

Support to Groups in Weardale Task Group

Wednesday 5th July 2017, 2:00pm

Function Room, Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope

Attendees:

Cllr Anita Savory (AS)	Unitary Councillor, Durham County Council (Chair)
Brian Thompson (BT)	Stanhope Parish Council
Damian Pearson (DP)	County Durham Housing Group
Frances O'Riley (FO'R)	WAP Board Member
Helen Barrass (HB)	Muggleswick Parish Council
Jane Henderson (JHe)	Wolsingham Parish Council
Jo Hayes (JHa)	WAP Forum Member
John Clarke (JC)	Wolsingham Bowls Club
Kate Burrows (KB)	Durham Community Action
Tom Nattrass (TN)	WAP Board Member
Tony Griffin (TG)	WAP Board Member
Wayne Brown (WB)	Durham County Council
Angelina Maddison (AM)	WAP Coordinator
Christine Davison (CD)	WAP Community Development Project Officer
Fiona Barber (FB)	WAP Support Officer

Apologies:

Ann Richards	Weardale Flower and Garden Club
Olive Wilson	Witton-le-Wear Parish Council

Distribution List:

Cliff Pringle	WAP Board Members (21 members)
Gillian Welsh	Homegroup
Oscar Watson	Durham Dales Centre
Yvonne Probert	Durham Dales Centre
	Durham Community Action
	Hunstanworth Community Association
	Muggleswick Parish Council
	Stanhope Parish Council
	Witton-le-Wear Parish Council
	Wolsingham Parish Council

1. Introductions, Apologies and Declaration of Interest

AS welcomed members to the Task Group. Introductions were made around the table. Apologies are recorded above.

No Declarations of Interest were raised.

2. Terms of Reference

AM requested that Task Group members spend a few moments familiarising themselves with the purpose, remit and role of the group. In previous years this priority has been addressed by the Small Grants Fund

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with an Appraisal Panel consisting solely of Board Members (for reasons of confidentiality) meeting to allocate funding. This year it was deemed appropriate for a Task Group to be set up to see if there are other ways in which this priority can be addressed. The purpose of this Task Group is to identify areas of work and decide on what to take to the Weardale Action Board for their decision.

Decision: The Task Group accepted the Terms of Reference

3 Review of the Small Grants Fund

CD presented an overview of the Small Grants Fund since its inception 6 years ago.

- 177 applications supported
- £147,598 allocated from Area Budget
- £246,584 match funding brought in
- 45 groups funded more than once
- £2,388 remaining in the fund from 2016/17

The group were then asked to discuss whether they felt there was a need for the Small Grants Fund to continue.

BT stated that he has been a champion of the Small Grants Fund since it was first set up and whilst still basically in favour of the concept wondered if its remit was being stretched as bigger organisations apply for funding. He suggested that the group look at whether the amount needs to be reduced, the criteria altered, multiple applications should be stopped. His view was that the Small Grants Fund should return to its original purpose of being small amounts for small 'grass roots' groups.

TN suggested that the group consider just how successful the fund has been. Have groups survived as a result of funding? He echoed BT and suggested the fund may need tweaking rather than a wholesale change.

JHa offered that in her experience as a beneficiary of funding from the Small Grants Fund that keeping the fund is vital for the small groups of Weardale. A couple of hundred pounds can make a huge difference to these small groups.

JHa also suggested that as Village Halls have lost funding from Durham County Council it may be sensible for the group to look at a funding scheme for capital projects to run alongside the Small Grants Fund.

TG asked if the groups provide feedback as to the impact of the funding. AM replied that projects provide this information which feeds into the Board Ambassador Reports and Monitoring and Evaluation exercises.

TN offered the example of the Quilting Group at Eastgate which received funding from the Small Grants Fund to provide new equipment. The group has seen an increase in membership from 12 to 25 as a result.

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JC suggested that the upper limit of the funding be increased where necessary if the proposed project merited it. AM advised that this would not be possible due to legal restrictions and issues with governance.

HB expressed concern that little was known about the Small Grants Fund outside of the main corridor of Weardale. She called for more publicity of the scheme in these areas.

AS and FO'R stressed that the Appraisal Panel does scrutinise and challenge the applications that come forward.

TG asked what criteria is already being applied to the applications. AM advised that some criteria is written down and can be found in the guidance notes for the applications. The Appraisal Panel also draws on the experience and knowledge of Board Members.

CD stated that the application form was deliberately created to be as simple as possible for groups to fill in in order to avoid discouraging potential applicants. WB added that the simplicity of the application process is the reason the Small Grants Fund is so successful. It also gives the groups confidence to apply for funding elsewhere in the future.

Decision: The group were in favour of the continuation of the Small Grant Fund

The group then discussed a revision of the criteria. After much discussion the group requested that the following be looked at:

- More information required as to the benefit to Weardale of any funding
- To scrutinise multiple applications by the same group e.g.
 - What has been the benefit of previous funding?
 - Limit a period of time in which multiple applications can be made
- To have two funds running concurrently
 - Small Grants Fund (as previous years)
 - Community Buildings Capital Projects Fund
- Focus on **small** groups
- Acknowledgement of funding from Small Grants Fund

AM advised Board members that as any Community Buildings Capital Projects Fund would need to be managed by Durham Community Action a small management fee will be included.

AM reminded Task Group members that groups don't just approach the Weardale Action Partnership for funding. Often they come for support and guidance. Groups that need additional help e.g. with their governance documents are then referred on to Durham Community Action.

The group requested that any new fund be robustly promoted to ensure that as many people are aware of the scheme as possible.

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The group discussed how much money should be allocated to each fund. The group suggested £25,000 for the Small Grants Fund and £20,000 for the Community Buildings Capital Projects Fund.

Some members suggested reducing the amount in the Small Grants Fund as funding that would usually be allocated to capital projects would now be taken from the other fund. The group decided to approach the WAP Board for the full amount of £25,000 giving them the option of reducing it should they feel it necessary.

- Decision: Project proposals for the following to be taken to the WAP Board for their consideration**
- **Small Grants Fund - £25,000**
 - **Community Buildings Capital Projects Fund - £20,000**

The group decided that all community buildings would be eligible to apply for funding not just Village Halls.

2016/17 Small Grants Fund

CD advised that there is £2,388 remaining in last year's fund. The group decided that the usual procedure should be maintained for this remaining money. CD advised that she would therefore convene an Appraisal Panel to allocate the funding. TN and TG expressed an interest to be a part of the Appraisal Panel.

4. Date, Times and Venues of Future Meetings

To be arranged.