

Economy and Business Development Scrutiny Committee

11 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillor C Branston (Chairman); Councillors B Adams, J Bloom, B Foster, M Hawkett, S Jenkins, C Poll, W Raja and W Whyte (Vice-Chairman)

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors P Irwin, A Macpherson and J Ward

APOLOGIES: Councillors B Chapple OBE and T Hunter-Watts

1. TEMPORARY AND PERMANENT CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

The Committee was informed that Councillors B Chapple and Foster would be permanent members on the Committee.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED –

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Whyte be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2018 be approved as a correct record.

5. DRAFT PARKING STRATEGY FOR AYLESBURY TOWN CENTRE

The council needed to review parking strategies for its town centres to take account of the planned growth within Aylesbury Vale, the challenges facing town centres and emerging new technologies. Investigations into carrying out parking studies began in 2017 in Aylesbury, Buckingham, Winslow and Wendover, and the outcomes would inform AVDC's investment management decisions relating to parking. The outcomes would also provide supporting information for the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.

The first study had been completed for Aylesbury. The brief for the work had been developed in consultation with Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Town Council to ensure all town centre related parking issues were within the scope. The study's objective was to investigate parking provision in the town centre and the surrounding area, and how to work with key stakeholders to deliver an integrated solution. Importantly, the focus was on parking in Aylesbury not just car parks that AVDC owned. The scope of the work included:

- understanding the current service and operational arrangements
- reviewing and appraising current parking provision, infrastructure and capacity identifying and evaluating constraints and issues
- providing advice on potential solutions to address the constraints and issues

- analysing future demand
- recommend the optimum parking provision for the town between 2018 –2033 taking into account emerging trends and technologies

ARUPS had been selected to deliver the Aylesbury brief following a robust procurement process. To produce the draft strategy, ARUPS had reviewed:

- related national, regional and local policy and guidance e.g. the National Planning Policy Framework, The Aylesbury Transport Plan, the draft Vale of Aylesbury Plan, the BTVLEP Strategic Economic Plan and the Aylesbury Town Centre Plan
- on-site visits
- best practice and emerging trends and technologies
- condition surveys
- customer feedback
- available data on usage

Based on these, six objectives were identified to form the strategy framework which were as follows:

1. Responsive to the needs of different groups and customers
2. Positively contributes to the local economy and regeneration
3. Commercially sustainable & efficient parking management model
4. Enhances the local environment
5. Integrates effectively with wider policy and plans
6. Resilience and anticipation of future change

The report contained a summary of recommendations that would be used to develop a delivery plan for the strategy. Recommendations were directly linked to the objectives and priorities in the strategy to ensure a clear link between activities and desired outcomes for Aylesbury. The recommendations had been categorised into two phases with phase one representing those which AVDC would like to deliver first. They were split into three themes: Strategic Management, Operational Management, and Initiatives and Innovation. The Committee were asked to consider the recommendations and also suggest which Phase recommendations SM11 – SM16 should fall into.

Members sought further information from officers and the Cabinet Member and were advised that:-

- i. Security concerns in car parks, such as lighting and access, were understandable and signage was available showing emergency contact details.
- ii. At present, around six or seven coaches arrived for pantomime performance at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre. A park and ride offer for the theatre would not be an attractive enough offer at present. Consideration of using The Gateway car park could be used to provide a park and ride site but the extra costs for security in keeping the car park open out of office hours would need to be covered.
- iii. There was merit in investigating the possible of offering park and ride for one off major events such as the Christmas Light Switch-on.
- iv. Space in the town centre for coach parks would be too costly, however the current collection and drop-off arrangement was effective
- v. Offering a variety of car park payment methods was important so that customers could select a choice that suited their preference
- vi. Discounted parking or free parking for electric vehicles could be considered under an innovation scheme
- vii. Encouraging use of bicycles through accessible bicycle parking would be considered as long as these were safe and did not affect the aesthetic of the town centre

- viii. Friarscroft car park was underutilised by commuters due to its 8.30pm closure. This closure time was due to anti-social behaviour. The possibility of adding in security measures to deal with this was recommended in the report.
- ix. The Waterside Festival had helped to promote the canalside area and show how accessible the theatre was to Waterside car park.
- x. Town centre flat developments did not always offer car parking as research by developers had shown this was not always necessary.

The Committee were supportive of the recommendations in the report, notably the review of car park names to be more logical for customers and the estimated £400k investment to upgrade payment equipment and options. Members felt that a stakeholder survey should be carried out in Phase 2 as the results would be more meaningful after improvements were carried out. This would have an impact on the proposed metrics in the report. Recommendations SM15 and SM16 were linked and Members agreed that these should be carried out in Phase 2.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee recommends SM12 – SM14 are delivered in Phase 1 and SM11, SM15 and SM16 are delivered in Phase 2.

Note:

Councillor Whyte declared a personal interest in the above item as one of the Council's representatives on the AVE Board.

6. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS (LEPS) REVIEW

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were set up as locally-derived business led partnerships between the private and public sector to drive forward economic growth across the country. Announced in 2010 and established in 2011 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, LEPs replaced the former Regional Development Agencies as part of Government's ambition to shift power away from central government. Aylesbury Vale was within LEPs: Bucks Thames Valley LEP (BTVLEP) and South East Midlands LEP (SEMLEP). LEPs have responsibility for around £12bn of public funding up to 2021 and were the mechanism for channelling the Local Growth Fund to localities delivering their investment priorities. One of the great strengths of LEPs was their ability to bring together business and civic leaders across local administrative boundaries and provide strategic direction for a functional economic area.

On 24 July 2018, the government had published a document entitled [Strengthened Local Partnerships](#) which outlined a range of leadership, governance, accountability and geography reforms for LEPs. The publication asked LEP chairs and other local stakeholders to come forward with considered proposals by the end of September 2018 on geographies which best reflected real functional economic areas, removed overlaps and, where appropriate, proposed wider changes such as mergers. The publication asked for comments:

- on revised geographies which best reflected 'real' functional economic areas.
- on the most appropriate geographical levels to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making and delivery going forward.
- to remove overlaps and where appropriate, proposing wider changes such as mergers.

Government now considered that retaining overlaps dilutes accountability and responsibility for setting strategies for place and allocating funding. Therefore it was

seeking transparent and consistent arrangements to ensure that all businesses and communities are represented by one Local Enterprise Partnership and were able to see a single vision and a compelling plan for their area. This would ensure that each LEP was in the best position to identify and align local interventions that maximise their economic impact and to meet the Government's increased ambition for the activity and responsibility of the LEPs which may include the allocation of money from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (post-Brexit pot comprising of previous EU structural funds). A simple unwinding of the 2011/12 arrangement would place the AVDC singularly in SEMLEP according to objective economic geography criteria.

The Committee received a report which detailed a number of possible arrangements for Aylesbury Vale and for future LEP arrangements. These included:-

- Just be a member of BTVLEP.
- Just be a member of SEMLEP.
- Merger of BTVLEP and SEMLEP.
- Merger of BTVLEP and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP).
- Creation of a "Super LEP" – a merger of BTVLEP, SEMLEP and OXLEP.

'No change' was not an option due to the requirement of removing overlapping LEPs and any decision would require additional work. The report contained positives and negatives of each proposal as well as detailed information on the geographic, economic (including population and housing growth, house prices) and other factors (e.g. Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor, impacting on Buckinghamshire). The report asked Members for their views ahead of Cabinet considering the proposal on 12 September 2018.

This item was attended by Richard Harrington (BTVLEP) and Hilary Chipping (SEMLEP) who both addressed the Committee ahead of Member debate. Members then had the opportunity to ask the LEP representatives additional questions which included:

- The relationship between the LEP decision and the Modernising Local Government decision in Buckinghamshire
- Any feedback from businesses on their LEP preference
- How a 'Super LEP' (BTVLEP, SEMLEP and OXLEP) may work and whether it was a realistic prospect
- Whether overlapping LEPs had a negative impact on performance
- How local authorities were represented on LEP Boards

Following this, Members sought further information from officers and were advised that:-

- i. Approaching Milton Keynes to come out of SEMLEP and join BTVLEP had not been considered as it was understood there was no appetite for Milton Keynes to come out its current LEP.
- ii. No discussions had been had with regards to a merger of BTVLEP and OXLEP or BTVLEP, SEMLEP and OXLEP. It was expected that OXLEP would not be interested in merging.

Members felt that this was a difficult decision to make and discussed the rationale that had led to AVDC joining both LEPs. The Committee saw value in the work that had been carried out by both LEPs in Aylesbury Vale and the positive relationship the council had with them. Members appreciated that an overlap created a lack of accountability and that joining one LEP would resolve this. It was felt that a balance needed to be struck between being part of a LEP that was large enough to be relevant and exert influence yet not too large for AVDC to lose its voice and lose local influence and identity. When discussing the merits of surveying businesses for their perspective, it

was considered that responses would not necessarily represent smaller business in the Vale who may not have the time or interest to respond.

The Committee discounted the option of a 'Super LEP' but were unable to draw a firm conclusion on which option to recommend to Cabinet.

RESOLVED –

That the comments and views of the Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration. The Committee also thanked the LEP representatives for their attendance.

Note:

Councillor Branston declared a personal interest in the above item as a former employee of Bucks Business First until 2011.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

The upcoming work programme for the next two meetings were discussed as were items that Members had expressed an interest in coming to Committee in future. Members saw merit in the following being added to the programme:-

- Member Tour of Westcott
- Methods of attracting investment into Aylesbury Vale
- How the council can support small businesses
- Update on Silverstone

RESOLVED –

That the current work programme be noted.