

AVDC update December 2017

Reorganisation of AVDC- Commercial AVDC

Now largely complete

Reduced the workforce by 10%, saving an estimated £2 million per annum

Cost of the exercise estimated at £3 million, payback 1½ years.

Created a workforce adapted to the challenge and with the right behaviours

This transformation has been achieved with the support of the Unions, and delivered what many organisations are clearly interested in emulating and is the most important part of our transformation journey.

Generated a significant proportion of the savings required over next 4 years. Budget continue to be balanced.

National Infrastructure Commission.

We are within a 'Central Area Growth Board', a central finding being that 'a lack of sufficient and suitable housing presents a fundamental risk to the success of the Area'.

AVDC is an active member of the core group and is seen as a key location for housing growth and the expressway. Specific recommendations are due next year, a 'consultation' anticipated.

The route of the expressway is key and may well be closeby. New towns talked of, rumours persist of an HS2 station. With 1M new homes promised across the Oxford/Cambridge corridor it would seem huge numbers are likely to be allocated with North Bucks.

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)

As I hope you will know, the 'VALP' has now moved to public consultation, this runs to Thursday 14 December. In the new year, the plan, along with any comments submitted in the consultation and all the evidence, will be sent to the planning inspector for examination. I believe it vital that this moves to submission before 31st March 2018, any delay may well mean significantly higher housing numbers. Currently AVDC is in a position of successfully defending the 5 year housing land supply argument and this is being upheld at appeals we are defending.

Please do feel free to make comments.

Further information about the VALP and the consultation can be found at

www.aylesburyvalecdc.gov.uk/localplan

Aylesbury Vale Broadband

I am very conscious that it has been a disappointing and very frustrating year for those seeking the connection. This should be balanced against those who are receiving an excellent service, including the local school. Whilst AVB is a private limited company, it is 95% owned by AVDC. I have always fully supported the concept and need of providing faster broadband to our rural communities. Whilst the CEO has resigned, existing customers continue receive a good service with any issues quickly responded to. I continue to offer to facilitate any existing customer problems. Discussions appear to be ongoing for the existing business will be sold, confidentiality agreements naturally in place. Whilst these negotiations continue I feel it in the best interests of the Council and residents not to comment. Full Council (6th December) agreed a motion to undertake a review of AVB to 'commence no later than 1 calendar month from the sale of AVB or by the 31st January 2018, whichever is the sooner. The Audit Committee is tasked with this detailed Audit. The Audit will report no more than 3 months after commencement. The Committee is independent, I am Chairman of this Committee and have played/will play a significant role. Full details of the motion will be published on the AVDC web-site. The full debate can be viewed on line.

Unitary Council-

Rumours persist that a decision is closer. Last month the DCLG were 'minded' to approve the Dorset Unitary proposal. There is now an expectation that Buckinghamshire will be next, perhaps before the year end. It must be hoped and expected that the decision will be evidence based. Interesting to note that the Dorset decision was encouraged by the recognition that it was a "strong & prosperous" area.

Response to Grenfell Tower tragedy

AVDC has reviewed all properties in response to dreadful events in London. The Council is working to ensure a private Landlord in Aylesbury meets their obligations soonest

Aylesbury Garden Town

Application led by AVDC successful in securing this designation and almost £1m of support funding received to develop a longer term master plan. Positive engagement with DCLG officials on future needs of AGT and hope this will see the Housing Infrastructure bids submitted in September approved. This involves no more housing but seeks to secure the infrastructure so desperately needed.

Aylesbury Town

Started The Exchange in Aylesbury bringing 4 new restaurants to the town and 47 flats. Waterside Theatre recently voted as one of Time Out's top 5 provincial theatres alongside Guildford and Bath

Conferences, Visits and Peer Interest

As part of the Commercial AVDC programme a number of conferences are held. a recent example, Digital and Culture was attended by many councils from across the Country

- 18 councils have visited this year
- 49 councils have attended 2017 conferences
- 17 events at which we've attended and presented/exhibited
- Now getting Health customers interested in our transformation changes eg Moorfields Eye Hospital

Silverstone

AVDC and South Northants DC initiated and galvanised a local authority matched funding offer of £9m to secure the Silverstone Heritage Centre.

Contractor due to be announced December, start on site February.

Bringing focus and investment to north Bucks.

Founding member of Silverstone Technology Cluster, now with over 30 new tech company subscribers.

AVDC has made a loan of £4.9m to bring forward important utilities infrastructure to the site. The loan will be repaid out of business rates retention.

AVDC Lottery

Pioneered the community lead Local Authority lottery

Over 30 councils now adopted the template

Generated over £150,000 of funding in 2 years

Planning Performance

This is by far the most frequently raised topic with me. It has recently been audited. I felt you may wish to see the exec summary, below. The full report is available on line if you wish to read it all please look at the last Audit Committee agenda- meeting was 27th November. Under the heading **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT – NOVEMBER 2017** you will see Planning and Enforcement. The report is there.

Planning & Planning Enforcement- Audit November 2017-

This review assessed the design of controls and their effectiveness with regards to planning applications and planning enforcement including adherence to national and local guidance. Based on the testing performed, we found the processes and controls to be operating effectively and have set out some areas of good practice below. Action is required in some areas to further improve the overall planning and enforcement processes.

The report is classified as Medium Risk with key findings summarised as follows:

- There is no local formal monitoring of comments, compliments and complaints and a process needs to be created (Medium)
- Proactive planning enforcement is not taking place (Medium)
- A formal Member/Officer engagement session needs to be developed including input to the creation of the new planning system (Low)
- Improvements to the oversight of the effectiveness of the Planning Liaison Officer role are needed (Low)
- Pre application advice costs are benchmarked as reasonable but are not fully substantiated (Low)

A number of areas of good practice were noted, including:

- The Quarterly Performance Report issued to the Development Management Committee confirms the 13 week deadline for major applications was met in every month except one for the 12 months to June 2017. Performance for both Minor and Other applications was compliant with Government deadlines to make decisions for the period April to June 2017 and the average for the year also being compliant. We tested the information which feeds into these reports and are content the data reported is sound.

- Through a benchmarking exercise of over 20 Councils we found that the presentation of a formal Quarterly Performance Report to Members via a Planning Committee (or equivalent) is rare. Agenda items are almost without exception only focussed on applications and no other business. The Quarterly Performance Report the Council uses is therefore, good practice and demonstrates openness and transparency with Members and the public.

- The three applications tested were all approved in line with the Council's delegated powers. Through a further sample of 15 cases we confirmed that the Council was compliant with advertising applications, involving statutory consultees and documenting the weighting placed on certain criteria. All of the key processes are held in a process document which was considered reasonable to support legislative compliance.

The Development Management Team has undergone structural change in the last 12 months. AVDC, like other councils across the county, is facing challenges around recruiting planning officers. There are a large number of consultants supporting delivery and current vacancies are for 1 Principal and 4.5 Senior officers.

New planning software is currently being developed with a move from Uniform to a Salesforce platform. This is intended to go live in 2018 and will change how staff, Members and the public interact with the planning process.

