

ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 MARCH 2019

PRESENT: Councillors W Whyte (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), B Adams, J Bloom, B Chapple OBE, B Foster, T Hunter-Watts, S Jenkins, D Lyons, C Poll and W Raja

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors C Adams and S Bowles

APOLOGIES: Councillor C Branston

1. TEMPORARY & PERMANENT CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

The Committee was informed that Councillor Lyons would be a permanent addition to Economy & Business Scrutiny's membership and was welcomed by the Committee.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2018 be approved as a correct record.

3. ENTERPRISE ZONES UPDATE

The Director of the Enterprise Zone, Anthony Sowden, was in attendance and welcomed by the Committee. The intention of the Director's role was to support the Enterprise Zone's Board and act as a lead for responsibilities.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been agreed by AVDC, Buckinghamshire County Council, Bucks and Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnerships (BTVLEP), and the Government which permitted a split of retained rates income from the Enterprise Zone (EZ) sites. The sites were designated in March 2016 with a 25 year lifespan. The intention was to invest in the Enterprise Zone to deliver an integrated set of interventions across the three sites which would improve the attractiveness of the Enterprise Zone as a business location. BTVLEP had also agreed individual MOUs with each site owner and set out the position relating to expected but indicative rates of development, marketing expenses and capital investment. The BTVLEP Board were responsible for the EZ governance and strategic direction. Day-to-day operational functions for the EZs were delegated to the Strategic Board which was made up of representatives from the partners. AVDC was ultimately the Accountable Body for the Enterprise Zone and ensured that appropriate arrangements for the proper use and administration of funding and monitoring of division of rates were in line with the MOU. AVEZ would retain new business rates generated through its lifespan for investment into EZ related infrastructure and other local priorities as agreed by the AVEZ Board. It was anticipated that in its 25 year lifespan, AVEZ could generate business rates retention of circa £130m, deliver up to 345,000m² business floor space and create up to 5,600 jobs.

The Committee was informed that the MOU had required a submission of a Five Year Implementation Plan by March 2017. This Plan outlined the strategic aims of the Enterprise Zone, set out arrangements for delivering those aims and provided a high level summary of proposed activity for each of the three sites. Members were also advised that each Enterprise Zone targeted specific high added-value sectors and their relative supply chains. The sectors were as follows:-

- Silverstone Park: High Performance Technology & Motorsport. New occupiers included David Brown Automotives, Baumot UK, MLL Telecom, Virgin Racing, Delta Motorsports, Mercedes GP, AF Corse, Silverstone Sports Engineering Hub and Lotus. The site was 27 hectares with a total capacity of up to 100,000m² business floor space.
- Westcott Venture Park: Space Propulsion, Satellite Applications, 5G and Unmanned Airborne Vehicles. New occupants included Reaction Engines, Satellite Applications Catapult and Portakabin. The site had a history going back to World War Two and had growing potential to develop into a 'space cluster'.
- Arla / Woodlands: this was comprised of two sites with a focus on Agri-Food and Health.
 - Woodlands was a 61 hectare site with a capacity for up to 102,800m² business floor space as well as 1,100 homes, 60 unit extra care, local centre, hotel and conference centre, sports village, primary school, open space and provision of the Eastern Link Road (South). It was hoped the planning process was nearing completion in the near future and the site would tie in to the Aylesbury Garden Town project.
 - Arla's 19 hectare site (known as Symmetry Park) would have capacity for up to 58,000m² business floor space. Some of the construction was expected to be completed later in 2019.

A timeline of key project milestones to date at each site was then provided to Members which included:

Silverstone

- 11,625m² floor space had been built with a 100% occupation rate.
- £5m Utilities Infrastructure Project was underway.
- Sports Engineering Innovation Centre secured via £2m LGF funding. This would be fully operational in Spring 2019.
- Further reserved matters planning consent for more floor space was being secured with construction anticipated to commence at the end of 2019.

Westcott Venture Park

- Over £10m public sector funding secured to support infrastructure, and space/satellite related initiatives.
- Satellite Applications Catapult 5G Step Out Centre and Business Incubation Centre had opened in Autumn 2018.
- Submission in August 2018 of detailed planning application to improve site access from the A41. This had been a complex process.

