

# DERWENT VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (DVP) BOARD MEETING

Held via Microsoft Teams on 14 July 2021 at 6pm



## **PRESENT:**

### **Councillors**

Declan Mulholland, Kathryn Rooney, Alan Shield, Michelle Walton and Alex Watson

### **Partner Organisations**

Melanie Cant - Do Business Network (DBN), Mark Clelland - Derwentside Trust and Alison Lazizzera - Durham County Council (DCC)

### **Public Representatives**

Marlene Boyles, Mike Clark, Helen Marley, Susan Mellor and Shelley O'Brien

### **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 Kevin Earley. Partner Reps: Paul Moralee - Karbon Homes, Rachel Rooney - County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Joanne Waller. Public Reps: Jeanette Harold.

## **1. Meeting opened by the Co-ordinator**

Corinne Walton welcomed everyone to the meeting, went through the Teams functions and meeting etiquette and reminded everyone of the Code of Conduct.

Board members introduced themselves, apologies were noted as above and there were no declarations of interest.

Corinne shared the agenda and briefly went through the items to be discussed at the meeting.

## **2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting (23 June 2021)**

Page 4, regarding the Towns and Villages Fund (T&V) presentation from the Regeneration, Economic and Growth (REG) Team, Corinne advised that due to a change in administration following the local elections in May, the report linked to the T&V is under review and will not be presented at this meeting. It is anticipated that this will now take place in the Autumn.

Page 6, regarding Board member representation on the task groups, following an email sent to Board members, Corinne said some Board members have come forward to sit on the groups. Anyone who has not responded yet and would like to be involved in one or more of the task groups, please get in touch with the DVP team.

Page 7, regarding funding from the PGT Discretionary Fund (PGTDF) to support the Eden Miners Centre, Cllr Shield (who declared an interest at the last Board meeting) asked if this could be considered for funding from the PGTDF.

Cllr Shield said the centre has fallen into disrepair with several issues including asbestos removal and the roof, therefore a significant amount of money needs to be spent on it and when completed, the building can become a community hub for the area.

He has spoken with John O'Connor (PGT Chair) who is supportive of this and also to Cllr Stelling who is willing to support any match funding, following the Board's approval, from his Neighbourhood Budget.

As the Roxy project had provided details and a breakdown of costs for the Board to make a decision on, Corinne said, for fairness and consistency, the same process should be applied to the Eden Miners Centre as no documentation on what is involved has been provided.

Cllr Shield said he will arrange for information to be made available for the Board to view. He also asked if there could be a general agreement in principle that the Board are prepared to support the refurbishment of the Eden Miners Centre subject to the information provided by the centre.

Shelley O'Brien said she would support the project and echoes Corinne's comments that we need to see what the overall plans/cost are before making a decision on funding it.

Ivan Jewell (Forum) asked in the chat facility if Leadgate can support both community facilities to be operational. Cllr Shield said they could, and that the Roxy will be an arts and culture venue for the North West Durham area and the Eden Miners Centre will be used as a community hub.

After further discussion/comments, it was AGREED in principle, subject to further information being supplied, to support the Eden Miners Centre with £3k from the PGTDF (and match funding being made by Cllr Stelling).

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

### **3. DVP Funding Processes 2021/22** (deferred from 23 June Board meeting)

Corinne outlined the report, that Board members had received prior to the meeting, which covered the budget process, budget allocation and options and Board member involvement in the Task Groups.

All AAPs have several budgets to administer during the 2021/22 financial year which includes: Area Budget (AB) of £244,902, Towns and Villages Improvement Fund (TVIF) of £210k and Holiday Activities with Healthy Food Fund (HAHF) approx. £36k. AAPs have flexibility in how they manage their budgets and the timescales involved, however £125k of the AB must be committed by 31 March 2022.

The Board agreed, in March, to fund a further 2 editions of the Derwent Valley NEWS from the 2021/22 DVP AB at a cost of £9k. Therefore, the AB for 2021/22 is £235,902.

