

AVDC Local Area Forum Briefing Update – March 2011

Key areas included in this update:

- Buckingham Open Day
- Buckingham Marketing Plan
- Final AVDC budget for 2011/2012
- The Vale of Aylesbury Plan
- Elections 5 May 2011

1. Buckingham Open Day

In early February, AVDC held an open day at the Customer Service Centre. Visitors were able to meet councillors and AVDC staff to ask questions about our services and feedback their views. We had between 60-70 visitors who tended to stay on average for half an hour.

Following the success of the first open day, there are plans to hold another one later in the year.

2. Buckingham Marketing Plan

In 2010/2011, AVDC contributed £13,500 towards the development of a brand for Buckingham and marketing plan. Working with the Traders' Association and other partners, this work has been going exceptionally well and plans are being developed for a launch in the next few months.

In 2011/2012, more resources are required - both manpower and money - to help with the launch and support the delivery of the marketing plan. AVDC is contributing a further £10k towards this. A proportion of the money will be used to fund a marketing assistant, Emma Eyles, who will spend one day a week on this work. Emma will largely be based in Buckingham.

3. Budget

Aylesbury Vale District Council has set a zero per cent rise in its council tax for 2011/2012. This means that local taxpayers will not face any increase on the average £2.52 a week they pay for all the services provided by AVDC.

Local authorities that accept the challenge of freezing council tax are eligible for a government grant equivalent to a 2.5 per cent increase in their element of the levy.

The government's grant settlement figures, issued to AVDC last December, were much worse than expected and mean a reduction in government funding of £2.6 million (22 per cent) for the next financial year with a further cut of £1.2 million (13

per cent) the following year. Overall, the council faces an 8.4 per cent reduction in its total resources, the largest of any authority in Buckinghamshire.

Due to the severe financial constraints imposed on all local authorities by the government's austerity measures, some difficult decisions have had to be made. But the council, which faces having to make even tougher decisions for the next three years, has done everything in its power to minimise the impact of the budget on frontline services.

To balance its books for the forthcoming financial year the council has identified around £1.8 million in savings across its services. Key savings include £650,000 made through restructuring some services and changes to the structure of the authority's senior management team and a further £300,000 by making changes to working practices in the refuse and recycling service.

AVDC will also be using £445,000 from the authority's financial reserves to help reduce the budget deficit.

It's anticipated that further savings of £2.6 million will need to be made by 2012/13 alone. The council's priority is to continue to look for further efficiencies and find new ways of generating income.

4. The Vale of Aylesbury Plan

At the last LAF meetings we highlighted the new Vale of Aylesbury Plan (the new planning policy document for the district). In December, we wrote to all parish and town councils to request your opinion of their communities 'feelings' to development and how they would wish to work with AVDC in the future. Around a third of councils have come back and thank you if you are one of them. If you have yet to respond if you could do so as soon as you can or tell us when you can that will help us in getting a 'feel' for the local communities thoughts, and also help us plan our resources.

The Localism Bill was published in December last year, and we have recently issued a newsletter giving an update on the changes to planning that are likely (available on our Vale of Aylesbury Plan web pages). One of the key changes is the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans which means it will be possible (within some limitations) to set the parishes own planning policy. This is a radical shift in the way planning policy is developed, and emphasises the importance of coming back to us on your communities initial reaction. Once you do come back to us, we will be able to work with you and help you move forward with these issues if you wish.

Technical work is continuing on developing the Districts own employment and housing targets, which are also one of the changes to the planning system. The top down regional process will go once the Localism Bill is in place, and we will have to

set our own figures. It's anticipated that this work will continue until around the autumn.

For more information please contact Andy Barton, Forward Plans Manager on 01296

5. Elections 2011

Elections are being held for all 59 District Council seats and for 652 seats on the 85 Parish Councils within the Vale which includes the new parish council for Buckingham Park. In addition, a referendum will be held on the same day on changing the way MPs are elected to the House of Commons – the “alternative vote” system versus the current ‘first past the post’.

The elections will take place on Thursday 5 May 2011 with polling taking place between 7.00am and 10.00pm.

The key dates in the election process are:

Publication of Notice of Election	21 March
Close of nominations	4 April (Noon)
Publication of Statement of Persons nominated	6 April (Noon)
Last day to register to vote or apply for a postal/proxy vote	14 April

Parish clerks have already been asked to consider how awareness of the elections can be raised locally such as articles in newsletters, mention at meetings, word of mouth, or items on websites.

The formal election process is handled by the elections team at AVDC. They will supply the various notices for display on Parish notice boards and also provide clerks with nomination packs, which may be handed to those wishing to stand for election.

It is imperative that candidates complete nomination papers fully and accurately and submit them so that they are received by the deadline. No discretion or latitude exists in law to allow for any extension of time. Early submission is recommended to allow time for a revised set to be completed if there are any errors.

Any publicity material candidates circulate must bear an imprint detailing who has printed, promoted and published the item. Further guidance will be included with nomination packs.