

DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETING (AGM)

Held via Microsoft Teams on 23 June 2021 at 3pm

PRESENT:

Councillors

Kevin Earley, Kathryn Rooney, Alan Shield, Michelle Walton and Alex Watson

Partner Organisations

Mark Clelland - Derwentside Trust, Paul Moralee - Karbon Homes, Rachel Rooney - County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Gary Scott - Do Business Network (DBN) and Joanne Waller - Durham County Council (DCC)

Public Representatives

Marlene Boyles, Jeanette Harold, Helen Marley and Susan Mellor

DVP:

Corinne Walton - AAP Co-ordinator, Kath Clements - Community Development / Project Officer and Lynn Dougal – Support Officer

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 7

APOLOGIES:

Elected Rep: Cllr Declan Mulholland. Partner Reps: Craig Farrage - Co Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Service, Alison Lazazzera – DCC and Insp Dave Stewart – Durham Constabulary. Public Reps: Mike Clark and Shelley O'Brien

1. Meeting opened by the Chair

Jeanette Harold (outgoing Chair) welcomed everyone to the AGM. She also acknowledged the newly elected DVP councillors - Cllrs Veronica Andrews, Kevin Earley, Dominic Haney, Declan Mulholland, Kathryn Rooney, Angela Sterling and Michelle Walton, and the re-elected councillors – Cllrs Stephen Robinson, Alan Shield, Watts Stelling and Alex Watson. Jeanette also welcomed Melanie Cant from DBN, who will be joining the Board as the new business rep in place of Gary Scott from the July meeting.

Jeanette reminded everyone of the Code of Conduct and the AAP Principles, which is on the reverse of the agenda.

Corinne went through the Teams functions such as the mute button, raising the hand icon and turning camera on/off. Board members were asked to write RTS (request to speak) in the chat facility.

Board members introduced themselves and apologies were noted as above. There was one declaration of interest from Cllr Shield regarding the Project Genesis Trust (PGT) Discretionary Fund as he is a newly elected member on the PGT Board.

Corinne shared the agenda which covered the items to be discussed at the meeting.

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meetings

22 May 2019 (AGM)

There were no comments/matters arising and the minutes were AGREED.

24 March 2021

Corinne gave an update on the following:

Page 2, The DVP was the event sponsor of the Footprint Climate Change Conference that took place online on 11 and 12 June 2021. On behalf of the Environment Task Group, both Ann English as Chair of the group, and Rosemary Morris attended the event online. Ann introduced herself as Chair of the Environment Group, thanked the speakers and welcomed those attending the conference. Rosemary then gave an update on what the DVP Environment Task Group had been delivering around the environmental agenda and what they hoped to achieve in the future. The conference was well received, and we look forward to working with Durham University and its partners again in the future.

Page 2, the DVP Photograph Challenge in conjunction with Visit Consett went ahead with the first challenge running from 1 March to 30 April. The second challenge is now up and running (1 June – 31 August) and has been promoted in the Derwent Valley NEWS magazine and on social media. Prizes have been kindly donated by local photographic businesses and partners.

Pages 9/10, regarding the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAHF) Fund Subgroup, Susan Mellor and Paul Moralee volunteered to be on the group.

There were no comments/matters arising and the minutes were AGREED.

3. DVP Annual Report 2020/21, Elected representative welcome and AGM 2021/22

Annual Report 2020/21

Corinne briefly went through the report, which Board members received a copy of prior to the meeting. The report provides information about the DVP and the projects that have been supported over the last year. Projects had been funded through the 2020/21 Area Budget (AB), the Councillors' Neighbourhood Budget (NB) and additional money received through Covid-19 Response and Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAHF) Funds.

The Annual Report will be available to read online at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/24406/About-us> There were no comments or suggested amendments raised in relation to the content of the Annual Report.

Elected Representatives

Corinne said following the local elections in May we have 7 new Councillors out of the 11 Councillors for the DVP area. Corinne welcomed the newly elected Councillors to the area as well as welcoming back the re-elected Councillors. An online 'Meet and Greet'

session was held in May with the new Councillors to give them an overview of the DVP.