In 2019, the Board agreed to set up a funding subgroup that would review the DVP budgets and make recommendations to the Board as to how, and within what timescales, each budget would be allocated. The group met in March 2020 but unfortunately due to the pandemic no further meetings were held and subsequently all budgets were amalgamated into one Covid-19 Recovery fund. The Board could decide to reconvene this group with the group having the same remit as previously.

The funding subgroup also discussed the need for more Board members to be involved in one or more of the 3 task groups, as it was felt that their input would be beneficial to the overall Board decision making process. As per the comments under **Item 2, Minutes of Previous Board Meeting** above, this has been followed up and responses from Board members have been received.

The Board were asked to consider the following options, for allocating the 2021/22 AB of £235,902:

1. To undertake one largescale project call out. Received applications would be initially reviewed for eligibility by the DVP Team and then reviewed by the DVP Funding Subgroup for recommendation to the Board as appropriate.
2. To allocate an equal share of the AB to the three Task Groups (Employment, Enterprise and Training, Environment and Health and Wellbeing) so three separately themed 'project call outs' can be undertaken. Received applications would initially be reviewed by each respective Task Group against their action plan, and recommended proposals from each group would be passed to the DVP Funding Subgroup for comment/recommendation to the Board as appropriate.

The Board then discussed the report, and the following comments were noted:

- When the funding subgroup was set up, the DVP had many different funding pots all with different criteria to manage. However, as the different budgets for this year have been amalgamated into one, with exception to the TVIF and HAHF funds, it may not be necessary to reconvene the group at the present time and could be considered again in the next financial year.
- Given the limited number of staff within the DVP Team and the number of groups that would be managed, eg funding subgroup, 3 task groups and a newly created TVIF group, it was felt that too many groups is likely to make it difficult for the team to administer.
- There is a small restriction in part of the AB in that £25k should include projects relating to OPSIF and £100k relating to Community Recovery.
- The 3 task groups have worked well in the past and as they have devised their individual action plans that have specific themes and targets, including covid recovery, it was suggested that each task group is given an allocated amount of money and have their own call out.
- A combination of both options would be a good model.
- Option 1 and/or combining both options is likely to require a significant amount of time from everyone involved.
- To keep part of the AB in reserve for any emerging projects or for an event and to share the remainder across the 3 task groups.
- The Board will still have a role to play with both options, as the subgroup or the task groups will be making recommendations on which projects to support. The project proposals will be presented to the Board, at a Board meeting, who will have the final

decision on which projects to support or reject.

- It was suggested that there should be flexibility around the funding within the task groups as a good project may be rejected if it is deemed too costly or a task group may struggle to get suitable projects and unable to spend their allocation.
- Allocating a set amount to each task group gives them a boundary in which to work, however it may be that some groups are over subscribed and others under subscribed. The onus would then be on the Board to decide on which projects would be supported or not.
- To make everyone aware when task group meetings are being held, the dates of the meetings will be added to the calendar on the Derwent Valley Life website.

The Board AGREED to Option 2 – allocating an equal share of the AB to each of the 3 task groups and each task group to have a separately themed project call out.

#### **4. DVP Task Group Update**

Corinne gave an update on the 3 task groups.

*Employment, Education and Training (EET) – Chair: Mike Clark*

Since the group reconvened earlier this year, they have focused on their delivery plan and have identified key areas for project development for 2021/22:

- support for those furthest from the labour market into employment including the provision of training and skills development
- support the business, hospitality, leisure and visitor sectors in their recovery from the impact of Covid-19

Corinne said that all task group meetings are being held via Microsoft Teams until further notice. It is hoped that face to face meetings can resume in the Autumn.

Rosemary Morris (Forum) said that she has attended Council meetings face to face and had to do an LFD test prior to attending the meetings. She wonders if this could be standard for all DCC related meetings.

