

**GREAT AYCLIFFE & MIDDRIDGE PARTNERSHIP (GAMP)
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020, 2:00PM (via Microsoft Teams)**



Better for everyone

PRESENT:

Elected Members

Cllr Eddy Adam – DCC
Cllr James Atkinson – DCC (Vice Chair)
Cllr John Clare – DCC
Cllr Kate Hopper – DCC
Cllr Paul Howell – DCC

Public Representatives

Sean Barnett
Sue Cooke (Vice Chair)
Chris Hutchinson
Alan Jordan
Carl Robinson
David Sutton-Lloyd
Natalie Whitworth

Partner Representatives

Daniel Blagdon – Health Representative
Andy Coulthard – Living Housing
Richard Crane – Durham County Council
Carol Gaskarth – Voluntary & Community Sector Representative
Insp Sarah Honeyman – Police (**Chair**)
Sharon Hutchinson – Business Representative
Malcolm Woodward – Fire Service

OFFICER

ATTENDANCE:

Brian Riley – GAMP Coordinator
Victoria Grieves – GAMP Community Development Project Officer
Paula Stockport – GAMP Support Officer
Alison Clark – DCC Head of Culture, Sport & Tourism
Susan Robinson – DCC Head of Corporate Property & Land

OBSERVERS:

Mr R Adamson

APOLOGIES:

Oliver Sherratt

1. Introductions & Apologies

Insp SH welcomed everyone to the meeting and handed over to BR for an outline of 'house rules/etiquette' for the meeting. BR asked everyone to be aware that the GAMP team weren't recording the meeting but couldn't guarantee that other attendees wouldn't be making their own recording.

BR reminded Board members of the standard Declaration of Interest item on the agenda. BR reminded meeting observers they would be welcome to comment under Items 3, 5 and 6 on the agenda.

BR confirmed that apologies for absence had been received, as noted above.

2. **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24.9.20 – Matters Arising**

The draft minutes from the Board meeting held on 24.9.20 had been circulated in advance with the meeting papers. BR confirmed there were no outstanding actions. There were no matters arising, and the minutes of the last meeting were **AGREED** by the Board as a true and accurate record.

3. **Countywide Partner Issues**

3.1 **DCC Leisure Transformation Programme**

(Alison Clark/Susan Robinson)

Board members received a presentation in relation to the DCC leisure transformation review. In January 2020 plans were approved in principle by the council to progress with a leisure centre transformation programme. Given the ongoing lockdown restrictions and the fact the pandemic will continue to impact on leisure for some time to come, DCC want to make sure that they can plan for the future for the facilities and activities that will be needed. The main objectives of the programme are:

- to support health and wellbeing in the county, especially in light of Covid-19 health impacts
- to increase participation
- to generate additional income to keep the service affordable
- to improve ageing buildings with high maintenance costs
- wider Regeneration benefits

The project has been planned to carefully balance budgets, condition of existing facilities and the improvements that would make the most difference to peoples' lives. The plans are all different to provide the right mix of facilities across the county, aiming to provide similar standards and to make the most of our facilities and spaces. At Newton Aycliffe, options will be progressed to refresh the building presentation, to make essential maintenance improvements and update the activity programme.

This is a two-stage consultation process:

Stage 1 – November to December 2020

- Consultation on shortlisted sites
- Engagement on the activity/facility mixture

Stage 2 – Up to and continuing beyond February 2021

- Continuous engagement starting after the stage 1 process to engage with advisory forums, young people, users and others (this will remain throughout the life of the project).
- An external reference group with Sport England and other regional and national bodies with an interest in the project.
- Consulting on the individual and site-specific proposals

Board members were encouraged to submit their views:

- Follow up queries: leisuretransformation@durham.gov.uk
- Site Consultation: <http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/24543>
- Engagement Website: <http://durhamleisuretransformation.co.uk/>

There was an opportunity for Q&A and the following points were noted:

- Cllr JA commented that there will be a wealth of historical data/information available linked to existing sites and this should be reviewed when considering

future plans, e.g. what works well. Cllr JA added that there is a wide range of 'new' and innovative activities available and would welcome such avenues being considered as part of the revised offer, rather than repeating the usual activities.

