



Better for everyone

## STANLEY AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIP (AAP)

### MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

Held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022 at 5.30pm via Teams

**Present:**

**Councillor**

Cllr Christine Bell  
Cllr Joan Nicholson  
Cllr Carole Hampson  
Cllr Jeanette Stephenson (Stanley Town Council)

**Partner Organisations**

Suzanne Jobson (Karbon Homes) Chair  
Martyn Stenton (Durham County Council)  
Alan Tubman (Stanley Town Council) Co-optee  
N. Insp Dave Stewart (Durham Constabulary)  
Max Wright (Business Representative)

**Public Representatives**

John Ullathorne  
Helen McCaughey

**Officer**

**Attendance:**

Daniel O'Brien (AAP Coordinator)  
Andrea Boyd (AAP Community Development Project Officer)  
Joanne Ashworth (Towns & Villages Community Development Project Officer)

**Apologies:**

Cllr Angela Hanson, Cllr Gordon Binney, Cllr Carl Marshall, Nerise Oldfield-Thompson (Public Representative), Vicky Walton (Public Representative), Michael Pearson (Fire Service), Linda Tyman (Public Representative), Joanne Clennell (County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group), Lesley Lines (AAP Support Officer)

Signed (Chair of meeting) .....

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**Public Attendance:** Seven members of the Forum/Public attended the meeting.

**1. Introductions and Apologies:**

Suzanne Jobson, Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies are noted above.

**2. Declaration of Interest:**

Board Members were asked to declare any personal or pecuniary interest in relation to the agenda as per the AAP Terms of Reference: No personal or pecuniary interests were recorded.

**3. Agreement of the minutes – 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and Matters Arising:**

Suzanne asked for agreement of the previous Board Minutes. The minutes were agreed as a true record. Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.

**4. Durham County Council Budget Consultation Presentation**

Martyn Stenton, Head of Early Help, Inclusion and Vulnerable Children, Durham County Council gave the Durham County Council Budget Consultation presentation:

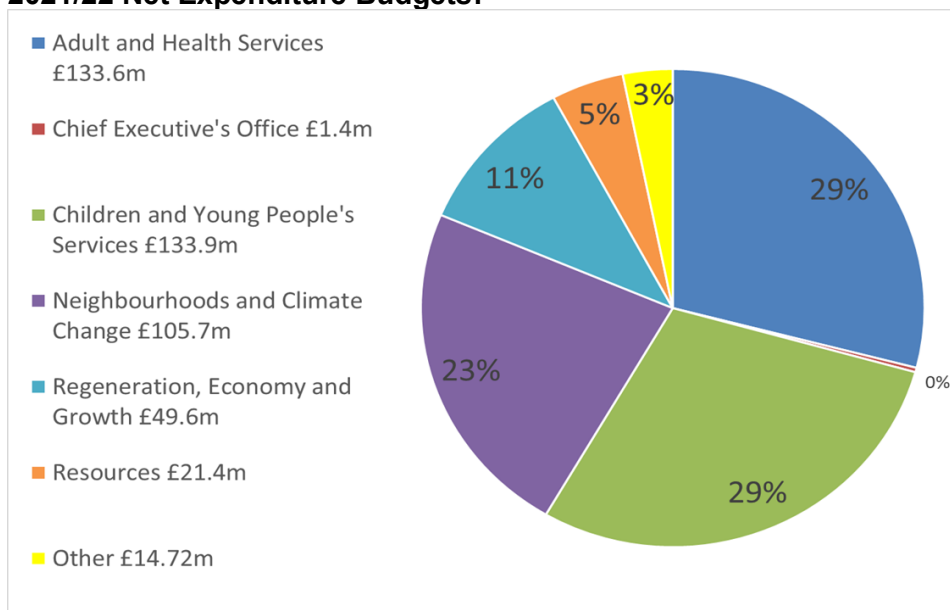
Martyn advised that he would give an overview of the Council Budget and Council Tax Position, outline the current position; 2022/23 Budget and 2022/23 to 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Plan, and then put some questions to the AAP Board for consideration and take any further queries.

**2021/22 Revenue Budget:**

- Gross Expenditure Budget £1.1 billion
- Sum financed by Council Tax £241 million
- Percentage of Gross Expenditure 21%
- Expenditure on Employees £300 million
- Expenditure purchasing services £427 million

The council's biggest budgets relate to the purchase of services such as residential and nursing care and home care for adults and residential care and support for children.