AGM

Corinne highlighted that the AAP Terms of Reference state that at the AGM, each AAP will elect a new Chair and Vice Chairs for the forthcoming financial year. Corinne thanked the outgoing Chair, Jeanette Harold, and outgoing Vice Chairs, Gary Scott and Cllr Watts Stelling, for taking on these roles during the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years. Their input, commitment and support to the Partnership Team has been greatly appreciated during what were very challenging times during the pandemic.

As Gary will be stepping down entirely from his Partner Rep role, and on behalf of the DVP team and the Board, Corinne made a special thank you to Gary for his support to the Partnership over the years and wished him well for the future.

Nominations for Vice Chairs were received and AGREED as follows:

Public Representative – Jeanette Harold
Partner Representative – Craig Farrage
Elected Representative – Cllr Alex Watson

Corinne advised that the position of Chair would rotate to the Partner Representatives this financial year but unfortunately the Vice Chair, Craig Farrage, would not be in a position to take up the Chair role at this time. Therefore, the Chair would need to rotate to the Elected Representative category for 2021/22 and therefore Cllr Alex Watson was AGREED as the new Chair via a full Board consensus.

Cllr Watson thanked Jeanette for her commitment and time for taking on the Chair role over the last 2 years.

4. AAP Funding and Operational Arrangements 2021/22

Corinne provided an overview of the report relating to '**Area Action Partnerships and Member Neighbourhood Budgets - Proposed Operating Arrangements 2021/22**' which sets out the proposed approach for AAP Boards and Teams to return to a greater local presence as the County emerges from the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It details the funding to be allocated to AAPs and Elected Members this year, and sets out how that will be managed, including some proposed changes to the requirements and procedures around the allocation of that funding to ensure AAPs comply with best practice and the Council's procedures.

The report has been prepared by Gordon Elliot, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement, and was presented to Cabinet on 16 June 2021.

Corinne went through the report, which Board members had received a copy of prior to the meeting, and a summary of the recommendations (as per the report) is provided below:

- that AAP Terms of Reference be amended in order to allow provision for AAP Board meetings to be held as hybrid meetings, should individual boards agree to do
- the proposed amalgamation of the five budget headings: DCC Area Budget (AB), Older People's Social Isolation Fund, Youth Grant, Welfare Reform Grant and the £100,000 COVID Recovery grant into a single 'Area Budget' Fund of £244,902 per AAP, of which a minimum of £125,000 will need to be defrayed in the current financial year
- that each Elected Member's Neighbourhood Budget (NB) will be enhanced with a one-off allocation of £10,000 for spend to support the revitalisation of towns and villages, with the funding awarded to AAPs reduced to £210,000 to offset these amendments
- the capacity for Elected Members to spend on small projects (between £100 to £999) be increased to £3,000 per annum for the period up to 31 March 2023
- the proposed information requirements from Elected Members if they intend to roll forward unspent NB allocations beyond year two of their period of office
- to the introduction of a new (online) AB / NB Application form
- that work will be carried out with the nominated AAP Chairs to develop the criteria for a Countywide AAP fund
- the changes to the Declaration of Interest process for Councillors when proposing schemes for NB spend in order that it is in line with the member Code of Conduct.

Regarding the Towns and Villages Fund (T&V), Corinne advised that there will be a presentation from the Regeneration, Economic and Growth (REG) Team at the July Board meeting to give an insight on how the T&V fund will work locally and to ensure there is a joined up approach to avoid duplication of service.

Cllr Watson said there are plans to upgrade Middle Street, Consett but as yet no dates have been confirmed. He wondered if local councillors could contribute to improving the town centre from the additional funds in their NBs, earmarked for improving towns and villages. He asked the Board for their views on employing a Town Centre Manager that could look at the wider issues across the Derwent Valley area. He also asked if it would be beneficial to set up a funding workshop/group to look at the towns and villages issues which would then be relayed to the Board.

Corinne said that the T&V funding of £210k is separate from the £1m that has been ringfenced for Middle Street improvements which is being administered by DCC's REG Team. Residents were invited to attend consultation workshops, ran by Fairhurst Consultants in 2017, and gave their views on the proposals for Middle Street.