- Cllr EA asked whether consideration has been given to provision of a theatre/cinema at any of the potential new sites. Cllr EA also asked whether any provision for gaming will be considered. AC commented that Newton Aycliffe is one of DCC's largest sites and there is definitely scope to consider better utilisation of the space, with a full review of all relevant areas including trainers, coaches, timetabling etc.
- SB asked whether school children/young people will be involved in the consultation. AC confirmed that DCC are liaising with schools and consultation will also be carried out via DCC's young people's forum.
- SB asked whether DCC will be reviewing post-COVID uptake figures when determining future provision. AC confirmed that there will be ongoing challenges posed by the pandemic and the continuing restrictions, adding that all previous 2019 market analysis will be compared with more recent data.
- SB commented that he wouldn't want to see potential conflict/dual provision with existing local services, e.g. bowling alleys.
- CG added that DCC should be mindful of the local economy when determining provision/services offered; the need to increase revenue shouldn't lead to displacement of existing local providers.

BR thanked AC/SR for their presentation, and they left the meeting.

3.2 DCC Budget/Medium Term Financial Plan (Richard Crane)

Board members received a presentation in relation to the Council's budget for 2021-22 and the ongoing uncertainties faced in relation to future financial planning.

RC highlighted the significant financial impacts that the Council have faced as a result of the pandemic, incurring significant additional costs combined with loss of income, which has resulted in a £19.3million shortfall for 2020-21.

In terms of 2021-22 budget setting, RC outlined that DCC had prudently invested £20million on a short-term basis in 2020-21, of which £10million will be withdrawn in 2021-22 to assist in offsetting budget pressures. A circa £9million shortfall is still forecast, however options to consider would be utilisation of the Budget Support Reserve (BSR) of £16.4 million (this reserve was created to enable the Council to plan savings effectively in such times of uncertainty), and looking at additional efficiency savings and increases in service income to complement savings already approved which would be expected to reduce any shortfall. It is not expected that efficiency savings would impact upon front line services. In the unlikely circumstance of a significant budget shortfall, late consultation on savings may be required, and this would take place via AAPs.

RC asked Board members if the AAP is comfortable with the Council's outlined approach in terms of identifying savings to balance the budget but considering the utilisation of the Budget Support Reserve to balance the budget due to the significant uncertainties faced and the tight timeframes. Board members were supportive of the approach.

There was an opportunity for Q&A and the following points were noted:

- SB questioned the rationale for ‘prudential borrowing’ of £2m, part of which is to finance the aforementioned investment in Leisure Centres, when DCC hold significantly more than this in reserves.
- SB requested a more detailed breakdown of the expenditure/budgets highlighted for Adults Wellbeing & Health and Children & Young Peoples Services, specifically further information in relation to the number of children in care outside of the area and the costs associated with this.
- Cllr EA asked what form the ‘further late consultation with AAPs’ would take should there be a need (i.e. in the unlikely circumstance of a significant budget shortfall) – the presentation slide states this would be carried out by email, but Cllr EA felt this could potentially warrant more thorough consultation.
- Cllr KH pointed out, on the issue of Council reserves, that this is often already earmarked and isn’t always available as ‘cash’.

RC agreed to follow up on the above points with the relevant officer/s and provide feedback (**Action 1: RC**).

BR highlighted that we had been due to receive an update from Sharon Hutchinson in relation to the business park at today’s meeting. This has been deferred due to the two DCC consultations (above) being added to our agenda, but also to allow more time for, hopefully, a slightly more positive update in future given the ongoing struggles and uncertainties faced by a large number of businesses as a result of the pandemic.

