

3 Towns Partnership Board Meeting
5.30pm on Thursday 28 September 2023 at Crook Civic Centre

PRESENT:

Partner Organisations

Gordon Elliott
Graham Tomaszko
Sgt Grant Cockerill
Liz Bradley
Helen Ward

Public Representatives

Mary Hall
Fiona Nicol
Dianne Mackay
David Dixon
Chris Ebdon
Pauline Moger

Elected Members

Councillor Richard Manchester, Durham County Council
Councillor Anne Reed, Durham County Council

Co-opted Members

Councillor Paul Stokes, Tow Law Town Council

Officer Attendance:

Sandy Denney	AAP Coordinator
Nicola Woodgate	Community Development Project Officer
Joanne Ashworth	Towns and Villages Community Development Project Officer
Kelly Hughes	AAP Support Officer

Presenters:

Gordon Elliot – Medium Term Financial Plan Presentation

Public Attendance:

2 members of the public were in attendance

Apologies:

Councillor Mike Currah, Councillor Olwyn Gunn, Councillor Fraser Tinsley, Councillor Margaret Elgie, Councillor Patricia Jopling, Jay Conlon, Jono Holmes

A1. Welcome and Introductions

RM opened the meeting and thanked the Board for attending.

A2. Agreement of minutes from the previous meeting 17 July 2023 – Matters Arising

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

A3. Local Neighbourhood Issues

Neighbourhood Budget Applications and Neighbourhood Budget Report

NW gave an update on Neighbourhood Budget and directed the Board to the report in their packs and said 2 applications had been circulated to the Board electronically since the last meeting.

NW said there was 1 application to go through at the Meeting, which is for information only.

1. The Hobbit Hut, Howden-le-Wear Primary School

Councillor Anne Reed

NB £2,500; Match £7,000; Total £9,500

The Board were informed that this is for information only.

No comments.

A4. Priorities and Action Plans

Action Plan and Project Updates

Task Groups and Area Budget Funding

SD updated the Board and informed them that the task groups for Voluntary & Community Sector and Community Recovery met in September 2023. The task group looked at the issues identified through the networking event for Community organisations and partners that met in July. The Community Recovery Task Group didn't identify any additional issues or anything that would need to be addressed through developing projects with partners. The recommendation to the board was that a call out for projects would be the best way of addressing the issues raised under each of the Community Recovery themes. The group suggested a call out which does not include employability as there is sufficient provision for this in the 3 Towns currently.

The Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group invited **HF** from Durham Community Action to show what support they could offer to the sector. Volunteer needs were identified. Durham Community Action will be launching a volunteer platform shortly to assist with the volunteer recruitment. There was a suggestion for another networking meeting. The Task Group agreed to propose a call out for the 2 themes of organisational sustainability and Support for the Voluntary Community Sector.

The Board were informed there is £135,900 Area Budget available, of which £34,000 is Capital. The AAP team have created a timeline for a callout which will close before the November Board meeting. **SD** will then be able to relay the demand for the available funding received to the Board at the next meeting.

SD updated the Board on the Events Fund, there is currently £5,570 left and suggested to wait until after Christmas for another callout to encourage projects for Spring.

BOARD AGREED TO EVENTS CALLOUT AFTER CHRISTMAS AND CALL FOR PROJECTS TO BE LAUNCHED ON MONDAY

ACTION: AAP TO START AREA BUDGET CALL OUT ON MONDAY AND EVENTS FUND CALL OUT IN EARLY 2024. AAP TO PLAN A NETWORKING MEETING FOR NOVEMBER AND CIRCULATE DATE.

Youth Panel

The Board were informed that the Youth Panel have met twice since the last Board meeting. At the previous Board meeting, the Board were informed that there was £158 left in the Children and Young People's Small Grants Fund and a suggestion was made for top up funding from the 3 Towns AAP to allow the Youth Panel to continue. However, this is not possible in the current financial year as AAPs are not permitted to fund new small grants programmes. The Youth Panel have been given £794.11 from the remaining funds from the Glenholme Centre following its closure as an organisation, to add to their pot meaning they have just under £1,000 left. The Youth Panel have undertaken new roles, as Youth Ambassadors, as a pilot of County Durham Fun and Food. At their last meeting, they appraised some Fun and Food October Half Term applications from a young person's perspective.

Fun & Food

There were 6 applications to the 3 Towns AAP for Fun & Food in Summer 2023. There were also 3 last minute projects, where the Gala Theatre provided free tickets to the summer pantomime to 3 groups across the 3 Towns. Fun and Food funded the transport and food.

The Board were informed there was just over £7,724 for October Half Term Fun and Food with the panel scheduled for Monday 2nd October 2023. The Youth Panel reviewed these last week and their comments will be input. Christmas 2023 has £21,713 Department for Education funding; organisations have been encouraged to think about applying to ensure the funding isn't lost to the area.

SD commented that there have been 120 AAP Fun and Food Projects over the summer, 225 projects in total across County with over 21,594 individual children that have benefited from these.

Towns and Villages

JA gave an update on Towns and Villages. The police hardstanding, bulb planting and recreation projects are all in progress.

Bus Board

PS updated the Board that the Bus Board is badly attended by other AAP's. ASB in bus stations had been discuss as well as the bus services improvement plan. The plan hasn't had as much funding as expected. They are currently working on a public transportation map which is run by DCC. It displays departure timetables and planners and is constantly being improved. There will be more updates on Facebook.

Letter of Support

SD informed the board that St Catherine's Community Centre's lease comes to an end in April 2024. The Community Centre are applying to the Community opportunity fund for funding to acquire the centre and have requested a letter of support from the AAP.

BOARD AGREES TO A SUPPORT LETTER FOR ST CATHERINE'S COMMUNITY CENTRE

ACTION: AAP TO DRAFT A LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE BID.

Board Timings

The Board were told the 3-month trial of 5.30pm start times for the Board meetings was finished and consulted the Board on continuing with 5.30pm start times.

BOARD AGREED TO 5.30PM BOARD MEETING START TIMES IN FUTURE

A5. Countywide Partners

GE gave a presentation on the Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Board were informed that the consultation is open online until 20th October 2023. In December 2023, a report will be published with the responses from the consultation.

A discussion took place surrounding the MTFP proposal. A query was raised on what the contingency plan will be if the balanced budget can't be reached. It was suggested that possibly the reserves may be used.

A request was made for more details on the proposal and more information on school to home transport. Comments were made that there should be a recognition of statutory requirements regarding the high cost in transport with SEND and additional travel support that is needed. The Board were informed there is a separate consultation detailing this information. Links to more information on the proposal are in the consultation.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential 4.99% council tax increase, particularly for those on lower income levels.

A query was raised regarding a previous proposal for local government to collect business rates and keep a higher percentage of these, however, it is understood this was never agreed.

ACTION – AAP TO SEND PRESENTATION AND CONSULTATION LINK TO THE BOARD

Locality Policing Update

GC gave a local police update. The Board were updated that there is a new chief constable in post – Rachel Bacon. She is very supportive of neighbourhood policing which matches what the locality and policing teams want. It is anticipated more teams may be implemented to reduce the demand in the community.

There will be a new PCSO recruitment in November with a potential start date before Christmas. The Board were informed that Crook neighbourhood policing have lost 3 PCSO's due to being successful in the recruitment of new PC's. 3 new PCs have also started in the team, one of who is Abbie who was present at the meeting and is a former PCSO in the team.

An update was given on the drone project. The pilots have been trained and awaiting the Crook Neighbourhood drone to be approved by the Chief Constable, it will then be in service within the team.

The Board were informed that crime is following the expected trend at this time of the year and there has been a rise in thefts, however, this is both nationally and locally, which could be attributed to the cost-of-living crisis. Community speed watch has had a massive boost with changes to the vetting process. Previously it was a long process, however it is now a local check which will mean a quicker turnaround process. There will be a campaign to recruit more volunteers to carry these duties out. There is a proven reduction in speed due to the speed watch van.

PACT meetings are still going ahead. Crook's took place recently, Willington this evening, 28th September and Tow Law is 20th October. They are currently trying to re-establish one in Howden-le-wear.

There has been an ASB community support group established on one of the estates in Crook which is working very well. It is suggested a similar group could be set up for Willington.

A query was raised regarding police engagement with schools. The Board were informed the police regularly engage and participate with schools it is a key part of tackling ASB.

SD updated the Board on behalf of Jono Holmes from the Fire & Rescue service and informed the Board the information will be circulated electronically.

A6. Date and time of next meeting

5.30pm on Thursday 9 November 2023 at Crook Civic Centre