Corinne also said there is a role for a T&V group to look at the issues that do not fit under the existing local priorities of Employment, Environment and Health. However, she has concerns that we could end up with too many groups and limited human resources to manage them. Although there will be extra staff for the T&V and HAHF monies, they will not be aligned to the AAPs but will be a corporate resource covering all 14 AAPs.

Cllr Shield said that some years ago he suggested funding a community speed watch vehicle in the DVP area and referred to the one in the Crook area which was funded through the AAP and local councillors to help tackle speeding issues. He said that speeding is an issue around the Derwent Valley and Consett areas and would like this

proposal to be looked at. He does not feel that this fits into any of the 3 local priorities but feels that it is an essential element in keeping people feeling safe within their communities. He said he would be happy to discuss this with the other councillors to endorse this proposal.

John O'Connor (Forum) feels that town centre regeneration plans tend to go slowly, and the data and views gathered through consultations are often out of date and do not come to fruition. He said that there should be a vision of what town centres will look like in 10 years' time and any proposals should be implemented quickly and not just talked about. He also said that the mix of town centres may need to change, for example residential and leisure, as these are often disregarded when talking about town centre regeneration.

Gary asked if the public will be asked to vote for their priorities in the Autumn and if so then the task groups/priorities could change. Corinne said that it is planned that priority voting will take place later this year with local residents and that new priorities could be voted in to be addressed in 2022/23. She also said that within the consultation there will be an element linked to the T&V money to gather the views of the public. As the local councillors have additional T&V money, we could work in conjunction with them or they may wish to fund projects local/specific to their own division.

Corinne said the report proposes that there are 3 groups – T&V, HAHF and Community Recovery. However, the 3 current task groups (Employment, Enterprise and Training (EET), Environment (Enviro) and Health and Wellbeing (HWB)) have recently reconvened and refreshed their action plans for 21/22. The Board could choose to continue with the 3 task groups as they are, or as per the report create the 3 groups as above and have another group that is an amalgamation of the 3 task group themes. Corinne said that due to limited resources within the DVP Team, it would be difficult to manage 6 groups. She also feels that task group members and partners have brought a lot to the existing task groups, this should be valued and their input not lost.

Cllr Earley said he would be happy to support initiatives that help tackle speeding. He also said that he thinks the Government have or intend to relax the planning laws around commercial use buildings and not sure if that change is reflected in the County Durham Plan.

Corinne asked the Board to decide whether they wish to keep the 3 task groups (EET, Enviro and HWB) or amalgamate them into one 'Community Recovery' group, and to set up a separate T&V group and HAHF group. Should the Board decide to amalgamate the 3 task groups, the action plans would be subsumed into one, with a limited number of themes from each task group taken forward.

Cllr Shield suggested keeping the 3 task groups and creating an additional group with selected participants to look at the overarching aspects that do not fall under health, environment or employment, such as towns and villages development and community speed watch.

Further comments (including the chat facility) were made from Board and Forum members that supported keeping the 3 task groups as they are.

Gary and Mark Clelland commented in the chat facility that they would support some form of Town Centre Management initiative/project.

Corinne said that the members of the 3 task groups would be very keen to continue with the work of the groups because of their specific focus on various themes. However, there is a need to look more broadly around Covid recovery themes, and based on the discussions at today's meeting, she suggested that the Board consider retaining the 3 task groups and reconvening the Covid-19 Recovery task group. The Covid-19 Recovery task group was set up last year, while the 3 task groups were on hold, and representatives from that group may be willing to reconvene as a 'Community Recovery' task group to pick up on the themes not captured within the 3 task groups, for example support for the VCS, food provision, etc.

Cllr Shield said to address the cross-cutting themes, he suggested that a group is set up with a majority membership from the councillors as they have access to information and funding. He said despite the political differences they would be putting these aside to work in a cohesive way for the betterment of the communities they serve. He said it should not be made up solely of councillors but with the majority of them and also said that not many councillors are aligned to the task groups.

Cllr Watson wondered if this was an opportunity for others to get involved but Corinne thought Cllr Shield was suggesting that the councillors work together and make a collective contribution to support themes not addressed in the task groups. The 11 Councillors' NB collectively has more funds available than the DVP has, and the Councillors may wish to support projects that the DVP are not able to capture through the work of the task groups.