[NW left the meeting]

4. Area Budget Update

4.1 2020-21 COVID Recovery Project Callout

BR updated Board members in relation to progress with this year’s Area Budget callout. Two panel meetings have been held so far, and 9 projects in total have been reviewed. Panel members supported 6 of these projects, and they have all either been circulated to the full Board for ratification already or should hopefully be ready shortly. Our total AB spend to date is **£71,939**, which leaves a balance currently of **£72,963**. Looking at the projects approved so far, we should be on track to achieve our minimum required capital spend (£24k), but we’ll obviously keep an eye on this.

BR highlighted that panel members have deferred 2 projects; it was felt that there wasn’t a strong urgency for the projects to be funded, but they will be reconsidered at a later date should we have funding remaining. Panel members have also rejected 1 project; it was felt there was insufficient evidence of need for the proposal and also that there is existing delivery of a similar nature.

BR confirmed there is another panel meeting on 3 December, and there are currently four projects to look at. We may decide early in the New Year to put a firm closing date on the funding – one, to try and encourage applicants to submit projects sooner rather than later, and two, to assist both the GAMP team and our Funding Team with managing workloads due to the approaching end-of-year. BR will keep Board members updated on this.

BR thanked panel members for their hard work and input with this process; there’s been some great discussion at the meetings and all panel members have done their homework thoroughly!

5. Neighbourhood Budget Update

5.1 Alston Crescent Layby

NB request = £30,298

Cllrs Clare, Durham & Howell – no declarations of interest

VG gave an outline of the project; funding will be used to install a layby, providing additional parking at Alston Crescent, to help alleviate problems with congestion in this residential area (space for up to 7 vehicles). The works will benefit residents and visitors to the area, promoting a safer environment for vehicular traffic and pedestrians.

There were no comments or queries and Board members **APPROVED** the application.

5.2 Greenfield Way/Meadowfield Way Traffic Calming

NB request = £2,384

Cllrs Clare, Durham & Howell – no declarations of interest

VG gave an outline of the project; funding will be used to install a mini-roundabout at the existing T-junction on Greenfield Way & Meadowfield Way. This will help to increase the safety of drivers and pedestrians by facilitating access and reducing delays and congestion, especially at peak times (school drop-off/pick-ups). Advanced warning signs will encourage drivers to reduce their speed to safely navigate the newly installed roundabout. The reduction in traffic speed will improve the safety of pedestrians and road users alike accessing the school.

SB asked for clarification on the detail of this project; there is already a mini-roundabout at this location. Cllr JC clarified that the proposal is to make changes to the existing roundabout; it is hoped that by raising the 'bump' and improving signage this will encourage drivers to slow down and use the roundabout correctly.

DSL was fully supportive of the proposal, commenting that this is one of the most dangerous junctions in Newton Aycliffe and not currently fit for purpose.

There were no further comments or queries and Board members **APPROVED** the application.

5.3 Gilpin Road Fencing

NB request = £2,617

Cllrs Atkinson & Iveson – no declarations of interest

VG gave an outline of the project; funding will be used to install 34m of birds-mouth fencing to the perimeter of the grassed area on Gilpin Road. This grass verge area is frequently overrun by vehicles, causing damage, and which is an eyesore in this residential area, especially during bad weather. The extension of the fencing in this area will prevent vehicles from being able to access this verge and stop further destruction.

There were no comments or queries and Board members **APPROVED** the application.

BR will forward the above NB applications x 3 to the Funding Team for technical appraisal (**Action 2: BR**).

VG gave Board members a brief update in relation to progress with NB spend this year; there have been 15 applications processed so far, totalling approximately £120k. VH highlighted there is around £170k NB remaining (between all Cllrs), and VG will continue to liaise with Cllrs on upcoming schemes/projects. VG clarified the deadline for projects to be with the Funding Team would ideally be the end of December, to allow sufficient time for the technical appraisal process.

