In excess of 450 events are held in the town centre and they are planned and coordinated through one of the Partnership sub-groups, currently Chaired by the Town Centre Manager. Any town centre organisation that hosts events is invited to join the group. The group comprises of AVDC Community Fulfilment, 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 large scale events such as Christmas light switch on (13,000 people), Santa Sunday (12,000), Christmas gift fair (9,000) to smaller events such as Wear it Pink.
- 3.22 The town centre team are currently extending the programme to include a canal festival in September and gin and jazz event in August. They are an active event producer at the WhizzFizzFest and are also responsible for business engagement in the event. The overall event 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.

- 3.23 In 2017, 40,000 biannual Live Guides were produced and distributed across the town and to Vale villages. This is a tourism guide providing information on transport, events, things to do, shopping and places to eat.
- 3.24 A significant element of the AVDC funding contributes towards the events programme and we have been moving away from free events and we now charge the public for events or income is raised from letting space at the events.
- 3.25 The Town Centre Manager has 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**

- 3.26 The importance of retaining and attracting independent town centre businesses is appreciated by all stakeholders including the multiple retailers.
- 3.27 The Town Centre Manager increased 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 events
  - quarterly network meetings
  - Discounted theatre tickets
  - 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
- 3.28 We are introducing events this year to further support the independents; these include an Easter egg trail and Halloween trail taking visitors in to the business premises.

#### **The Town Centre Team**

- 3.29 Following the business review in 2016/2017, approval was given for the capacity of the Town Centre team to be increased to enable it to deliver an increasingly demanding work programme. The previously part-time Town Centre Manager and Events and Promotion Officer's hours were increased to full-time and a new part-time administrative officer and business development officer for the markets were introduced. These changes are now in place with the exception of the business development officer post which is still vacant.
- 3.30 The role of the team is to deliver the business plan on behalf of and working with the Partnership members.

#### **Funding of the Partnership**

- 3.29 The work of the ATCP is funded via a number of sources – AVDC, membership of the Partnership, lettings income from public space and events and contributions in kind. The total working budget of the Partnership is

£185,600 which is offset by £46,500 income. AVDC pays the remaining balance.

#### **4 Markets**

- 4.1 The management of the Aylesbury markets and the Winslow general market is undertaken by the Town Centre Manager with the support of a part-time Markets' Manager. The key tasks focus around managing the trader relationship, improving the customer experience and generating income from the markets to at least break even.
- 4.2 The market expenditure is £108,000 with income at £99,700. Work has been undertaken with business rates to reduce the liability and the team continues to work hard at attracting and retaining market traders, with initiatives and collaborative working.
- 4.3 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 and opportunities which are identified through a business plan and are taking affect.
- 4.4 Since the town centre team took over their initial focus was reviewing and improving the basic operation of the markets both in Aylesbury and Winslow. New terms and conditions were developed, new stalls purchased with an ongoing maintenance programme, new processes put in place including cash less rent collection, social media sites and the communication between traders and AVDC market staff enhanced and improved. Several markets have been developed with the introduction of two new markets – the Vintage and Craft bazaar and the weekly Foodie Friday.
- 4.5 The promotion of the markets continues to be an important part of the business plans for both markets. Love your market is celebrated and market dates promoted in publications. The town centre team has won three national awards for the work they are undertaking to improve the markets.
- 4.6 Whilst there is undoubtedly a long way to go, the work so far is paying off and during the summer there is no capacity on the Aylesbury Foodie Friday market and the number of traders in Winslow has dramatically increased.

#### **5. Challenges facing the town centre**

- 5.1 The challenges facing the town centre are set out in Appendix 1 which is the extract from the VALP. Whilst most of the challenges have remained constant, in recent years, the shrinking demand for retail space has become more evident and the Town Centre Manager will provide more information in her presentation in the impact this is having on the town centre and action being taken to help address it.

#### **6. Resource implications**

The presentation will summarise how the funds for the Partnership are used. No increase in AVDC funding is requested.

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Background Documents

Aylesbury Town Centre Improvement Plan  
Aylesbury Town Centre Partnership Business Plan  
Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan