

Durham Area Action Partnership Minutes of the Board Meeting
Wednesday 15 November 2023
(Virtual Meeting - held via Microsoft Teams)

Board Members

Attendance: Chris Tindale, Cllr Eric Mavin, Rebecca Ashby, Gary Tidbury, Cllr Liz Brown, Cllr Bill Kellett, Jen Straughan-Hawley, Cllr Lucy Hovvels, Colin Stephenson, Paul Howard, Lee Alexander, Cllr Lesley Mavin, Dan Lonsdale, Mark Adamson, Sam Humble, Sheela Bell, Cllr Richard Ormerod, Hannah Shepherd, Victoria Ashfield, Maureen Boettcher, Paul Lysaght

AAP Officer

Attendance: Craig Morgan – AAP Co-ordinator
Wendy Lavelle – Community Development Project Officer
Lyndsey Hunter – Community Development Project Officer
PJ Harding – Community Development Project Officer (Towns and Villages Team)
Marie Ainscough – AAP Support Officer

Presenter: Graeme Smith - Housing Development Manager, Durham County Council

Apologies Board: Sarah Burns, Georgia Donohue

Forum Members: 5 forum members attended the meeting.

1 [Welcome from the Chair, Introductions and Apologies](#)

Jen Straughan-Hawley (Chair) welcomed everyone to the online Durham AAP Board Meeting. A round of introductions followed.

Apologies for absence, [as above].

2 [Presentation: Second Council Budget Consultation](#)

Lee Alexander – Head of Adult Care, Durham County Council delivered a presentation on the 2024/25 County Council Forecast Revenue Budget Consultation which included an update on the Council's medium term financial forecasts; the major reasons for changes to the financial forecast and impact and the additional savings options to help close the forecast budget shortfall.

The views of the AAP were sought on the following -

- Our proposed approach to balance the budget further has identified additional savings of £1.9 million in 2024/25 and £2.9 million across the four-year period from savings from back office and making efficiencies,

raising additional income and changes to delivering frontline services – what is the AAP view on this approach?

- What do you feel will be the impact of this approach upon you, your communities or those you represent? – why do you believe this would be the case?
- Do you have any additional ideas or suggestions as to areas where we can raise further income or become more efficient in the years to come?

The deadline for feedback is 5.00pm on Sunday 3 December 2023. Feedback from both budget consultations will be taken to Cabinet in January 2024 with the budget report presented to Cabinet on 14 February 2024. Cabinet budget proposals will then be presented to Full Council on 28 February 2024 where budget approval and Council Tax for 2024/25 will be set. Work is underway to identify further budget savings to meet the shortfall expected for the MTFP 2024/25 – 2027/28.

The Chair thanked Lee for his presentation and the meeting was opened for discussion –

- Has the Council thought about working in partnership with a private enterprise rather than trying to continue to offer services within the budget they have?
This is done in certain areas such as integrated working with the NHS. This helps to draw down funding. Work done by Business Durham is another example.
- Can you expand on the savings around neighbourhood protection. A Board member highlighted that there was an empty school building in the area she represented that had been empty for two years and was costing a lot of money in terms of resources from the fire service, the police as well as impacting on the council.
- You mentioned the level of inflation. What measures are you using?
This can depend on what is being measured as it differs between wages, utilities and supplies and services.
- What might there be in the way of opportunities to generate income which is going to make a difference quickly for example get empty homes back into use again.
- A forum member commented that, it's not correct to say they're efficiency savings as there are no efficiency savings left to be made.

Lee agreed to get more specific detail/information on the questions/comments raised above and feedback.

3 Presentation: Housing & Homelessness Strategies

Graeme Smith - Housing Development Manager, Durham County Council delivered a presentation on the above. The purpose of this presentation was to provide an overview of the vision and principles of the draft Housing Strategy and the key points and priorities of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and to obtain feedback as part of the joint consultation on the draft strategies.

Consultation for both draft strategies run until 18 December 2023. You can provide feedback on the Housing Strategy and/or the Draft County Durham Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy online at www.durham.gov.uk/consultation email your comments to thehousingconversation@durham.gov.uk or at any of the council's Customer Access Points and libraries.

The meeting was opened for discussion –

- Why has the City of Durham not been included in the selective licensing programme? Can you give us a date when this would come into the city? *A date cannot be given at this time but there is a call for selective licencing to cover a wider area.*
- The student representative on the Board said they would continue to work on selective licencing as it was a necessity for the City of Durham but wondered why students have not been included in discussions. *It was agreed these were well made points and would be taken on board.*
- Failing to look at the big picture in terms of how the housing stock is used throughout the county.
- Strategies around student housing/licencing are not functioning in the way they should be for the benefit of the local community and the students.

4 [Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 September 2023 and matters arising](#)

The Chair reviewed the previous minutes for matters arising, actions and accuracy.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Five applications that were considered and approved are now being processed.

5 [AAP Funding Update](#)

An update on the current funding position had been included in the papers.

£118,188 of Area Budget projects had been approved; and there was £9,596 left to allocate. If the Board approved the Durham Scouts application (item 6), there would be no Area Budget remaining.

Towns and Villages Funding

£190,306 of Towns and Villages Funding projects had been approved; and there was £19,694 left to allocate. If the Board approved the Peskies Park application (item 6), there would be no Towns and Villages Fund remaining.

6 Task Group Updates / Review

Healthy and Resilient Communities Application Discussion

- Durham Scouts

An application had been received for £9,596.00 towards a total project cost of £12,547.00.

The funding had been requested to help Durham Scouts purchase new equipment which would allow them to sustain their camping and outdoor activities. Receiving the funding will allow the scout leaders to focus more time on core scouting activities.

Chris Tindale, Chair of the Healthy and Resilient Communities Task Group provided a brief overview of the project and explained that the applicant had provided satisfactory responses to the questions raised at the task group meeting.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

Improving Our Villages and City Application Discussion

- Peskies Park

An application had been received for £19,694.00 towards a total project cost of £19,694.00.

Peskies Park is a green space sandwiched between Laburnum Terrace and the railway line in the viaduct area of Durham City. There had been little investment in the park over recent years. Working with local people the County Council had developed an initiative to improve the park for the whole area. This would include planting and seating.

The Board was happy to support this project and it was approved.

7 Project Monitoring Update Report Q2 - 2023/24 (July to September 2023)

Craig delivered a presentation on the Quarter 2 project progress report for the period 1 July 2023 – 30 September 2023. Durham AAP is required to monitor all area budget projects it had funded on a quarterly basis and at their completion by the AAP funding team. Neighbourhood budget projects over £10,000 are also monitored.

A comprehensive report on all projects currently being monitored had previously been circulated to Board members for information.

Neighbourhood Budgets updates and approvals

The following neighbourhood budget projects were shared with the Board -

Name of Scheme: Belmont Library Defibrillator
Councillor(s): Lesley Mavin / Eric Mavin
Interest Declared: Yes, both Eric and Lesley are Belmont Parish Councillors
Amount: £1,484.00

Name of Scheme: Heaviside, Gilesgate – Salt Bin
Councillor(s): Eric Mavin
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £1,405.00

Name of Scheme: Installation of path – Moorfield Park
Councillor(s): Lesley Mavin / Eric Mavin / Christine Fletcher
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £8,976.00

Name of Scheme: Installation of metal fencing – Rennys Lane
Councillor(s): Eric Mavin / Lesley Mavin
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £6,882.00

Name of Scheme: Shadforth Road Safety Scheme
Councillor(s): David Hall / Bill Kellett
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £8,000.00

Name of Scheme: Ainsley Street Footpath Resurfacing
Councillor(s): Liz Brown
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £3,951.00

Name of Scheme: Hastings Avenue 20 mph Scheme
Councillor(s): Liz Brown / Elizabeth Scott
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £9,434.00

Name of Scheme: East Side Avenue Footpath
Councillor(s): Marion Wilson
Interest Declared: Yes, Marion is a Parish Councillor
Amount: £5,650.72

Name of Scheme: Durham City Youth Project
Councillor(s): Amanda Hopgood / Mark Wilkes / Mamie Simmons
Interest Declared: Yes, Mamie is a Trustee of the organisation
Amount: £3,000.00

Name of Scheme: Village Newsletter
Councillor(s): David Stoker
Interest Declared: No
Amount: £2,250.00

The Board was happy for the projects to go ahead and the interests as declared.

Fun and Food (Holiday Activities with Healthy Food)

We received four Fun and Food applications for Christmas 2023 totalling £6,581.65. There was £6,931.99 available for this holiday period.

1. MK Youth Sports - £2,995.00 - a query was raised in relation to the percentage of children on free school meals.
2. Go the Distance - £1,637.00
3. Harbour Support - £690.00
4. Laurel Avenue Community Centre - £1,259.65

The Board agreed to support all 4 fun and food projects.

9 Coordinators / Chairs Update

Coordinator's Update

Craig had met with people from Climate Fresk who run sessions on environment and climate change. They would like to run a session with Board members in the New Year and had requested a slot on the January Board Meeting agenda.

It was highlighted that Durham AAP were still in need of a partner representative to act as Vice Chair on the Board.

A meeting will be taking place in the next couple of weeks to discuss the AAP Review and how we shape this more effectively; changes will be implemented from March onwards.

The AAP team had been working on a project for West Rainton Football Club and developing projects around some work at Sidegate in Durham.

Craig had been carrying out work with the consultation team on the Air Quality Management Plan for Durham City.

Craig continues to support Jubilee Hall, West Rainton to help them sustain their future and he had attended a meeting in the cathedral to talk about the World Heritage Site.

Chair's Update

Jen said she would be working as a volunteer at the Lumiere event.

10 Partner Updates

Paul Howard from Durham BID provided the following written update - Our Independents campaign begins again on Friday to kickstart the festive season for us. We will host our street entertainment events every weekend on 2nd, 9th, 16th and 17th December at various locations. Christmas Festival from 1st to 3rd where we will have a stand promoting Indy campaign, Restaurant Week and a selection of local businesses. Business confidence is reasonably buoyant, and footfall is stable if somewhat subdued still. Lumiere begins tomorrow. Restaurant Week is being planned again for the last week in January and the plan for Fire and Ice 2024 is progressing - theme will be North-East landmarks.

Colin Stephenson – Health

Colin reported that County Durham had the most available appointments in comparison to other regions. The ICB is undergoing a period of transition looking to make 30% of savings and will see a reduction of 95 NHS commissioning posts; will share the proposed structure for County Durham before the end of the financial year.

Sheela Bell – Voluntary Community Sector update

The latest statistics published by the VCSE Barometer survey show that the three highest areas of concern in our sector are: securing income, an increasing demand for services and a decreasing number of volunteers. Small charities which make up 80% of the sector, are the most affected, where larger charities are beginning to see early signs of recovery after what has been a four year period of uncertainty since the beginning of Covid. We can only hope this translates to the hundreds of smaller VCS orgs our communities depend upon. We're also seeing the retail arm of charities in the sector face a decline in sales as a result on the ongoing bus strike.

Unsurprisingly Cost of living remains top of the list in all sector news, but we are seeing more resources become available to the sector, for example the Charities Aid Foundation have resources on areas such as governance and brining in funds. The National Lottery Community Fund has also announced that maximum grants under its Awards for All scheme will double to £20,000, in an attempt to increase funds available to VC organisations.

More than half of all children and young people growing up in the North East of England are in families relying on Universal Credit or similar legacy benefits. We're fortunate to have organisations in our sector fighting for entitlement to these benefits and indeed fighting for an increase in universal credit, the County Durham Community Foundation are just one of over 50 North East organisations who have signed an open letter to the Chancellor appealing for support.

And lastly an update from the Hospice sector. We're facing the same challenges as the rest of the sector, we're seeing both the frequency and value of donations decrease which has a direct correlation to the cost of living crisis. We're seeing demand increase with an ever ageing population and like many others, we're constantly recruiting to volunteer posts to help us deliver our services. That being said we're experiencing a wonderful amount of corporate support, our community of supporters are staunchly loyal and we're nearing the end of our first year of Community Outreach where we've been able to take elements of Hospice care into the community. This project is currently being delivered in Chester le Street and we've connected with hundreds of people living with life limiting illnesses, supporting them and their carers and loved ones.

Sam Humble – Believe Housing

- Housing register continues to grow.
- The cold weather and dark nights bring issues with heating and customers are struggling; there are schemes in place to help.
- Big issue around no access.
- Anti-social behaviour showing some decrease however the complexity of cases is difficult to deal with.
- A good neighbourhood leaflet had been produced.
- Increase in safeguarding and domestic abuse.

Dan Lonsdale – Students' Union President

- Good to see new students arriving.
- Work ongoing around housing and licencing.
- 91% of gas certificates are currently out of date in HMOs that are licenced or registered.

11 [Any other Business](#)

None.

12 [Date and time of next meeting](#)

Tuesday 30 January 2024, 6.00 pm, Merryoaks Community Hall, Park House Road, Merryoaks, Durham, DH1 3QF

Everyone was thanked for their attendance and the meeting closed.