[Cllr PH left the meeting]

6. Neighbourhood Issues

6.1 Neighbourhood Policing Update

Insp SH updated Board members in relation to neighbourhood policing activity, including ongoing issues with antisocial behaviour, local PACT priorities and meeting dates, as well as current/emerging issues.

Insp SH highlighted that one of the main ASB causers in the town has been issued with a Criminal Behaviour Order. These are not easy orders to obtain and many months of work goes into bringing the request before the Courts. This now means that breaches of the Order will result in the youth being put before the court. The team also engage with these youths in an effort to divert them away from criminal behaviour. PC Welch is working on a new engagement initiative with this youth and hopefully it will be rolled out to others across the town. The initiative involves the youth acknowledging their behaviour and working on ways to give back to the community where they have caused the problems.

Insp SH confirmed that two new PCSOs will be joining the team in December.

Cllr EA noted thanks to the neighbourhood policing team who are doing a fantastic job under very difficult circumstances, and in particular PC Welch for his restorative justice work for which he should be commended.

DSL commented that he'd be keen to meet with the new staff when they're up and running, to discuss the potential for links with Woodham Community Centre.

Cllr JA asked whether there have been many complaints or queries resulting from the smell coming from the biomass recycling centre. Insp SH clarified this hasn't really been highlighted as an area of concern to her.

A copy of Insp SH's full update report will be circulated with the minutes, for information (**Action 3: BR**).

7. Coordinator's Update

7.1 Better for Everyone Virtual Event

BR confirmed that our Better for Everyone virtual event took place on Thursday 12 November, and a copy of the summary report was circulated by email on 18 November. BR thanked those Board members who were able to attend; BR was slightly disappointed with our final attendance figures, there were 81 people registered beforehand, but on the night only 36 logged on. BR was really pleased though with the fantastic comments and feedback received, particularly from Board members, this was greatly appreciated.

BR commented in terms of the Vibrant Towns & Villages consultation work, DCC Regen have requested that we pick out the 'key themes' that came through from the Q&A at the event (as per the summary report), and agree these as a Board:

- Development of Elmfield School Site
- Development of old Southern Club and Labour Club sites
- Traffic Management Plan for Forrest Park Development
- Improvements to the C35 road from Woodham Golf Club to Rushyford
- More social housing needed, with improved energy efficiency standards
- Improved engagement with Town Centre Management
- Lack of evening economy, particularly in the Town Centre
- Better public transport links
- Better maintenance of footpaths/pavements

BR asked Board members if they felt the above points the key areas of focus for our towns and villages, and if not, what additional priorities/issues do you feel need to be taken into consideration when considering the question of "*What action do we need to take in our area to make our towns and villages vibrant?*".

- Cllr KH commented that there is a lack of synergy between DCC and Livin in relation to grass cutting/grounds maintenance timetables.
- DSL would like to see more structure around better involvement of community centres as part of the wider discussions.

BR will feedback the above points to Regen and keep Board members updated on any future consultation or developments (**Action 4: BR**).

[SH left the meeting]

7.2 New AAP Branding

BR highlighted that DCC and the AAPs have recently introduced new branding; Board members will see our new logo being used going forward – just for information.

7.3 2021 Board Meeting Dates

BR confirmed that a list of the proposed 2021 meeting dates had been circulated in advance with the meeting papers, for information. All meetings will remain virtual with a 2.00pm start time until further notice, and BR asked Board members to diary all dates – Teams invitations will also be circulated for all dates in advance (**Action 5: PS**).

Items not on the Agenda

DSL expressed thanks to the Government for recognising the importance of support for community venues, as well as DCC for their swift financial support which has been a tremendous help for a number of groups and organisations.

8. Date & Time of Next Meeting: Tuesday 26 January 2021, 2:00pm (via Microsoft Teams)

Insp SH/BR thanked all attendees and the meeting was closed.