

Chester-le-Street & District Area Action Partnership (AAP) Board Meeting – Minutes of Monday 1st July 2021 at 6.00pm Teams Virtual Meeting

Elected Councillors

Councillor Craig Martin
Councillor Alison Batey
Councillor Tracie Smith
Councillor Alan Bell
Councillor Bill Moist
Councillor Emma Waldock
Elsie Forrester (Parish Council Representative)

Partner Organisations

Graeme Carr (Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Service)
Jon Quine (North Durham Clinical Commissioning Group)
Suzanne Jobson (Karbon Homes)
Victoria Murray (Head of Digital & Communication, DCC)
Joanne Malki (Business Sector)

Public Representatives

Derek Briggs
Khaled Malki
Clare Todd
Howell Davies
Jake Rollings
Janice Rokni

Officer Attendance:

Michael Wilkes (AAP Principal AAP Co-ordinator)
Fiona Kelly, (Principal Community Development Project Officer)
Allyson Rose (Community Development Project Officer)
Lesley Lines (Community Development Support Officer)

Apologies:

Joanne Pugh (Community Representative) and Lee Morris (Durham Constabulary).

Public Attendance:

Six members of the AAP Public Forum were present at the meeting.

1. AGM Introductions.

Michael thanked the outgoing Chair Allan Bainbridge on behalf of the Board for his time as Chair.

2. Election of Chair & Vice Chair

Michael noted that Jake Rollings, Public Representative, had been nominated by fellow Public Representatives to be put forward as Chair. Michael asked for the Board to agree this nomination.

Agreed

Michael also noted that Suzanne Jobson (Karbon Homes), Partner Representative, had been nominated to stand as Vice Chair for the Partner element of the Board. Michael asked for the Board to agree this nomination.

Agreed

Michael noted that, due to the delays in Councillors being assigned to AAP Boards, the Vice Chair for the Councillor element of the Board would be agreed at the next meeting.

1. Introductions, Apologies and Virtual Housekeeping Code of Conduct/Protocols

Jake welcomed members to the virtual meeting and introductions were made

2. Agreement of minutes of the previous meeting, held 15th February & matters arising

The Chair went through the minutes page by page for clarity. The Board then agreed the minutes were a true and accurate record.

Agreed

Matters Arising

Page 2 – Item 2.1 - Michael advised that Jane Sunter (Public Health, Durham County Council) had been invited to this meeting but could unfortunately not attend. Michael noted that Jane would be invited to a forthcoming meeting to talk around the suicide prevention work that has taken place in the area and to also provide an update on public health issues.

Michael advised the letter of thanks to the NHS had been sent to thank them for their work at the vaccination site in Pelton Fell.

Item 9.1 - Public Representatives – Michael advised that it had been agreed at the last meeting that Public Representatives would remain in place until September. Of the seven public representatives, six of them would need to step down in September. A process of recruiting would now need to be considered.

Elsie Forrester proposed a suggestion of leaving the Public Representatives in place until the end of the financial year.

Michael asked the Board if they wished to consider this proposal. Michael noted that, if this was to be considered, Public Representative Board Members should not be involved in this decision.

Michael highlighted that Jake, was a Public Representative, and was now in the role of Chair. Jake advised that he would hand over the role of Chair to Michael to allow this discussion to take place. Michael stepped into the Chair's role. A discussion took place.

Cllr Alison Batey highlighted concerns that, changing Public Representative Board Members may cause a hiatus in business, causing project approval to be delayed. Cllr Batey proposed extending the Public Representatives term until March 2022, as long as the said Public Board members were happy to stay on.

Cllr Bill Moist highlighted that the minutes stated Public Board Members would stand down in September. Any further discussion around this item was not on the agenda. Cllr Moist further advised there shouldn't be a problem in recruiting.

Cllr Alan Bell agreed, as it was not an agenda item, that the issue should not be decided upon at this meeting. Cllr Bell asked when the Public Representative term had finished and why it had not already been looked at. Cllr Bell highlighted that no one may want to be a Public Representative, but at the same time there may be people wanting the opportunity.

Michael advised that the current six Public Representative terms had finished in June but due to COVID and not being allowed to meet in public or hold interviews etc, recruitment had been delayed. Michael also noted that the majority of AAPs who also did not have vacant positions on their Boards, had taken similar action to what the Chester-le-Street & District AAP had done.

Cllr Paul Sexton (non-Board Member) advised that this issue needed to be democratic and transparent.

Cllr Craig Martin asked that the advantages and disadvantages be highlighted for the next meeting.

Cllr Alison Batey asked that this information be sent to Board Members in advance of the next meeting, so that a decision could be made at the next meeting. Cllr Batey also highlighted that it was agreed Public Board Members could not vote on this decision.

Action: Michael

Michael agreed that this issue would be put on the next agenda to discuss the best way forward and a decision be made at that meeting.

Michael then handed the Chair back to Jake.

Jake thanked Board Members for the discussion.

3. AAP Operating Arrangements 2021/22

Michael highlighted the AAP and Member Neighbourhood Budgets – Proposed Operating Arrangements report. Michael advised that an overall core budget of £244,902 was available to the AAP for 2021/22, of which, £24,000 must still be allocated to capital spend.

- Area Budget (AB) - £100,000
- Older Peoples Social Isolation Fund (OPSIF) - £25,000
- Welfare Assistance Grant (WAG) - £10,000
- Youth Grant (YG) - £9,902
- COVID Restoration Grant (CRG) - £100,000

Michael highlighted that the Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAWHF) grant will remain separate to the pooled budgets and will still be allocated and administered via AAPs.

Michael advised, from a Chester-le-Street & District AAP perspective, a carry forward amount of £24,352 (revenue) was included. Therefore, the total funding the AAP has available in 2021/22 is £269,254.

It had been confirmed that £125,000 of the above funding i.e. the £25,000 OPSIF element and the £100,000 Covid Restoration funding, would need to be spent this financial year. AAPs will therefore need to evidence defrayed spend by the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

Michael advised that the remainder of the core budget, could be carried forward into the 2022/23 financial year.

Town & Villages Funding

Michael highlighted that at DCC Cabinet on 10th February 2021, it was agreed that an allocation of 4.2 million would be available for AAPs to fund wider corporate objectives of improving Town & Villages across County Durham.

DCC Cabinet, on 16th June 2021, agreed that, in order to ensure a greater focus is given to the funding of community 'town and villages' themed projects across the county in every electoral division, that each AAP is allocated £210,000 (rather than the £300,000 originally allocated). In addition to this, each County Councillor would be allocated a one-off additional £10,000 to their Neighbourhood Budget allocation of £19,400 for the 2021/22 financial year.

Staff from the DCC's Regeneration, Economy and Growth (REG) service grouping will attend AAP Board Meetings to present Towns and Village related information to AAP Boards and

County Councillors to help them make investment decisions. AAP Boards will make recommendations for schemes they want to support and those will go through the existing sign-off and approval process that has been adopted for all other AAP activity.

It is not anticipated that the Towns and Village budget allocations will be fully defrayed within this financial year.

Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (HAWHF)

In February 2021, DCC were awarded £2,383,860 by the Department for Education (DfE) to support the provision of HAWHF across County Durham during the Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. £525,000 of this has been allocated to AAPs for the locality-based delivery of the programme. The programme is running similarly to the programme in 2020 and targets smaller locally based partners/providers. Individual allocations to AAPs were based on the number of free school meal eligible children and child poverty rates for 5-15 year-olds. Applying this formula, Chester-le-Street & District AAP was awarded £40,132.

In addition to the above allocation, the Chester-le-Street & District AAP capitalised on underspends in other AAP areas to utilise an additional £15,856 for HAWHF activity this summer.

In April 2021, AAPs were also notified that they would be receiving £95,188 for HAWHF delivery in the May and October half-terms. This was money that was allocated internally by DCC and is separate to the DfE funding, however, to ensure consistency, it was decided to allocate funding to each AAP on the same basis as the DfE funding. Applying this formula, Chester-le-Street & District AAP was awarded £7,399.

AAP 2021/22 Priorities/Task & Finish Groups

In 2020/21, due to the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, it was agreed that each AAP's Area Budget allocation should be aligned to one broad priority focus of COVID-19 Recovery. Within this single focus, AAP Boards were able to address a wide range of issues around the broad themes set out below:

- Employability Initiatives
- Advice and Guidance
- Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Organisational Sustainability
- Food Provision and Support
- Social Isolation
- Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Support to Small Businesses (through a third party, not-for-profit)

As the work of AAPs commences in 2021/22, given the allocation of additional funds to address Town and Village revitalisation, Community Recovery and Holiday Activities with Healthy Food, it is appropriate that Boards will derive local priorities/Task & Finish Groups around these three themes. In terms of further priorities to be addressed over the next year, normally at this point, an AAP will have had the benefit of a broad community consultation exercise to help shape their thinking on their focus for the year. However, given the impact of the pandemic, it has not been possible to carry out that exercise for boards to consider.

Whilst the choice of the priorities to be addressed is a decision to be made by the Board, it is proposed that the Board give careful consideration to adding substantially to these three themes. This is proposed as AAPs have reduced time to address a broad range of topics in a year following an election, the lack of up-to-date community priority data and the scale of the resources and their associated timeframes for spend.

If the Board agree to progress on these three broad themes, this will be on the basis that community consultation is carried out during the Autumn on local priorities (to help shape priorities for 2022/23 as well as the towns and villages work). It is also proposed that, to ensure maximum flexibility, the Community Recovery theme, is bolstered by the inclusion of the criteria 'emerging community issues'.

AAP Boards, AAP Locality Bases and Board Meeting Schedule

It is essential that the Board remains the decision-making body for the AAP and work has continued extremely successfully during 2020/21 using a virtual platform. Overall, attendance from Board Members has been high, separate consultation/focus groups have been organised and AAPs contributed to fourteen events delivered throughout the county which were also well attended. AAPs have embraced virtual working and there has no perceived adverse effects on productivity or decision-making capability. However, it is recognised that in line with national and corporate guidance, plans to return to face-to-face working and staff presence within localities will need to be prepared.

As we work towards holding physical face-to-face Board Meetings in public again, AAPs are seeking advice from IT colleagues to develop a hybrid approach which could potentially allow for a mix of people meeting in person and other Board Members and/or public/presenters attending virtually. Alongside this, advice is also being sought on the mobile technology to deliver the best experience for meetings once physical venues are used again.

In accordance with DCC corporate advice, AAP Teams are planning to return to their locality bases in the near future. In line with that advice, it is envisaged AAP Teams will implement a hybrid form of office/homeworking moving forward.

Key Considerations

Taking into consideration the above and the more detailed information contained within the *AAP and Member Neighbourhood Budgets - Proposed Operating Arrangements 2021/22* DCC Cabinet report, the Board are requested to make decisions on the following key areas so the AAP can move swiftly on allocating the 2021/22 funding aligned to them.

- Core Budget Process
- 2021/22 Priorities/Task and Finish Groups
- Board Meeting Schedule

Core Budget Process

The Board are required to decide on the process which the AAP will follow in relation to allocating the 2021/22 funding. The Board agreed last financial year to move forward on a 'call-out process' which allowed all groups/organisations to apply directly for funding, based around our normal application processes and in accordance with set deadlines. As with the previous financial year, the Board could outline which COVID/Community Recovery areas they wish applicants to focus on (as per those outlined) within the call-out process. This call-out process could also include a focus on the OPSIF monies if the Board so wish.

If the Board are minded to agreeing to conduct a call-out approach, we will need to commence with this process immediately.

2021/21 Priorities/Task & Finish Groups

The Board are required to confirm which priorities/Task and Finish Groups the AAP will focus on for the 2021/22 financial year. It is recommended that the Board focus on the following key priorities/themes and set-up up designated Task & Finish Groups as highlighted in section 5 of this report, to focus on the following:

- Town and Villages
- Community Recovery
- Holiday Activities with Healthy Food

The Board, last financial year, agreed to set-up an Appraisal Panel sub-group. The Appraisal Panel provided the assessment mechanism for all applications seeking funding from the call-out process. It is recommended that the approach adopted in the Appraisal Panel, is now used in the Task & Finish Groups to assess project applications. Task & Finish Groups will subsequently provide reports to the Board and make recommendations on approval and non-approval of projects.

The Board will also need to make a decision on the membership of Task & Finish Groups. All Board Members will have the opportunity to sit on the Task & Finish Groups and there will be

the obvious need to invite/include relevant officers from DCC and partners and other interested parties to be part of the groups. The Board need to make the decision however as to whether or not we limit numbers in the groups and to whether or not we have designated Chairs for the particular groups.

Michael encouraged members to get involved.

Howell asked if a forward plan of Task Groups could be made available.

Cllr Sexton asked if the Task Groups brought the recommendations to the Board for approval. Michael highlighted that Board Members do approve and have the final decision on projects.

Cllr Alison Batey requested that County Councillors get involved, especially for Town & Villages. Michael agreed.

Board Meeting Schedule

The Board are asked to consider the information regarding future Board Meetings. There are various options available for the Board to consider in relation to future Board Meetings. This is something which the Board maybe wish to consider in more detail at a later date as we become more aware of the wider COVID situation we find ourselves in from a national perspective and also as more detailed information is available on the options for hybrid meetings in local community facilities. In order to ensure we have set Board dates in the diary, a suggested schedule for future Board Meetings is highlighted below. As stated last financial year, the frequency of meetings can be reviewed on an ongoing basis and therefore altered if the Board feels there is a need to do so.

- Monday 13th September
- Monday 18th October
- Monday 22nd November
- Monday 24th January 2022
- Monday 28th February 2022
- Monday 28th March 2022

In addition to the above, a meeting on 26th July was proposed. It was noted that this would be a light meeting but would enable the Towns and Villages presentation to be brought to the Board, along with an update from the new Police Crime Commissioner.

Cllr. Tracie Smith asked if AAP Officers were available to meet on site.

Cllr. Bill Moist asked that we get back to face-to-face meetings as soon as possible.

Cllr Alison Batey highlighted that, a venue would need to be larger than normal to accommodate social distancing.

Michael advised that AAP Officers could attend site visits but appropriate paperwork needed to be completed to adhere to DCC policies. Michael also noted that, future meetings would have

to be held in a safe and secure environment and be accessible to all. Michael noted that face-to-face/hybrid meetings will hopefully be something that can take place soon and that AAP staff will need to adhere to all DCC policies when organising and arranging such meetings.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board take note of the contents of the report and agree a way forward on the five key areas.

- i) Call Out Process – To include Older Peoples Social Isolation Monies (£25,000)
The Chair asked for a vote on this principle. **Agreed**
- ii) 2021/22 Priorities **Agreed**
 - Town & Villages
 - Community Recovery
 - Holiday Activities with Healthy Food
- iii) Task & Finish Groups – The Task Groups are there to assess projects. Projects are then brought to the Board who make the final decision. Cllr Alison Batey highlighted the level of commitment needed from the Board Members. **Agreed**
- iv) Future Board Meetings Proposal – Michael advised that there was flexibility to move the meetings or add more meetings to accommodate presentations from partners. **Agreed**

AAP Monitoring Reports

Qtr.1 Monitoring Report

Fiona gave an update of the projects which are continuing to spend. Fiona highlighted most of the projects have been delayed due to COVID. The next Monitoring Report will be October and will give more clarity as projects begin to progress.

