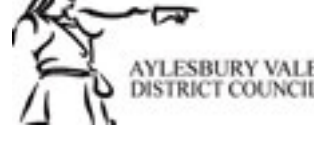


# A new vision for Aylesbury Vale

By Andrew Grant | 18 November 2016



We've all got a vision for what our organisations should deliver to our communities, in terms of outcomes. But what's the vision for your organisation itself? How is it evolving to serve those communities in a modern world? How will you make it work?

My vision for Aylesbury Vale DC is for it to become like a social enterprise where we don't charge council tax.

We all know council tax is a toxic topic. No one wants to pay more, or even what they pay already.

The majority of residents mistakenly believe it covers costs when in fact, in our case, it actually covers less than a third of them.

Council tax is used to whip us, it restricts us and its not scalable. I'm a big believer in the age of the commercial council where that vision of a social enterprise stands a chance of being realised. It might sound radical but why not?

I believe we can generate our own income and invest it in supporting key services to not only deliver those positive outcomes for our communities but also to offer new services which customers want. It's about leaving the old structure behind and promoting untapped potential.

Scrapping council tax and evolving into a social enterprise might sound ambitious but this is a long term vision.

I'm not suggesting it's going to happen next year. With the results we're already seeing through our commercial journey, here at Aylesbury Vale DC, I don't see any reason why this won't be achievable.

As with any of us, it would take more than this article (more like a book!), to detail the ways we've changed, so I'll highlight a few key areas.

We have of course done the usual – the efficiencies and restructuring which have helped to save £14m over the last six years.

Unfortunately, that approach to savings tends to be a bit of a 'one-off special'.

It's the big numbers that are going to help Aylesbury Vale DC achieve our vision for the organisation – the 'scaleables', the ventures where we're offering competitive services that our customers want and are willing to pay for.

Vale Commerce, which was key to us recently being short-listed for a prestigious Entrepreneurial Council of the Year award (fingers crossed for a win!) is at heart of this

It's our wholly owned company which houses two brands – Limecart and Incgen - both operating on subscription business model and both driven through digital marketing.

Limecart offers home and garden services, packaged up for a monthly charge. Packages, which include a range of benefits including window cleaning, home cleaning and handyman services, were put together based on market research from 1400 residents.

Our USP is that we're a one-stop-shop for taking the hassle out of everyday tasks and we're using local suppliers. We're just about to launch and already have a number of pre-registered customers.

This concept has so much potential and can operate beyond our geographical boundaries.

Incgen offers support to local businesses, through a variety of different packages, at different prices, which include office space, meeting facilities, networking opportunities, as well as phone and post services.

It officially launched a couple of months back and our customer base is growing with positive feedback.

The meeting facilities and office space offered up through Incgen come from our fantastic conference centre, the Gateway.

We hire this facility out for events, as well as renting office space to other organisations. Since April we have generated around £80,000 from room hire alone.

The Gateway is a key part of our property portfolio and property is definitely one of those big numbers.

That portfolio has grown significantly over the part few years underpinning the regeneration of Aylesbury town centre: we've built a theatre, a university campus, a hotel and a supermarket which we're renting out to some big names.

We're extending our portfolio into new sectors and are constantly innovating in and exploring untapped markets.

As it stands, we are generating a major revenue stream from our commercial property.

Our ultra-fast fibre broadband company, AV Broadband, is also going great guns, supplying this now commonplace service to residents in rural areas, where the bigger companies refused to go.

And we've just secured a major contract to supply payroll services to other organisations – this service to external organisations is generating more than £60,000 a year.

So, Aylesbury Vale DC has evolved to support business, providing homes and garden services, broadband, conference facilities, payroll, whilst operating as a landlord and more besides.

All this to generate income to invest back into our key services, so highly valued by our communities.

Sounds a bit like a social enterprise to me!

If we keep on this commercial track, one day, we could well be onto a winner with the council tax too and that vision will be our reality.

I've only had time to mention some of the innovative things we're doing here but we'll be sharing more of our ideas and learning with other councils at our third Surviving to Thriving Conference on November 22.

Please contact [cwheller@aylesburyvale.gov.uk](mailto:cwheller@aylesburyvale.gov.uk) for more information.

We'd love to see you there!

## Andrew Grant is chief executive of Aylesbury Vale DC

0 Comments The MJ Login

Recommend Tweet Share Sort by Best

Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

### ALSO ON THE MJ

#### Union's Fol reveals scale of youth centre cuts

1 comment • 6 months ago

BMC — How very sad. I spend several years managing the myplace young peoples centres programme at Big ...

#### Hamilton to leave DCN for improvement role

1 comment • 3 months ago

Bunnco — We will all miss Matthew at the DCN. He has worked tirelessly and has played a key role in elevating the ...

#### Municipal leaders insist waste reforms must be 'fully funded'

1 comment • 3 months ago

Roger Gamba-Jones — Unfortunately government often has a very 'on different planet' way of looking at the ...

#### Kober: Politics is a team game. Councils nationally must unite

1 comment • a year ago

andrew — I thought that the Local Government Association spoke on behalf of all LGs to central ...

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Disqus' Privacy Policy DISQUS

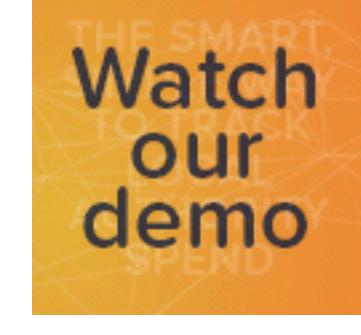
Budgets and efficiency Local economies Finance Council Tax

Twitter Facebook LinkedIn Google+

Free Email Newsletter

Latest Issue

- ### Most Popular
- Senior councillors meet to agree Amey terms
  - EXCLUSIVE: Violence could delay EU poll
  - Call for VOA cuts review
  - Councils urged to consider social value more strategically
  - 21st century leadership, technology and climate change
  - Education enterprise to be formed by Redbridge



- ### Tag Cloud
- Adult social care
  - Brexit
  - Business
  - Business rates
  - Chief executives
  - Childrens services
  - CIPFA
  - Economic growth
  - Elections
  - Finance
  - Funding
  - Housing
  - James Brokenshire
  - Local democracy
  - Local economies
  - Local elections
  - Local Government Association
  - Management
  - MHCLG
  - Outsourcing
  - People
  - Politics
  - Social Care
  - Spending
  - Review
  - Whitehall
  - more..

## Our local government network



NEWS  
OPINION  
ANALYSIS

BEST PRACTICE  
JOBS  
EVENTS

SUBSCRIBE  
RSS  
CONTACT US

ABOUT US  
ADVERTISE  
TERMS & CONDITIONS  
PRIVACY POLICY