Corinne said that she would be happy to circulate any information Cllr Shield has regarding Community Speed Watch to the Councillors so they may comment on the proposal and/or wish to contribute funds towards it.

Cllr Early feels that by setting up a group mainly of councillors, they would be diverting away from the DVP, but he would be happy to work with local councillors on project ideas that could come back to the Board for discussion.

Cllr Shield said there has been concerns raised in the past about councillors not being involved in the task groups. With a new complement of councillors, he said we have the opportunity to work together to help drive change and councillors could use their additional funding to supplement the DVP and the crossing cutting projects that have been suggested.

Corinne said the general consensus from the Board is to retain the 3 Task Groups and reconvene the Community Recovery Task Group (previously Covid-19 Recovery). The Community Recovery group would consider issues/ideas not captured within the 3 Task Groups and anything else that does not fit with these groups could go direct to the Board for a Board decision.

Regarding Board member representation on the task groups, Corinne advised that an email will be sent to all Board members asking if they would be interested in joining one or more of the task groups.

With regards to the timings of the Board meetings, the Board discussed whether to hold meetings during the day or in the evening. There was no consensus reached, however it was suggested that when face to face meetings start again, there could be some flexibility in holding meetings online during the winter months/bad weather.

As there is a full Council meeting on 14 July, it was agreed that the next Board meeting would be moved to 6pm for that particular meeting, then meeting timings would be reviewed thereafter.

5. DVP Funding Processes 2021/22

Due to the Board meeting running slightly behind schedule, this item on the agenda has been deferred to the next Board meeting on 14 July.

6. Project Genesis Trust (PGT) Discretionary Fund Proposal

As PGT has kindly donated £10k to be used as match funding for projects receiving DVP funds, Corinne advised that the Roxy project, which was part funded from the Covid-19 Recovery money in 2020, has applied to the Discretionary Fund for the shortfall of £8,049.

Corinne said the previous DVP Executive members met to discuss this and felt that the project had already received a generous amount of funding support (£19,164) from the DVP and that there was an expectation that the applicant explore other sources of funding for the shortfall, which they have done but without success.

Corinne said should the Board agree to fund the full amount of the shortfall, it would not leave much funds available for other organisations to apply for.

John O'Connor (Forum) said the Discretionary Fund is there to support projects, received by the DVP, to make up small amounts of money to help achieve a bigger impact. He said that PGT could work directly with the applicant but preferred to work in conjunction with the DVP to help facilitate a collaborative approach. He also said that PGT has a Small Grants Fund of £15k for smaller projects with a maximum of £500 so this Discretionary Fund is complementary to this.

Cllr Shield gave a brief outline about the Roxy project to make new Board members aware of the project and the current financial situation. Cllr Shield said he is in favour of supporting the shortfall, either in part or in full.

Cllr Shield also mentioned that the Eden Miners Centre has applied for funding to PGT to refurbish the building as it has fallen into disrepair and the Trustees would like to bring it back into use.

Cllr Shield declared an interest in the Eden Miners Centre as he is a Trustee and declared an interest in the Roxy from a personal perspective having visited the venue, spoken with the owners and also due to it being in his electoral division.

Corinne advised that should the Board agree to fund the shortfall, it would be Autumn before the funds would be released, due to the length of the appraisal process. She also said that local Councillors have their NB and T&V Funding that could be used to support the Roxy project as an alternative which have lesser timescales attached.

Cllr Shield concurred that funds could be offered from his NB so he would be willing to contribute £4,025 from his funds to the Roxy Project if the remaining £4,024 could be supported from the PGT Discretionary Fund.

There were no objections by the Board to the above proposal, and it was AGREED to part fund the shortfall of £4,024 to the Roxy project from the PGT Discretionary Fund.

Cllr Shield said he would contact David Barnes, from the Roxy, and copy Corinne into the correspondence so progress could be made with regards to accessing the additional funds from NB and PGT.

7. Meeting Close and Date of Next Meeting

Alex thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed that the next Board meeting will be on Wednesday 14 July 2021 at 6pm via Microsoft Teams.

Signed as a correct record:

Date: