

# Notes of the Weardale Area Action Partnership AGM & Board Meeting

19<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at Durham Dales Centre,  
Stanhope



## PRESENT

### Board Members

**Public Representatives:** Phil Chatfield (PC)  
Tom Natrass (TN)  
Josephine Hayes (JH)  
Dawn Gregory (DG)

**Partner Representatives:** Catherine Findlay - Clinical Commissioning Group (CF)  
Julian Haynes – Voluntary Sector (JuH)  
Damian Pearson - County Durham Housing Group (DP)  
Stuart Timmiss – Durham County Council (ST)

**Elected Members:** Cllr Anita Savory (AS)  
Cllr Brian Thompson – Stanhope (BT)  
Cllr Helen Barrass – Muggleswick Parish Council (HB)

**Officers:** Angelina Maddison (AM)  
Tracy Edwards (TE)  
Fiona Barber (FB)

## Apologies

**Public Representatives:** Joan Warriner  
Tony Griffin  
Chris Powell

**Partner Representatives:** Peter Maddison – County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service  
Inspector Kevin Tuck – Durham Constabulary  
Inspector Ed Turner – Durham Constabulary  
Paul Smissen – Business Sector

**Elected Representatives:** Cllr David Sugden – Wolsingham  
Cllr Olive Wilson - Witton-le-Wear  
Trish Chapman (Hunstanworth)

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made around the table. Apologies recorded above.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked that any Declarations of Interest be raised at the appropriate time on the agenda.

## 3. Agreement of Notes from Board Meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and Matters Arising

The notes of this meeting, as printed and circulated, were **AGREED** and confirmed as a true record by those present.

There were no identified Matters Arising.

## 4. Local Neighbourhood Issues and PACT

AM advised the Board that it was Insp. Tuck's last week in post. Insp Ed Turner will be replacing him as our Police Representative on the WAP Board. The Chair asked that the WAP team send a letter of thanks to both Insp. Tuck and to the Chief Constable for his invaluable contribution to the work of the WAP Board. Action: The WAP Team to send a letter as described above on behalf of the members of the WAP Board.

AM advised Board members that at a Task Group meeting, a member of the public raised some concerns regarding issues with cyclists, off road and other vehicles both on the roads and on bridleways and pathways in the Crawleyside area. An extensive report was provided to the WAP team which has been forwarded to the police for them to address.

## 5. Presentations

### **Natural Flood Management – Kirsty Hardy – Environment Agency**

Kirsty gave a presentation on the Natural Flood Management project which is being undertaken in Weardale. Natural Flood management utilises features which are specifically designed to work with the natural processes in the landscape to slow river flows and reduce flood risk. The project has been funded by Defra and is one of a number of projects throughout the UK designed to look at how natural flood management can help to reduce flood risk.

A copy of the presentation is held on file. If you would like a copy of this please email the WAP team at [weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk](mailto:weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk)

Kirsty advised that she is looking to access the expert knowledge of local people in Weardale who know the history of the local environment and who know what happens to the water courses when it rains.

She advised that the Environment Agency has engaged with landowners and North Pennines AONB. She is also looking to set up a Local Expert Workshop to bring together people with local knowledge to look at detail at the area covered by the project. Any Board members interested in taking part in this workshop are invited to contact Kirsty via email on [kirsty.hardy@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:kirsty.hardy@environment-agency.gov.uk). Board members are also free to pass on this email address to anyone they think may be interested in taking part.

The Chair suggested using the local press to ask people who have been affected by flooding or have helped in the aftermath of a flood (e.g. the emergency services) to share their knowledge and experience. He also suggested publicising this in the WAP e-bulletin.

DP advised the County Durham Housing Group may have some information which could be useful regarding their properties in the area.

DG asked why Wolsingham was not included in the project area given that it has already suffered from two floods this year. Kirsty explained that the approach is to target from the top of the catchment area. It is anticipated that this will have an effect in Wolsingham.

The Chair thanked Kirsty for her presentation. He also told her that the WAP Board will support the project and offered its assistance in helping to gather people together.

### **County Durham Plan – Stuart Timmiss - Durham County Council**

Stuart gave a presentation on the County Durham Plan.

A copy of the presentation is held on file. If you would like a copy of this please email the WAP team at [weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk](mailto:weardaleaap@durham.gov.uk)

Stuart encouraged those present to take part in the consultation. The Consultation period runs from 22<sup>nd</sup> June until 3<sup>rd</sup> August at 4:30pm. Individual responses can be submitted in the following ways:

- online at: [www.durham.gov.uk/future](http://www.durham.gov.uk/future)
- Write to: FREEPOST SPATIAL POLICY (no further details needed)
- Pick up a response form from libraries or customer access points
- Email [cdpconsultation@durham.gov.uk](mailto:cdpconsultation@durham.gov.uk)

Questions were taken from Board members. Stuart outlined Durham County Council's policy on dealing with empty premises. He gave information on how the council works to try and bring properties back into use as well as the Powers of Enforcement available to the council that they hold to deal with 'blight' properties.

BT commented that at first glance this new County Durham Plan looks more positive for the residents of Weardale and he looks forward to its development.

ST reminded Board members that the Plan can still be improved. He encouraged Board members once again to take part in the consultation process and asked for specifics to be included as to what is good about the plan / what they would like to see in the plan as opposed to just general comments / objections.

The Chair thanked Stuart for his presentation.

## **6. Weardale Action Partnership Reports**

### **i. Consultation Report**

AM advised Board members that Durham County Council are moving towards using electronic means as a way of gathering information. The WAP team have noticed that when they try to gather information in this way it results in very poor response rates. The WAP team undertook a number of roadshows and visits across Weardale to look at various methods of communication in an effort to understand which is best to use in Weardale.

AM advised Board members that the result of this work was that the WAP team identified that residents of Weardale would much rather speak face to face with someone. A report has been compiled detailing the experiences and findings of the team which will be shared with colleagues at Durham County Council.

Some discussion took place regarding IT competencies and accessibility of Broadband etc. Generally, Board members agreed that the findings in the report correlated with their own experiences and thanked the WAP team for the effort that had gone into obtaining this information.

AM asked that Board members submit any comments on the report by 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2018.

## **ii. Rural Advice Worker Report**

AM gave a brief background of the Rural Advice Worker project which was funded through Welfare Reform funding. AM told the Board that the outcomes of this project had far exceeded her expectations.

Since the start of the project in April 2017 up to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018:

- 127 home visits have been conducted
- £215,275.36 of income has been gained for clients
- £99,818.78 of debt has been managed for clients

AM shared her concern that this project is only just scratching the surface of the issues faced by residents of Weardale and asked the Board if they would like to allocate the Welfare Reform funding to fund this project for a further year.

DP observed that when Universal Credit comes in it will have an effect on people.

Board members **AGREED** that an Area Budget application can be prepared to continue the Rural Advice Worker project for a further year.

AS asked the Board if a letter of appreciation can be sent to Linda to recognise the sterling work she is doing for residents of Weardale.

**Action: WAP team to send a letter on behalf of the Board.**

ST suggested asking Linda for some information to see if broader issues sitting behind the debt and welfare issues that she deals with can be identified and also investigate whether there is any other way that Board members could help Linda as she supports others.

**Action: AM to invite Linda to the next Board meeting to provide an update to the project and to begin to look at the broader issues.**

## **iii. Young Firefighters**

TN told fellow Board members about his visits to both Wolsingham School and Stanhope Fire Station to see the Young Firefighters. All recruits are enthusiastic and plans are underway to gain more recruits. TN advised that there are discussions taking place as to whether to amalgamate the two groups in order that both benefit from the facilities on offer at the recently refurbished Fire Station in Stanhope.

## **iv. Wearhead Clippy Mat Group**

TE informed the Board that during a visit to the Clippy Mat Group when the WAP team was carrying out its roadshows, a member stated how it would be useful for the

group to have a boiler to be able to dye fabric to specific colours. The boiler cost £100 and was funded through the Small Grants element of Cllr Mrs Savory's Neighbourhood Budget.

## **7. Priorities 2018/19 Financial Year**

AM drew the Board's attention to the spreadsheet provided which gave an overview of the projects in development by the Task Groups.

### **Children, Young People and Families Task Group**

- i. Witton le Wear Youth Provision – Witton le Wear Parish Council has offered £1,500 and Witton le Wear Community Association have offered half price room hire to enable a project to bring youth workers to the village. The WAP team is currently awaiting written confirmation of the half price room hire.
- ii. Stanhope Play Area – The WAP team is working with Stanhope Parish Council to develop a project to enhance the provision at Stanhope Play Area. The project is currently in the process of acquiring 3 quotations.
- iii. Underpin kickabouts – A project to underpin the sessions previously provided by the Sports Activator Apprentices. An Area Budget application is currently being prepared.
- iv. Rural Skills Training – A continuation of a previous project that was funded four years ago. UTASS matched our contribution and has been able to deliver a number of training courses at subsidised rates for the farming community of Weardale.
- v. Witton le Wear Breakfast Club – still in development.
- vi. Baby, Toddler and Parent wellbeing – The WAP team is working with colleagues in Health to bring a number of opportunities to Weardale.

### **Culture, Tourism and Heritage**

- i. Walkers Are Welcome – PC explained the concept of this project to Board members and advised that the Wolsingham Wayfarers are very enthusiastic about this project. It is hoped that this project will be used as a basis for further walking projects e.g. to improve The Weardale Way
- ii. Low Barns Visitor Centre Refurbishment – PC explained that the Task Group had received a presentation from the Durham Wildlife Trust outlining their plans for a refurbished Visitor Centre at Low Barns. The Task Group have agreed to recommend the project for Board approval subject to certain caveats regarding more detailed information of the actual plans when available.
- iii. Slitt Wood / Groverake / Rookhope Arch – A project to improve access to these sites and to provide information boards. North Pennines AONB are currently completing an Area Budget application form.
- iv. Winking Sheep Sportive – Documentation has been received from the committee and is being processed.

Board members were enthusiastic about the project at Low Barns and asked if Durham Wildlife Trust can be encouraged to utilise their location at the beginning of Weardale to encourage visitors to travel further into Weardale.

DG asked about the Walkers Are Welcome petition. AM advised that its purpose is to make sure that local residents are aware of the plans to gain accreditation status.

Wolsingham Wayfarers will be taking the petition on their walks and a copy is also being placed at Bradley Burn Farm. The WAP team will also take it to each of the Agricultural Shows later this summer.

## **8. Budget Overview and Decision making**

AM explained to Board members the different budgets available to them. She reminded them that the role of the Task Group is to identify and develop projects to a stage where they are ready to be taken to WAP Board members to ask for their approval for funding.

### **Area Budget**

The role of the Board member is to look at and approve Area Budget applications. Any concerns should be raised prior to the Board meeting at which the application is tabled in order to allow sufficient time for the concern to be addressed. Board members can ask for Terms and Conditions to be placed on submitted applications.

### **Social Isolation Fund**

AM reminded the Board that this year we have been allocated £25,000 to address issues surrounding Social Isolation. She asked for volunteers from the Board to be a part of a Task Group to look into this. DG, JH and DP asked to be a member of this Task Group.

### **Neighbourhood Budgets**

AM reminded Board members that their role is not to approve Neighbourhood Budget applications but instead to add value to the projects. If there is a conflict of interest with an application then the Board members will need to approve the application in order for it to proceed. AM stated that sometimes it is necessary to ask for Board comments / approvals electronically. In these cases it is helpful that each Board member submits a response to the email.

### **Decision Making**

Board members were asked to consider the following projects for approval of funding from the Area Budget.

### **Low Barns Visitor Centre Refurbishment**

AM reminded Board members that if this funding was secured that no money would be released until the condition placed by the Task Group was met – namely that they would have sight of more detailed plans or artists impressions of the work to be undertaken.

DG asked how accessible the new Visitor Centre would be. AM advised that she would ask Durham Wildlife Trust for more information. PC suggested that any future projects in a similar vein should always be asked to provide an accessibility plan.

**The Board APPROVED the project subject to the identified Terms and Conditions and allocated £20,000 of Area Budget.**

### **Wolsingham Skate Park**

**Cllr Mrs Anita Savory declared an interest.**

**The Board APPROVED the project and allocated £20,000 of Area Budget**

### **Small Grants Fund**

AM reminded Board members that they had agreed to top slice the Area Budget at the Board meeting in May to provide for the Small Grants Fund.

**The Board APPROVED the project and allocated £20,000 of Area Budget**

### **Rural Skills Training**

AM advised Board members that the Children, Young People and Families Task Group have yet to see the full application so this would not be forwarded to the funding team until the Task Group were happy with the application.

**The Board APPROVED the project and allocated £10,000 of Area Budget.**

## **9. 2018/19 Neighbourhood Budget**

Two of Cllr Mrs Savory's Neighbourhood Budget applications were submitted to the Board for approval due to there being conflicts of interest in both applications:

- Centenary Outdoor Room – Wolsingham Primary School  
**The Board APPROVED the project**
- Community Day  
**The Board APPROVED the project**

DG asked how people become aware of the funding that County Councillors have available to them. AM advised that people can talk to the elected members or a member of the WAP team.

Board members discussed the general principle of Neighbourhood Budgets. They expressed concern at the ability to roll budgets forward into a fourth year and the potential for all spend to take place in an election year. Board members advocated a system whereby County Councillors were free to ring-fence a portion of their Neighbourhood Budget to be spent in the following year but felt strongly that a certain amount should be spent 'in-year'.

The Chair stopped the discussion as it was beyond the remit of the Board.

The Board asked if the WAP team would write to Gordon Elliott, Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement to raise this issue. **Action: WAP team**

### **Weardale Agricultural Show**

Board members were notified of Cllr Shuttleworth's Neighbourhood Budget application to provide funding for marquees at Weardale Agricultural Show. There was no conflict of interest and Board members were asked if they could add value to this application. No comments were made.

### **Frosterley Village Hall**

Cllr Shuttleworth allocated some of his 2016/17 Neighbourhood Budget to Frosterley Village Hall to go towards the refurbishment of the caretakers flat. The project has not developed as hoped and the Village Hall have approached Cllr Shuttleworth to see if the money can be used in a different way. They would like the funding to go towards the refurbishment of the heating system. As this is a change of intention for the funding it is a requirement by the Funding Team that the WAP Board approves this application.

**The Board APPROVED the project**

## **10. Countywide Partner Issues**

None

## **11. Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

Board members discussed the possibility of changing the date of Board meetings during the winter months at the request of HB. After consulting the information gathered from Board members the Board decided that meetings remain on Thursdays.

**Next meeting – Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September, 6:00pm – 8:00pm in Durham Dales Centre.**

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.