Michael again reiterated that projects will be invited to attend to present at future Board Meetings.

Holiday Activities with Healthy Food (Fun & Food Programme)

Alison Rose updated Board Members on the allocation of HAWHF.

Cllr Alison Batey asked that beneficiaries be listed in future reports.

Action: Ally

Cllr Alan Bell asked if this funding was already allocated. Cllr Bell highlighted no projects were from the Lumley area.

It was noted that the fund had been widely publicised and communicated via all standard processes.

Partner Updates

Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Update

Jon Quine gave a presentation on the Health & Wellbeing Board White Paper.

Jon advised County Durham CCG will cease to exist from April 2022. This will be replaced by an Integrated Care System (ICS) that will cover the North East & North Cumbria.

Jon advised the CCG currently commissions a budget for County Durham of about one billion pounds. The new ICS NHS Board is being formed and will then commission services.

This Partnership Board will be created with representation from all authorities and the voluntary sector. The Chair of this ICS Board will be Sir Liam Donaldson.

Jon highlighted that, not only is the NHS in a transitional period and having a challenging time with Covid, it is also about to go through a significant re-organisation.

Work is ongoing as to how to make sure primary care continues to be represented.

DCC and the NHS are working closely within County Durham to try and influence the shape and how things are going to work. There is now a duty to collaborate. Jon reassured everybody that all parties are working to the same aim.

Fire & Rescue Service

Graeme Carr introduced himself and gave a brief overview. Graeme answered questions from Howell Davies in relation to the fires on Walldridge Fell.

Graeme advised that he was aware of the problems the community were facing. Graeme advised the Arson Reduction Team had been working with schools in the area. Graeme noted that no re-occurring incidents have happened after recent interventions.

Karbon Homes

Suzanne Jobson gave an update. Suzanne highlighted that Karbon will open the hub on the Front Street after the July COVID announcement from the Government. Suzanne noted that training with digital support is continuing and that Karbon are using Cornerstones and Bullion Hall to meet people in person.

Suzanne asked that should any Councillor's/Board Members have any queries, they can forward these in advance of the meeting so she could give answers on the evening.

Business Association – Cllr Alan Bell advised that this will be a good opportunity to highlight how many units on the Front Street were empty. Michael advised he would take this on board. Howell Davies highlighted that the 'new banners on Chester-le-Street Front Street looked really good.

Clare Todd advised that 'In Bloom Window' competition is underway. Judging would be taking place next week. It was also noted that local businesses are once again taking part in the Lego Trail.

Cllr Alan Bell asked if Graeme Soult could come to a subsequent meeting to give an update.

Action: Fiona

AAP Co-ordinators Update

Annual Report – Michael highlighted that the draft format will go to DCC Design & Print imminently and be emailed to Board Members for comment in due course.

Board Champions – Moving forward, Board Members will be aligned to projects for the purposes of attending monitoring visits with AAP Officers and reporting back to the wider Board as and when appropriate. It was noted that this process will begin once new projects have come on stream this financial year.

Mini Figure Trail – Fiona noted that Joanne has had a good response from Town Centre Businesses to take the leaflets and receive entries.

Town Centre Banners – Fiona thanked DCC Street Lighting Team & DCC Design & Print helping to get this project up and running.

Cllr Alan Bell highlighted a number of local issues of concern and asked that a Councillor update could be put onto the agenda.



Michael apologised for missing the Neighbourhood Issues from the agenda. Michael advised this would be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Michael thanked the Board and public for their attendance.

Date and time of next meeting

Monday 26th July 2021 (6pm – 8pm) Virtual Board Meeting