

# **Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee**

**23 MAY 2018**

**PRESENT:** Councillors C Branston (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), B Adams, J Bloom, M Hawkett, T Hunter-Watts, P Irwin, C Poll, W Raja, M Rand (In place of P Strachan) and W Whyte

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor M Collins

## **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Strachan be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

## **2. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Branston be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

## **3. MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the minutes from the meeting on 13 March 2018 be approved as a correct record.

## **4. AYLESBURY VALE ESTATES - REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE 2017/2018 BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee received a report which reviewed the performance of Aylesbury Vale Estates compared to the 2017/18 Business Plan and were asked to consider recommendations to Cabinet. The item was attended by Graham Cole, Philip Ingman and Ed Inder from Akeman Asset Management. AVDC and the Akeman Partnership LLP 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.

There were a number of pivotal points that had affected the portfolio during 2017/18. As expected, Cinram had gone into administration but new tenants for the sites had since been found. Negotiations were on going for residential development at Gateway Phase 2 and progress was being made in discussions between Lidl, AVDC and BCC Highways at the Askeys site. Sales made included land at Adam's Close/Western Avenue, Buckingham, and the Town Hall Arches. Despite interest from other locations, Boots had signed a new ten year lease at Hale Leys. The retail market in the town centre was still a challenge but the foot fall through Hale Leys amounted to 4.6 million per annum. There had been successes with tenant demand in industrial units as there was a low vacancy rate.

Members sought more information from the AVE representatives on a variety of topics which included:-

- i. Clarification on figures provided in the Financial Summary.

- ii. Plans for reinvestment following the sale of sites in the portfolio.
- iii. An understanding of agreements for charitable organisations such as Men in Sheds and the Boxing Club. The Committee was advised these had always been short term agreements until there was commercial demand for the units. AVE recognised the positive impact and benefit of these organisations but did need to consider the market income potential. AVE had offered discounted rents but the organisations were still not able to pay.
- iv. Further detail on all the pivotal points during 2017/18 and realisation timescales in future.
- v. Alternative plans should any current negotiations fall through.
- vi. Security and monitoring arrangements at sites across the portfolio and contingency for swift enforcement action.

After the presentation from AVE representatives, the Committee saw merit in making the following comments to Cabinet:

- Concerns over a lack of timescales and a lack of urgency in AVE's actions.
- Concern that there was not a contingency plan for the sale or development of sites if the first plan failed.
- Suggest facilitating and promoting pop-up stores in Hale Leys to encourage market traders and small businesses. This would offer businesses experience and create a community feel in Hale Leys.
- Cabinet Member to investigate any complaints raised by AVE in the planning service as per usual protocol.
- The refurbishment work carried out at Rabans Lane be commended.

RESOLVED –

That representatives from AVE be thanked for their attendance and the Committee's comments be referred to Cabinet.

*Note:*

*Councillor Whyte declared a personal interest in the above item as one of the Council's representatives on the AVE Board. Councillor Whyte responded to questions but was not in attendance when the Committee considered comments to Cabinet.*

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME**

The upcoming work programme for the rest of the year was reported to Committee. Members reiterated that they wanted an item relating to market town support and possibly inviting John Harvey from Buckingham to attend. The Committee also expressed an interest in a broadband update coming to committee, perhaps with an update from Connected Counties.

RESOLVED –

That the current work programme be noted.

## **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. AYLESBURY VALE ESTATES - REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE 2017/2018 BUSINESS PLAN**

Consideration was given to the confidential information in relation to discussions on AVE's performance review for 2017/18.