Arla / Woodlands

- Promotion of major Woodlands planning application for up to 102,800m² EZ commercial floor space and 1,100 new homes.

Members were then advised of the anticipated next steps for the Enterprise Zone at each location which included:

Silverstone

- Commencement of the delivery of Phase 2 Commercial Development

- Silverstone Sports Innovation Campus which was subject to approval of £15m SEMLEP LGF Bid. The bid itself had a tight deadline. The campus would have sports related research and development facilities including a Velodrome and an Olympic sized swimming pool. Space would also be used for innovation alongside community facilities. For instance, the pool could be used by the local community outside business hours.

Westcott Venture Park

- SAC Innovation Centre (supported by £3.2m BTVLEP and EZ funding).
- 1,200m² business space for small space technology
- Essential infrastructure improvement to enable future investment – A41 roundabout
- Submission of planning application for ‘Move on’ Accommodation

Arla / Woodlands

- Completion of Phase 1 of Symmetry Park (expected October 2019)
- Woodlands: preparation of Eastern Link Road (South) and submission of Reserved Matters Planning Application

Mr Sowden then discussed the current outputs across the EZs compared to the AVEZ five year implementation plan. The figures stood as follows:

	Completion towards 5 year plan
Employment floor space	21%
Jobs created	13%
Businesses attracted to the EZ	34%

This was not an unusual position in the early stages of EZs due to the long lead time to implement major property development projects and the time lag between floor space completion and occupation. Also, it was not always possible to be made aware of some figures, such as job numbers, at certain businesses due to their secretive and competitive industries.

Members sought more information on the Enterprise Zones and were advised that:-

- The planning process for Woodlands and Hampden Fields were linked together due to Highways linkage. Delays to Hampden Fields, for instance through a judicial review, may delay Woodlands.
- The A41 roundabout at Westcott was a priority to the EZ Board and contingency options regarding funding were being considered should the current bid fail.
- The Westcott EZ was situated within a larger Westcott business site and it was not likely that this EZ itself would expand further. The size of this site had been chosen based on government guidance and the need to balance achievability vs future ambition. It was accepted that some of the businesses outside the EZ but within Westcott benefitted from EZ security.
- Current completions along the A41 dual carriageway were not the Arla Symmetry site; this was situated further away from the A41. The next step for this site regarding housing was for Bucks Advantage to promote the site for development but planning consent was needed first. Development itself relied upon the completion of the Southern Link Road in Hampden Fields. It was possible for these homes to be custom built and/or modular which would differentiate the development to others.
- Some of the industries in the EZs were investigating green technologies, such as electric and hybrid vehicles, and exploring the commercial opportunities. Work

undertaken at Silverstone regarding batteries could be classed as world leading. The businesses were also mindful of their environmental impacts. Westcott had solar panels and was 'carbon negative' in that it fed electricity back into the grid.

- Westcott had demand for apprenticeships but found it hard to attract applicants. Links were being developed with the LEPs and also Leicester University to grow the apprenticeship schemes offered over the next two years.
- The Woodlands site was mindful of developing and linking its health related industry with Stoke Mandeville.
- The planning process would play a key role in the five year implementation plan being realised.

Members also noted some of the success stories of businesses operating within the EZs such as David Brown Automotives who had recently exhibited at the Geneva International Motor Show. The Committee also suggested that, where possible, the EZs engaged with their local communities. For instance, Formula E at Silverstone could generate a local fan base that would bring people together. This idea would be taken away for consideration.

RESOLVED –

That the AVEZ update be noted and that Mr Sowden be thanked for his attendance.

Note: Councillor S. Bowles declared a personal interest as a member of the AVEZ Board.

4. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered their future work programme which had been outlined in the agenda. Members commented that a tour of Silverstone would be useful if possible. The Committee was advised that 'wrap-up' reports may be scheduled for early-2020 in preparation for the creation Buckinghamshire unitary authority.

RESOLVED –

That the position regarding the work programme, as discussed at the meeting, be noted.