**2021/22 Net Expenditure Budgets:**



**Council Tax Overview:**

- Council tax is calculated by reference to the “Band D” Council tax calculation

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- In County Durham the majority of properties are in the lower Council Tax Bands and only pay a proportion of the Band D Council Tax
- Durham County Council is a **low tax base** authority due to the high proportion of properties in the lower Bands
- This means we have a low Band D equivalent tax base and a higher Band D Council Tax
- In county Durham 83% of all properties are in Bands A to C

**Council Tax Comparisons:**

- The proportion of properties in each Council Tax band varies significantly across the country, impacting on the tax raising capacity of individual local authorities
- In England, on average, 66% of all properties are within bands A to C
- In County Durham 83% of all properties are within bands A to C
- Authorities with a low band D council tax tend to be in affluent areas where the average amount paid by their residents is significantly higher as more properties are in Bands E to H and therefore pay more than the band D amount (Band H pays double the band D figure)
- The majority (57%) of County Durham taxpayers live in a Band A property and currently pay 2/3rds of the Band D Council Tax = £1,135.72 p.a.

**Council Tax Comparisons – Actual Council Tax Paid:**

- The average Council Tax paid per household in England is £1,428 p.a.
- The average Council Tax charged per household in County Durham is £1,258 – £170 (12%) below the national average
- Of the 309 Local Authorities in England we rank 241st in terms of the highest Council Tax – i.e. **in the bottom 25%**
- Durham also has a significant safety net for vulnerable low income households through its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – we are the only Council in the N. East and one of only a few nationally that does not cap the level of support available.
- 80% of all eligible (financially vulnerable) working age households (c36,000) in Co. Durham receive 100% support and have no bill to pay.

**2022/23 Budget – Current Position / Considerations:**

The council estimates additional unavoidable base budget pressures in 2022/23 arising from the following:

	<b>£million</b>
6.6% National Living Wage Uplift and other Inflation on care fees	12.0
Pay Inflation for council employees – estimate of 3% (CPI 5.1%)	7.1
Looked After Children	4.4
Waste Disposal	4.4
Home to School Transport	2.6
Inflation on other expenditure areas at 2.5% (CPI 5.1%)	2.9
Additional Borrowing to Fund Capital Expenditure	3.0
Energy Costs – Electricity and Gas	3.1
Staffing and Other Pressures	2.4
National Insurance 1.25% increase on employee costs	1.5

The council is forecasting to receive increased funding from government, is able to withdraw a range of one-off investments in 2021/22 and has identified efficiency savings for 2022/23.

Taken together this will reduce the unavoidable cost pressure identified to around £7 million i.e., this is the current forecast of budget shortfall for 2022/23

The council is able to raise council tax in 2022/23 by 4.99% - this is a 1.99% “base” council tax increase (i.e., the referendum limit) and a 3% adult social care precept the council is able to utilise in 2022/23.

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Council tax in presently £241 million. A 1% increase generates c£2.4 million with the maximum 4.99% generating c£12 million additional Council Tax revenues

**Other Risks and Issues:**

- The government is expected to finalise a review into the apportionment of government funding between local authorities in 2022 for possible implementation in 2023/24. This will lead to winners and losers across local government
- Local authorities will receive additional government grant over the next three years financed from the health and social care levy. However, this will be required to finance the cap on care costs and changes to the means test, possibly bringing other “self-funders” onto council contract rates. The Council will also have to implement a “fair cost of care” for service provision. At this point there is no clarity if the funding received will be enough to cover the additional costs and loss of income
- Base budget pressures across all service areas are a major concern at this point for the future with inflation set to be higher than 5% over the next year, the ongoing long-term impact of the pandemic being unknown and with the demands upon our services continuing to increase.

**Key Messages and Questions for the AAP:**

- Council is in a strong financial position, but things can quickly turn – need to continue to plan and prepare for the worst
- A range of unavoidable additional budget pressures need to be accommodated next year
- Significant uncertainty exists over impact of possible redistribution of government funding and Social Care Levy / Social Care changes in the medium term
- Council continues to suffer from low tax base and limitations on tax raising capacity
- Additional flexibility on council tax increases and expectation from Govt that this is taken – if not taken in any one year cannot be recovered, is lost forever from base

**Questions:**

- **What is the AAP view on balancing the 2022/23 forecast budget shortfall from council tax increases vs reductions in services or one-off use of reserves which would increase the savings required in 2023/24?**

**Responses from Stanley AAP Board Members Present:**

Overall members welcomed the information about the budget and the options – some would like to see more detail and more information in advance of being presented information during the meeting.

Members had a range of views about the proposals, some recognised the need to look at a council tax increase and recognised that 3% would balance the books. There were concerns about the impact increases would have on local residents who were already finding it difficult to pay other bills which were going up significantly too.

The council tax reduction scheme was welcomed and hoped Durham would continue to support residents in this way.

A number of members didn't feel services should be cut but one member of the partnership felt there would be scope for further savings and didn't feel as an example that spend on the neighbourhood wardens could be justified.

There was interest in the council looking more at its use of reserves and if this could in part or all balance the books this year. There wasn't information in the presentation about the scale of the

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reserves and the treasury management strategy, so people didn't know the scale of the reserves or if the council was getting a good return from them in light of inflation eroding savings.

There was an interest in seeing how the figures for a council tax increase applied at resident level rather than just in terms of the overall council budget. It was felt this would be helpful for future years to present it so people knew what it would mean for individual residents – this was calculated and shared during the discussion to illustrate what a 3% increase would mean for a Band A and average council tax payer.

**Next Steps:**

- Take on board feedback from budget consultations
- Budget report presented to Cabinet on 9 February 2022
- Cabinet report then presented to Full Council on 23 February 2022 where budget approval and council tax for 2022/23 will be sought.

The Chair thanked Martyn for the presentation.

**5. Neighbourhood Issues and Locality Policing Issues:**

N. Insp Dave Stewart advised that levels of Anti-Social Behaviour are on the decrease in the Stanley area. He also informed the meeting that shift patterns had been changed in response to anticipated sickness levels as a result of the new variant, and that they would soon be reverting back to normal neighbourhood policing shifts.

Q: John asked if County Durham had the highest drink and drive record in the Country following the Police's Christmas 2021 drink and drive campaign?

A: Dave advised he would consult with the Traffic Department to find out.

Q: Christine stated that delinquents had been harassing residents in Annfield Plain and asked if they were still terrorizing Stanley or have now moved onto Annfield Plain?

A: Dave stated that there would be some displacement, but if residents report the issues they will be acted upon.

**6. AAP Coordinator Update:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Community Recovery Project Call Out**

Daniel stated that the deadline for project applications for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Community Recovery Project Call Out was 5pm on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022. A number of enquiries have been made to the Stanley AAP Office with application emails sent out to those that wish to apply. Daniel encouraged all Board Members and Forum Members to publicise this funding window via their networks.

**1st Community Recovery Successful Project Applicants Update:**

Daniel advised that the successful project applications had undergone a further technical appraisal with the Funding Team and that he had been working with applicants to answer any queries that had arose. It is hoped that the grants will be authorised soon, and the projects will be able to commence in the local community.

**Storm Arwen Feedback Support**

Daniel informed the Board Meeting that Gordon Elliott, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement at Durham County Council had sent thank you letters to all the voluntary and community sector organisations from across County Durham who had stepped up to support residents without power after Storm Arwen. The letter also contains guidance of how groups can apply for any expenses that they accrued because of the support they provided.

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## 7. Partner Work Update / Stanley specific items of interest:

### Jobcentre Plus

- The Jobcentre is still open for business, although some interviews are still being carried out on the phone.
- DurhamWorks Job Fair in Stanley Civic Hall has been moved from the 27<sup>th</sup> January to the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.

### Love Beamish & Stanley:

- The new website will be live during the last week of January
- There will be a Jobs Page on the website and an Events page. All partners and organisations are encouraged to pass on any jobs or events details to Love Beamish & Stanley to include.

### Wellbeing for Life:

- A new weekly Men's Group is to start on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 from 10:30am – 11:30am in Stanley Indoor Bowls Club.
- We are also exploring setting up some more new groups in the Stanley such as seated exercise. Anyone with any suggestions for new groups are encouraged to get in touch.

### Stanley Town Council

- New Town Clerk starts early February.
- DurhamWorks Job Fair is the 23<sup>rd</sup> March as outlined.
- Stanley Community Fund has received a number of applications and will be assessed by the end of January.
- The Pantomime: Beauty & The Beast was a great success and a big thank you to everyone who attended and helped publicise it. Christmas Eve show was a sell-out.
- Job Fare with Durham Works 27<sup>th</sup> January.
- Stanley Town Council will continue their annual events programme in 2022 and will include Stanley in Bloom, Play in the Park, Jubilee Event, and Armed Forces Day.

### Foundation of Light:

- Our delivery hubs are gradually being opened back up in Durham for local community use and for the delivery of our training courses.
- Courses will include Employability, Hospitality and Tourism, Customer Service, English and Maths.

### Durham Constabulary:

- We held a successful Police and Community Together (PACT) Meeting in Stanley Indoor Bowls Centre that focused on the Anti-Social Behaviour issues in Stanley.
- Exploring the use of Shop Watch Radios for Town Centre businesses.
- Asked Stanley Town Council to give them as much notice as possible for the events where they would like a Police presence.

### Karbon Homes:

- The Skills Hub on Stanley Front Street is currently operating an appointment only attendance system.
- Our Money Advice Service is available to be accessed by all Karbon Homes Tenants.
- Karbon Homes also provide a range of services for residents who aren't Karbon Homes tenants.

## 8. Neighbourhood Budget Summaries:

### Summary Description – Artichoke Trust – Plastica Botanica, Lumiere Durham 2021

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The project will support Lumiere to deliver a workshop and display that highlights plastic waste. The Project is in partnership with 14 Councillors from across the County.

**Project Cost: £2,400.00**  
**Councillor Joyce Charlton Contribution: £200.00**

**Summary Description – Craghead Development Trust – Burnside Youth Club**

The project will see Burnside youth club's weekly groups for local children 6yrs - 11yrs continue to run, the club has been successful over the last 7 years and proven invaluable to the young people within the area. The club will also start a new club for over 12s, the funding will contribute towards, level 3 youth worker, room hire, refreshments, resources, and materials.

**Project Cost: £2,080.00**  
**Councillor Sam McMahon Contribution: £500.00**  
**Councillor Carol Hampson Contribution: £500.00**  
**Councillor Carl Marshall Contribution: £500.00**  
**Councillor Angela Hanson Contribution: £500.00**

**Small Grants:**

**Applicant: Tanfield Lea and District Community Association**

**Project Brief:** To Purchase Film license and refreshments for young people's Christmas project.

**Total Cost: £350.00**  
**Councillor Joyce Charlton Contribution: £200.00**

**Applicant: Annfield Plain Football Club**

**Project Brief:** Purchase refreshments and decorations for Santa's grotto.

**Total Cost: £ 250.00**  
**Councillor Joan Nicholson Contribution: £75.00**  
**Councillor Christine Bell Contribution: £75.00**

**Applicant: North East Horticultural Society**

**Project Brief:** Hall hire for Community meetings.

**Total Cost: £200.00**  
**Councillor Joyce Charlton Contribution: £50.00**  
**Councillor Sam McMahon Contribution: £50.00**  
**Councillor Christine Bell Contribution: £50.00**  
**Councillor Joan Nicholson Contribution: £50.00**

**Applicant: Catchgate and Annfield Plain Action Partnership.**

**Project Brief:** Refreshments for Christmas 2021.

**Total Cost: £5,000.00**  
**Councillor Christine Bell Contribution: £500.00**

**Applicant: Pontop Partnership of Churches**

**Project Brief:** Children's Love Christmas project.

**Total Cost: £2,000.00**  
**Councillor Joyce Charlton Contribution: £100.00**  
**Councillor Sam McMahon Contribution: £100.00**  
**Councillor Gordon Binney Contribution: £100.00**  
**Councillor Carole Hampson Contribution: £100.00**

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**Pre-Notified Any Other Business:**

- Cllr Nicholson informed the meeting that a Citizens Advice Worker is now available locally to work with people who are struggling with their utility bills.

**Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 4.00pm on Stanley AAP's dedicated 'Teams' page.

For further details about these minutes please contact Stanley AAP office, Tel: 03000 265323.

Signed (Chair of meeting) .....

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