Cllr Walton commented in the chat facility that she has taken an LFD test for every meeting but has not been asked whether she has done one.

Alison Lazazzera said that it is recommended that anyone attending a DCC meeting (including Board meetings) takes an LFD test prior to attending. It is not mandatory but DCC are encouraging LFD tests to be taken and are reviewing the situation regularly.

*Environment (Enviro) – Chair: Ann English and Vice Chair: Rosemary Morris*

Since the group reconvened earlier this year, they have focused on their action plan and have identified key areas for project development for 2021/22:

- Environment, transport, resource use and air quality
- Nature, woodlands and habitats
- 'Green' employment, training and skills opportunities

- Overarching theme of 'Research and Data' to inform project development and delivery linked to partner strategies, action plans, research and available data

*Health and Wellbeing (HAWB) – Chair: John O'Connor*

Since the group reconvened earlier this year, they have focused on their action plan and have identified key areas for project development for 2021/22:

- Mental health
- Suicide Prevention
- Social Isolation
- Bereavement Support

Copies of the full delivery/action plans are available upon request.

Ann English (Forum) said that some time ago the Board discussed defibrillators and that a map showing their location would be made available as well as an App and wondered if there was an update. Corinne suggested that Kath Clements and John O'Connor discuss this with Ann separately as they have been liaising with the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS).

Mark Clelland said there is an App called 'Staying Alive' that lists all the available defibrillators that have been registered in the area. Defibrillators have to be registered with NEAS and the App shows the location, address and access.

Kath Clements commented in the chat facility '*There's a national database called the Circuit which is expected to be launched this year. Currently several Ambulance Trusts have adopted but we've been awaiting from NEAS*'.

If anyone wishes to join one or more of the task groups and receive updates on the work of the task groups, please get in touch with the DVP Team at [dvaap@durham.gov.uk](mailto:dvaap@durham.gov.uk) and they will be added to the distribution list.

## **5. Towns and Villages Improvement Fund Report**

Corinne outlined the report, that Board members had received prior to the meeting, that sets out the scheme criteria, resources available, support from DCC's REG service and creating a TVIF group. (A copy of the full report is available upon request.)

Each AAP will receive £210k to support local projects with the aim of improving towns and villages. All councillors across the county have an additional £10k to their Neighbourhood Budget that can be used to enhance their local area.

The DVP will have the flexibility to be innovative but within the criteria established for this funding which project proposals must meet at least one of the stated criteria.

As well as the criteria, other points to note included:

- the fund can be used for both capital and revenue projects
- projects should have a level of sustainability with no expectation of long-term support

- the fund can be spent over 1 – 3 years
- engagement events may be held with communities to identify how the money could be allocated, these may take place either face to face, online or a hybrid of both
- capping feasibility studies to a maximum of £30k
- projects supported should have a minimum contribution from this fund of £10k and have a match funding rate of at least 30%
- bids for Town and Villages funding will be made through the established AAP funding process
- additional staff have been redeployed centrally and will support the AAPs

The REG Team are committed to supporting the AAPs with identifying larger scale regeneration needs and opportunities and they will be attending a future Board meeting to discuss the fund and support available in more detail.

As the Consett Destination Development Plan (CDDP) has been on hold for some time, the Board may wish to merge the CDDP group with a new 'Towns & Villages' group given that some of the criteria is similar, particularly around the local tourism/visitor offer.

Corinne said that Kathryn Watson in DCC's Digital Team is planning to send in a proposal for the introduction of Wi-Fi into Consett Town Centre. They have already delivered projects in Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland and Chester le Street and this could be an opportunity for us to link in with the Consett Town Centre proposal and add value to the project.

Cllr Watson said he gets a lot of complaints about the town centre and some villages being run down and not maintained properly and wondered if the TVIF could be used to employ 2 people over the 3 years to help make a difference in the area, e.g., a handyperson to spruce up, ensure maintenance is carried out, a point of contact for issues, etc. Corinne said the fund can be used for revenue costs such as salaries, as well as capital costs.

John O'Connor (Forum) commented in the chat facility *'What about funding a T & V position to attract large sums of external money into area to deliver existing Masterplan. There will be no Levelling Up funds for DV area, so we need to source bigger sums of money to make a difference.'*

Mike Clark commented in the chat facility *'Since DCC and the local MP decided to prioritise other areas for a levelling up fund bid taking that opportunity away from the area - can we have an update on the allocated £1m fund for Consett announced by the council before the last election in May?'*

Corinne said the proposals linked to the £1m for Middle Street are under review by the new joint administration and once this has been completed, we will share that information.

Cllr Walton said regarding the funding of salaries, there is scope to have a neighbourhood warden and although there are neighbourhood wardens, she said she has not seen any in Consett and suggested this would be a good area to focus on. She also said that she attended a meeting with Kathryn Rooney, Alex Watson and the REG team about the £1m project and subsequently the report has gone to the Portfolio Holder

for REG. She said she wanted to reassure everyone that they are pushing to getting that information and will give an update as soon as she can.

Cllr Shield said he has stressed to the Clean and Green Team that some areas are not being addressed properly and that these issues should be resolved by that team. As people are already paying for these services through their council tax, councillors' are likely to get a lot of 'earache' from the communities they serve when they hear that money is being used to employ someone to do a similar job.

Cllr Watson said that the Clean and Green team do not have the manpower to carry out all the work and said that this is something that the public should be consulted on.

Cllr Shield said that it is not just a lack of manpower but in the scheduling and coordination of the work and although he would support such an initiative, he would be cautious about committing money to something that should be done already.

Corinne said that once we are able to consult with communities, we will get a breadth and feel for what is needed in both the town centre, and the outer lying villages.

Shelley commented in the chat facility that *'she feels very strongly people need to be consulted on this particular pot of money, we have a duty as a Board to ensure it is spent with their views in mind.'*

Melanie Cant commented in the chat facility *'Although I would like to see our town centres well maintained I do agree with Alan regarding the public will be asking why this isn't maintained by DCC. Surely this is what we pay council tax for?'*

Marlene Boyle said in Consett town centre people should be discouraged from feeding the pigeons. The street furniture is covered in pigeon droppings and no matter how much money is spent in Consett, people will not be able to use the seating areas and other spaces and suggested that signs should be put up to deter people from feeding them.

Corinne asked the Board to consider setting up a TVIF subgroup to take forward this area of work as it would not be through the work of the 3 task groups, although there will be some cross cutting links. She also suggested that the Board consider merging the CDDP group into the TVIF group as the plan has links to the TVIF. Also, as there is no funding aligned to the CDDP, incorporating the 2 groups would give the plan access to funding.

The TVIF group would take the lead on the consultation and engagement events with the public and they would also make recommendations on the types of projects to support, which would then go to the Board to make the final decision.

Corinne said membership of the TVIF group could consist of Board members, key partners and a REG representative. She also said we would be looking to set up an initial meeting shortly to discuss the preliminaries in readiness for when the full update from REG is available.

The Board AGREED to set up a TVIF group and incorporate the work of the CDDP into the TVIF group.

Mike said as the CDDP group was successful in levering in £500k of funding, without DCC support, he would like to see the CDDP group reconvened. The group devised an action plan, which parts of it have been implemented, and by rekindling the group, we could review the action plan and set some new targets. It was noted that the TVIF group would incorporate the work of the CDDP as many of the members were the same as the previous group.

**6. Partner Updates**

Craig Farrage was due to give a presentation on the Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Service locality update but unfortunately, he has not been able to attend the meeting. It was suggested that the presentation be rescheduled at a later date.

**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 29 September 2021 at 6pm via Microsoft Teams.

Signed as a correct record: .....

Date: .....